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

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

Volume 36, Numbers 9 & 10

September–October 1981

RURS

—Woodstock

Rating systems have always been a source of bewilderment and frustration for beginners as well as experienced climbers. No matter how hard one tries to invent sophisticated, objective ways of evaluating a climb's difficulty, the latter seems to possess a kind of black-magic quality defying any classification. Every serious climber knows that you cannot really trust any rating of a climb unless you've done it—and when you've done it, you don't need the rating. So, why bother with numbers, decimals, pluses and minuses, and logarithms?

The problem with rating systems is that they pretend to be objective, which they obviously cannot be. The only serious thing to do is openly admit this and act accordingly. And here comes RURS (Realized Ultimate Rating System). Everything you always wanted to know about rating systems and never dared to ask. Better: everything you always knew about rating systems and never dared to say. Because every climber, no matter how good he or she is, when thinking about the difficulty of a climb, has always used nothing else but RURS—without knowing it. For the enlightenment of the climbing crowds, here's how it works.

Obviously, the rating depends on the climber's ability, experience, mood, inspiration, how many beers he or she had the night before, and so on. While you are doing the climb, you may rate it in a number of different, unofficial ways: funny, ridiculous, desperate, four-letter words, et cetera. It's only when you've done it (or just backed off it)

that you rate it according to RURS. There are just three categories: piece of cake (PC), hard piece of cake (HPC), impossible (I). That's it.

The advantages of RURS are immediately clear to everyone; the first being the fact that it's easy to use, easier to understand, and universal. At the outset you have a really hard time trying to figure out what a 5.8 might be. Then you have to consider whether it's a Seneca 5.8, a Gunks 5.8, or a Yosemite 5.8, while if you're in the Alps it might be a hard grade V or possibly a VI minus (UIAA system) or an old grade VI, and in England it would be something like 5a or 5b, anyway it's sort of Hard Very Severe unless you're in Scotland because up there it would be only a Very Severe, and in Australia it's about 17 or 18. And when you've figured it out you go do it and find that it is not like a 5.8 at all, it's just damn hard, man, and so what do you say after all that? Anywhere in the world, RURS makes it easy; it's just a hard piece of cake (HPC).

To give you a better idea of how RURS works, here's a sample of ratings based on personal experience (numbers in brackets refer to the currently used rating):

Piece of Cake (PC)	Skyline Traverse (5.3)
	CCK (5.8)
	Marshall's Madness (5.9)
	Kindergarten (5.0)

(Continued next page)

RURS (CONTINUED)

Hard Piece of
Cake (HPC)

Triple A (5.5)
Directissima (5.9)
Double Crack (5.8)
Prune (5.6)

Impossible (I)

Arm Buster (?)
Tomato (5.7)
Foops (5.11)
Green Bucket (5.6)

Yeah, it's a good salad. I'm ready to admit that you might question some of the above evaluations, and I agree that RURS contains a slight hint of subjectivity. But that's the fun of it. You have the same arbitrariness, the same desperate confusion, the same basic nonsense as with the other rating systems, but you're allowed a degree of personal freedom that is denied by the dull and boring would-be precision of numbers. RURS gives you back what you've missed for so long in climbing—that creative touch, that note of personality. And it's time dependent, too. You may shift climbs from one category to another, from one day to the next.

Think of the time when I'll be back in the States, and maybe I'll be able to do Cripple's Crack and downrate it from I to HPC and possibly PC. I'm looking forward to that, folks.

(Woodstock, AKA Gianni Battimelli, our Roman jam crack expert returned home in mid-September to accept a position at the University. **Ciao.**)

MARRIED!

Vivian Mendenhall and Barry Reville will be married on October 6 in Carson City, Utah (airlines and other higher forces willing). They will thereafter be known by their same names as before. Even their addresses will be unchanged for the immediate future.

And, Bill Delano will marry Toni Sanchez in Lake Tahoe November 6. They may return here for a visit in January.



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.

PUBLICATIONS

Accidents in North American Mountaineering, 1981. The American Alpine Club and the Alpine Club of Canada. 67 pages. \$2.00

This issue describes and analyses the 1980 climbing accidents reported for Canada (18) and the U.S. (141). In the U.S. the total number of persons involved was 295; in Canada, 59. Thirty three climbers were killed in the U.S.; five died in Canada.

Some disasters, particularly of foreign mountaineers on Mt. McKinley, seem remote and yet are the practical results of a cavalier attitude toward a big mountain in the Arctic. Some mishaps, amusing in a black humour sort of way, seem closer to home:

"...about halfway down the rappel...[the first rappeller] placed a nut, sling, and carabiner to stabilize the ropes in the high wind. He then rappelled another 60 feet to some bolts on the face...[as the second rappeller] reached the nut his shirt got caught in his rappel rig. He elected to cut the shirt clear. With one swipe of his knife, he cut completely through both rappel ropes just above his figure eight ring. Moments before, he had transferred the sling on the nut to his harness, which held his fall. He soon realized that the nut was placed behind an expanding flake. The ropes above him had now blown away in the wind. He was able to haul up more nuts and improve his anchor somewhat. Their remaining rope was too short to continue the rappel. After considering a couple of options, they elected to make two pendulums to Sickle Ledge [El Cap] where there were fixed lines to the ground.

Analysis

If a prusik sling had been used as a back-up, as is the general practice on rappels, [the second rappeller] could have freed his shirt without doing all the other things. Also, it is a good practice to carry a few bolts and pitons for extricating yourself from unexpected situations."

These accounts teach good lessons of what not to do. Unfortunately, since there are many ways of doing something wrong, the lesson to be learned from other's mistakes is never complete. We all run the constant risk of adding a new kind of accident to "the literature."

This is an appropriate place to record this summer's Gunks fatalities. On June 11, a 17-year-old Connecticut climber and two partners had just finished their three-pitch climb. They had unroped and changed into street shoes. They were bouldering the last rock band to the trail when the relatively inexperienced climber slipped and fell all the way to the scree slope. On June 14, a 40-year-old New Jersey man, evidently an experienced climber, died after hitting a ledge during a 30-40 foot fall. He had just led an unprotected 5.8 and was finishing up on the 5.3 pitch of Shockley's Without.

Mt. Analogue, A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing, Rene Daumal, 1952. Paperback \$2.50.

Rene Daumal, a mountaineer and pupil of the mystic G.I. Gurdjieff wrote *Mt. Analogue* in the last years of his life, when tuberculosis forced him up to the high, restorative air of the Alps. Just before his death at age 36, Daumal went back to Paris, when the high altitudes could do no more for him. Always a seeker after the truth, he helped his friends and followers to discover it in themselves. Denied his beloved mountains by illness, Daumal became, by compensation, a helper in the exploration of the inner life.

A strange and beautiful little book, a classic allegory of man's search for himself, *Mt. Analogue* is the story of a departure for an unknown mountain never mapped, but which cannot not exist.

The mountaineers band together for the difficult climbs, descents, painful and inevitable falls. "But for those who do not lose heart, there gleams from time to time, at the bottom of a crevasse, or on a vertiginous ridge, the priceless crystal, the moment of Truth".

O.K., O.K., so allegories and mystics give you a royal pain?

Read it for the lively, funny story, the whimsical drawings, the poems like "Lay of the Luckless Mountaineer," and the little pieces of advice that crop up in odd places like the story's peradams the lucky chamoix hunters find.

—reviewed by Nori Gessler

THIRD ANNUAL AWHE CLIMBING MEET

The week of August 16th brought the Third Annual American Women's Himalayan Expeditions Meet (AWHE) to Littleton, New Hampshire and the hospitality of Meriby Sweet. This year's group was small, but diverse. Of the eight that actively participated during the week, three were men and three were from Europe. We enjoyed the classic and popular climbs that the area had to offer, including They Died Laughing at Cathedral, **Sliding Board** and **Standard Route** at Whitehorse Ledge—The Slabs; **Whitney-Gilman Route**, **Reppy's Crack** and **Moby Grape** at Cannon Cliff. Gianni and Max also conquered **Vertigo** at Cannon, while Jane and Cathy climbed **Consolation Prize**. Our evening's entertainment consisted of slide shows given by Gianni and Cathy, plus an occasional trip to Bishop's for homemade ice cream. Present were Gianni Battimelli and Massimo Frezzotti, Rome, Italy; Cathy Woodhead, Bristol, England; Lisa Freundlich, Portland, Maine; Karin Lindquist, Lyme, New Hampshire; Jane Price, Cabin John, Maryland; Bill Stem, Maryland, and myself.

Next year's trip will probably be in the West. I recommend the Meet to all climbers who are interested in meeting new people and exploring new areas. For further information, contact Meriby Sweet, The White Mountain School, Littleton, New Hampshire 03561.

—Patti Lemon

VIRGIN LEAD AT HARPER'S FERRY

When I told a nonclimbing, but sympathetic friend about my impending first lead at Harper's Ferry, he said, "What's a lead?", then, "oh...".

Trying not to alarm me, he told me about "this huge black mother of a crag" with a wonderful piece of American folk art painted on its face. It said: **MENNON'S SKIN POWDER** in 60 foot high capital letters. The Park Service folks thought it was a little too grandiose and had MS volunteers paint over it in rock-colored paint. Through the years, though, the disguising paint weathered away (bad taste always triumphs) and Mennon again advertises its skin powder to all those sweaty Appalachian Trail and C & O canal hiker/bikers.

Don Barnett and I got an early start on Sunday—headed to West Virginia despite the threatening weather. (Deep in my heart, I confess, I was hoping for thunderstorms.)

At the ranger station we signed in hardhat and clothing color just in case there was some terrible, terrible, accident and they had no other way of identifying the body. Then we drove over to that "huge black mother of a crag."

My mom always told me that when you feel overdressed, you should take off one piece of jewelry. Walking with a slight list to the left from the weight of my rack I thought, "Mother was right" and jet-tisoned three Friends, several rurs, some crack'n'ups, and oh, no! not my lucky Extra Long Dong. . .

I started up—hey, it was funner that top roping. Don was a little perplexed when I brought him up the first pitch and he saw the imaginative way I was anchored. Joe Farness happened by and tied in for the last two exciting pitches. It started to drizzle; it got slippery. We rappelled off and headed back to Harpers Ferry where a nouveau-Colonial dame fed us mammoth Virginia ham sandwiches—possibly the very best I've ever encountered.

—Nori Gessler

OUT AND ABOUT

Ian Cruikshank reports that he is recovering rapidly from his operation. The pinched nerve in his neck—the result of an old wrestling fall—became progressively worse this spring. An examination by a for-profit doctor led to the removal of part of a ruptured disk.

He says that he'll be getting back into shape and climbing again soon.

NORTH CAROLINA CLIMBING

The AAC Blue Ridge Section and the Southeastern Climbers Association will co-sponsor a fall climbing meet October 10, 11, and 12 at Looking Glass Rock in North Carolina's Pisgah National Forest. Looking Glass is a large granite dome with a variety of climbs on its south, north, and north-west faces. This is a chance to meet climbers for whom Looking Glass is home rock. We plan to carpool. Drivers of large, comfortable cars will be most popular. We have reserved a large group campground and are arranging a program for Saturday evening. For further information, call Lin Murphy.

HANGING AROUND

BULL RUN July 19

This was almost a nontrip since the permission letter did not arrive until the Friday before the scheduled date.

The day itself was hot yet humid; the turnout modest yet intrepid. After checking in with the caretaker, we followed Gianni up the trail, which had its own objective dangers, including poison ivy (ubiquitous), ticks (spotted), brambles (sharp), and copperheads (rumored but unseen). There were also unexpected pleasures such as many wild raspberries, occasional blueberries, and a pleasant breeze as we neared the top.

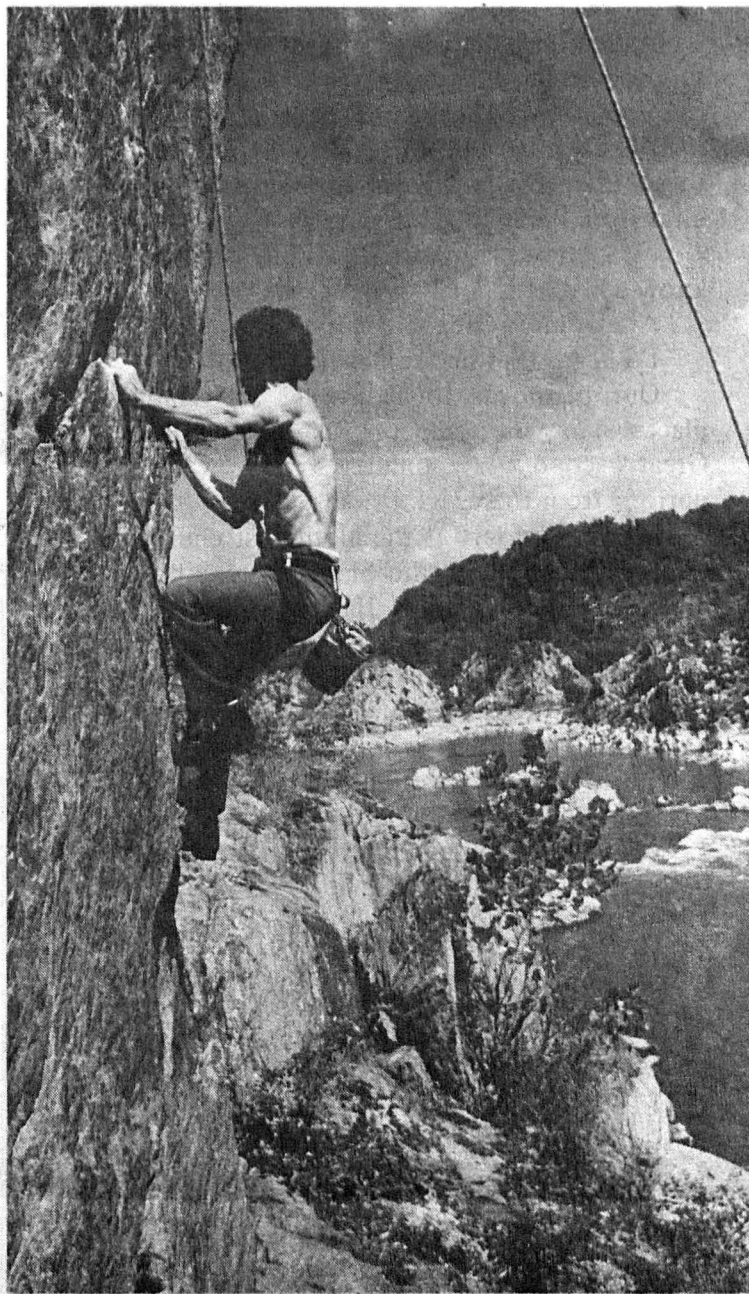
But on to the climbing which was, after all, the purpose of the trip: **Charlie's Crack** was rigged and conquered by only two—Gianni (twice, mind you!) and Harold. A climber who shall remain anonymous wedged his shoe in the crack so tightly that he had to remove it from his foot to retreat. The debate on whether to permit him to retrieve it was settled when it was decided that it would offer unfair aid to following members of the party. Around the corner, **Bull Run Overhang** made us feel better with about a 75% success rate.

Moving right along, **Seven and One Half Won't Do** was climbed by Gianni, Mike, John and Harold. The name of this climb derives from a bizarre move, which consists of a heel-toe foot jam requiring a size eight or larger shoe to span the gap.

The face to the right was climbed by all, using numerous variations. It was on this wall that we were treated to a display of gymnastics when Mike ascended a ten-foot vertical stretch without the use of his legs.

The hike out collected two bags of trash. After bidding farewell to the caretaker, we retired to the Pepperoni Stick for pizza and beer. Attendees were Gianni Battimelli, Harold Goldstein, Janet Young, Jim Nelson, Ute Christoph, John Ferguson, and Mike and Don Kocher.

Don Kocher



Z-SLASH—photo by Charlie Dorian

GREAT FALLS, VIRGINIA, August 2

A beautiful, sunny day greeted us at Juliet's Balcony. We (Nick and Charlie Dorian, Gianni Battimelli and friend Michele, Martha Hale, Joe Farness, Jeff Brown, James Eakin, and myself) rigged three climbs in the area, including Romeo's Ladder. While some of us worked on a variation or two, Michele, Martha and Gianni put up a new route called **Swimming Is Not Allowed**. The day was so warm and humid—we all considered the route.

—Patti Lemon

HIDDEN DELIGHTS

As before, the call came at the last minute. I suppose I should learn to anticipate them, but how can you prepare for the unexpected?

"Let's go to Ede's Fort," said Greg. "I've wanted to go there for two years, ever since I took a folder on it from PATC's trip drawer."

"It's the last minute," I said, "besides, I don't know where it is."

"Trust me," Greg said smoothly.

I'd heard that line somewhere before.

Our plan was to rediscover and climb at two places along the Cacapon River. Ede's Fort is near Great Cacapon, WV. Caudey's Castle was somewhere upriver from there.

If you turn left at the Methodist church in Great Cacapon and follow the blacktop, you'll eventually cross the Cacapon River. If you do, you've gone too far. About a quarter mile before the new bridge which replaced the old ford is a sign saying, "Private Road." Stroll down it a mile or so to its end. That barricade before you is Ede's Fort, a 200 foot high monument to the resistance of sandstone-quartzite to erosion. Sadly, it's all on private land:

We asked to climb of the owner sitting reading on his front porch.

"Officially, I can't give you permission—my insurance policy," he replied.

So we walked around and up to the top, which has a picture perfect view along the river. We could walk along the ridge away from the river on an old, old road, which might be a possible approach to the place. No climbing this day, however.

We ambled (it was a hot day) on back to the car, determined to find the almost-lost-in-antiquity Caudey's Castle. One expedition had set out to find it last fall; they returned, cold and disappointed. Would we, less experienced but brasher, succeed? We drove hither to yon; we tried byways and traces through the woods. Finally, we asked directions.

Behind a locked gate with a "Posted" sign was a wide dirt road leading uphill to an old parking lot. The owner had closed the road not to climbers or hikers, but to keep out all the empty beer cans!*

We walked up the two miles and hit a sign that said, "Castle—100 feet." Sure enough, through the trees, there it was. We could walk, scramble and fourth class to the top. What a view! We were 500 feet above the river, in a gorgeous gorge. The castle is vertically bedded sandstone, much like Seneca Rocks, but still with its vegetation and lichen.

Since it was too late to climb, we returned to the car to spend the night at Ice Mountain. There is ice here through the summer—but under the scree slope.

A late evening thunderstorm lingered through Sunday morning, dulling our desire to climb. The sun did come out while we were walking down from nearby Raven Rocks, so we tried Caudey's Castle after a lunch break.

The side of the castle facing the river is smooth, vertical and split by a crack straight up the middle. "Should we give it a try? Will it go? Where are the belays?" The questions change when you don't have a guidebook. . .

It was terrific!

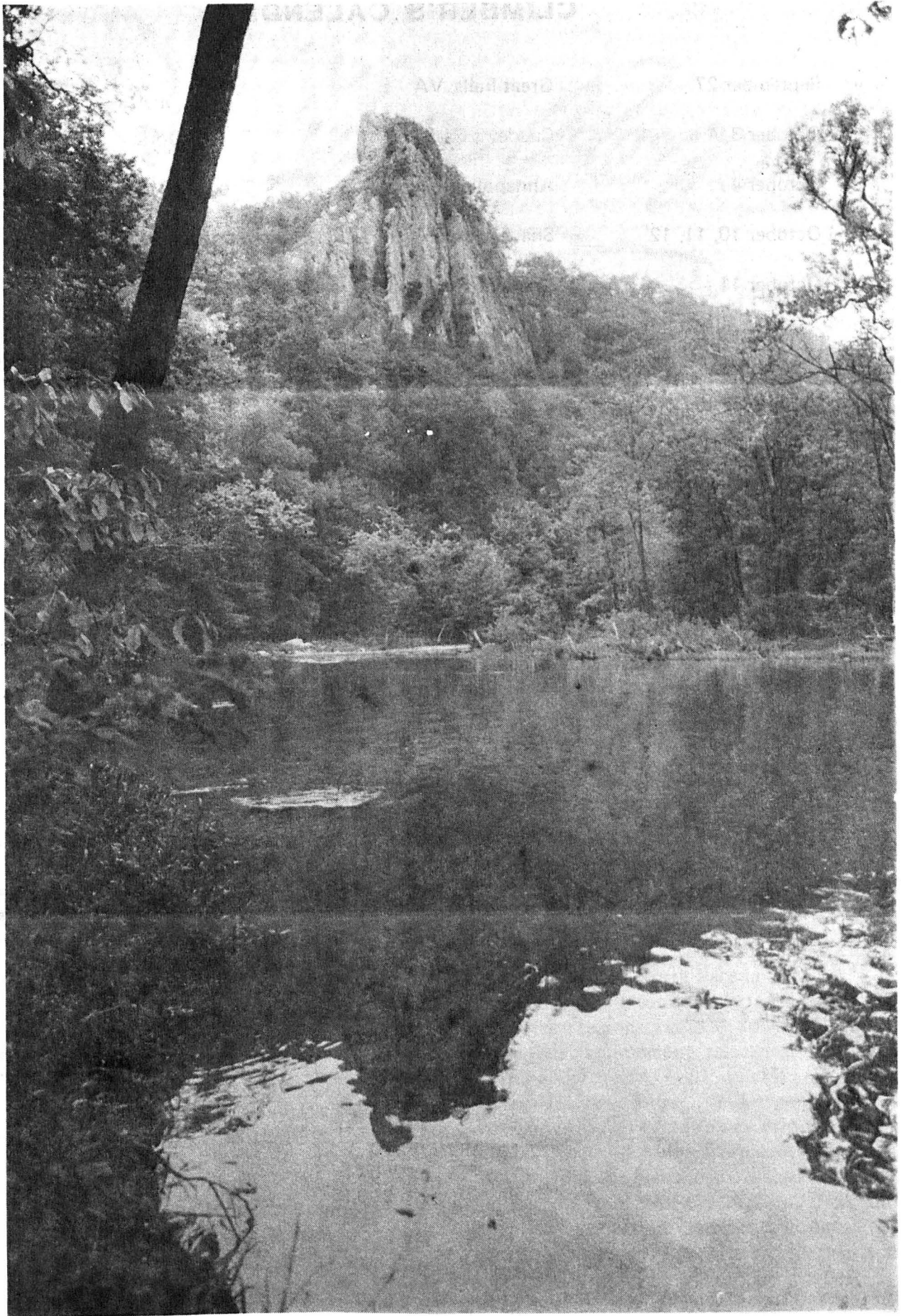
—Greg Christopulos and Charlie Dorian

(*But they now bring .24 per pound at Safeway, and hasn't he heard of John Stannard? —ed.)

MOUNTAIN MUTES NPS CRITICISM

Mountain magazine, which has repeatedly castigated the Park Service for its alleged restrictions on climbing in Alaska, has finally listened to other climbers of Alaskan mountains. **Mountain 78** now grants, "it is clear that it is possible to climb in most of the ranges of Alaska as freely and as readily as if there were no rules." In reaching this conclusion, **Mountain** indirectly quotes an UP ROPE editorial (February 1980) regarding former (Alaska) Sen. Gravel's anti-Park Service/prodevelopment position. **Mountain** had supplied its readers with preprinted, pro-Gravel position postcards, which they were encouraged to mail to the Senator. UP ROPE editorialized that it was curious that some mountaineers were appealing to a man who wants to develop the wilderness.

Sen. Gravel was defeated last year, but his successor's, Sen. Murkowski, prodevelopment sympathies are, if anything, more intense.



CAUDEY'S CASTLE—photo by Charlie Dorian

CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

September 27	Great Falls, VA	
October 3, 4	Caudey's Castle*	Charlie Dorian
October 4	Annapolis Rocks	Greg Christopulos (575-4061)
October 10, 11, 12	Shawangunks*	Martha Hale
October 11	Crescent Rocks	
October 14	MS Meeting 8 pm	PATC Headquarters Program: "El Capitan" (film)
October 18	Bull Run	John Bremer
October 24, 25	Nelson Rocks	
October 25	Sugarloaf	Don Kocher (949-2239)
October 31, November 1	Seneca Rocks*	Patti Lemon (762-4769)
November 7, 8	Greenland Gap*	Charlie Dorian
November 11	MS Meeting 8 pm	PATC Headquarters
November 15	Annapolis Rocks	Don Barnett
November 22	Crescent Rocks	John Bremer

For trip information, call the leader or James Eakin. Day trips are to top rope climbing areas. Weekend trips (designated *) are to lead climbing areas—please arrange for your own climbing partner.

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