



LIBRARY
POTOMAC APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB
1718 N STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

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

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

Volume 36, Number 11

November 1981

ROBSON

by Jeff Brown

In 1913, Conrad Kain, a remarkable Austrian mountain guide, pioneered a route up the east side of Mount Robson (12,972 ft.) to capture the first ascent of the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Due to the poor conditions and dangers of his ascent route, Kain chose to guide his party down the south face to a small rock bivouac for the night. Kain later commented that Robson was one of the most difficult climbs of his career because of the dangers from snow and ice, stone avalanches, and treacherous weather.

Mount Robson remains a formidable challenge to mountaineers around the world. Steve Jensen, having once been stopped by Robson's hostile environment, inspired Ed Cummings, Tom Russell, Bob Stahlbush, Rick Todd and me to attempt to climb the King of the Rockies. On August 24, 1981, we assembled in Jasper, Alberta. Several of us were freshly returned from other climbs in the area, including Mt. Athabasca (11,452 ft.) (via Normal and Silverhorn routes), Wilcox Peak (9,463 ft.) and Mt. Temple (11,600 + ft.)—all in good weather.

Under warm and clear skies we drove to the base of our objective. There snow and ice sluffed off the flanks of the magnificent south face, which rises over 10,000 feet above the valley. After reading records left by other climbers, we concluded that this overly warm weather created excessive danger from avalanching snow and ice and collapsing snow bridges. Opting to wait for

cooler weather, we decided to entertain ourselves by climbing another peak.

We picked the East Ridge of Mount Edith Cavell (11,033 ft.), a rock ridge also pioneered by Conrad Kain. Tom decided to chase the women in Jasper, while the other five hiked to the col at the base of the long ridge and spent the night in the open among rocks. By sunrise we were climbing up loose scree and intermittent snow and ice to a large shoulder. Above, a more solid rock buttress provided more aesthetic climbing to the East Summit. Traversing past several large cornices, we reached the true summit at noon. On signing the summit register we found the names of Yvon Chouinard, Fred Beckey, and D. Doody entered after completion of their spectacular first ascent of the dangerous North Face in 1965.

The descent took nearly as long as the ascent for several reasons. Halfway down, we sought cover from an approaching electrical storm, which fortunately blew over quickly. Downclimbing unroped on loose rock required patient concentration to avoid falling into the void of the North Face. We also escorted a remarkable dog down from the shoulder. It had followed four Jasper climbers halfway up the peak but was stopped by the rock buttress. Two more thunderstorms poured down before we reached trailhead at dusk.

(Continued next page)

ROBSON (Continued)

Back in Jasper we read the long-range weather reports and concluded that cooler weather would soon arrive. All six made the day-long hike up to Berg Lake. Tom and Bob decided that they would go no further on the climb, but would explore other sights in the area. After waiting out a day's rain, Ed, Ricky, Steve and I started up the Robson Glacier early the next morning.

The going was easy up to the upper Robson Cirque. There we paused to pick out a route through the labyrinth of the Upper Robson Icefall. As we discussed the possibilities, a large section of ice collapsed and tumbled down across our intended route. A minute later another section, about twice the size of the first, collapsed, buried the first, filled in several crevasses, and moved to within 20 feet of where we stood. After this powerful display, the icefall became deathly still.

Now midafternoon, Ricky led us across the freshly fallen blocks of ice and up the icefall. Progress slowed as benign-looking snow ramps revealed themselves to be steep jumbles of broken ice. Further route-finding brought us to a choice: climb up a steep ice wall, or traverse down and to the right with no obvious route up. We chose the ice wall: it appeared to have a weakness through it. In the middle of the lead pitch, I discovered the route was blocked by an overhanging bulge at the top—not climbable when limited by a short rope,

a pack and one ice axe. Ricky followed up halfway, bringing needed extra rope, an ice hammer, and a semblance of a belay. Armed with the two tools and that bit of ice climbing practice gleaned from the icicles in Whiteoak Canyon, I scaled the bulge and anchored into more level ice above. The others followed, greatly relieved to get off the popping ice blocks on which they had been patiently waiting. But by then, daylight had been consumed. We were forced to set up camp on a large ice block in the upper reaches of the icefall.

During the night, the wind increased, the temperature dropped, and clouds moved in. Morning brought calm air, but near white-out conditions. Ricky and I scouted an easy route through the remainder of the icefall and selected a campsite on the snows of the Dome at about 10,300 feet, just below the Kain Face. We fetched Steve and Ed from below where they had been melting snow and packing gear in their precariously perched tent.

When we returned to our upper campsite, the winds were gusting strongly. We pitched the tent without the fly and crawled in. The MSR stove roared for hours melting endless quantities of snow to supply the 12 quarts of water needed for dinner, breakfast, and the climb. Condensation covered the tent walls with fine ice crystals that fell with each

(Continued next page)



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.

PATC MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

Chair	
Martha Hale	762-4769
Vice Chair	
James Eakin	598-6047
Secretary	
Charlie Dorian	362-7523
Treasurer	
Ed Cummings	332-6100

UP ROPE STAFF

Editor	
Lin Murphy	533-8412
Circulation Manager	
Joe Farness	949-2239

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.

ROBSON (Continued)

gust of wind onto clothing and sleeping bags. From below, Tom and Bob saw only one cloud around the upper part of Robson and partly cloudy skies elsewhere.

That night it snowed twelve inches. We awoke at 3:00 a.m. in anticipation of an ascent, however, the continuing snow and gusting wind forced us to stay put in the damp tent. By 9:00 a.m. the winds had subsided, and the snowfall slackened. Whiteout conditions persisted, nevertheless. Food shortage, wetness, and deteriorating weather forced us to abandon our attempt.

Following the wands down to the upper icefall was not too difficult in the all-white surroundings, but picking a new route to avoid the overhanging ice wall was tricky in flat light with fogged glacier glasses. Delicately we groped and poked our way

through the maze of crevasses, crossing narrow and sometimes nonexistent snow bridges. We finally regained our ascent route somewhere below the ice wall. Soon we dropped below cloud level and negotiated a shortcut through the fallen ice by crossing filled-in crevasses.

Steve took the lead below and guided us safely across the Robson Glacier to the Extinguisher Tower. Three more hours through rain brought us to the log shelter at Berg Lake. There we dried out and complimented ourselves on returning safely under such poor conditions.

We immediately began planning for our next attempt. When we return we will be better prepared with the lessons Robson had just taught. Next time we hope to have better weather.

EQUIPMENT REPORTS— ICE SCREWS

The following comparisons are based on the author's personal experience with this equipment while climbing in the Washington, D.C. area. The ice conditions encountered by climbers in this area consist of hard water ice formed on seepages and drainages in local river valleys, road cuts, and quarries. New Hampshire is the preferred destination for extended climbing trips.

Chouinard tubular ice screws are the easiest to place and provide the most reliable, fracture-free placements compared to the other available ice screws and pitons. The Salewa tubular ice screw, perhaps because of its smaller diameter displacement hole, can be more difficult to drive into hard ice and will often fracture brittle ice when penetration is made.

The Lowe Snarg ice piton and the Salewa Wart Hog are designed to eliminate the need for screwing and hammer directly into the ice. This feature can be beneficial, particularly for making fast, one-handed placements on steep ice. However, the hard water ice in the northeast is often difficult to penetrate with this type of tool. The Lowe Snarg ice piton is especially difficult to hammer into hard ice and the threaded Snarg has the further disadvantage of being very time consuming to remove. The fine threading requires many more turns for removal than conventional ice screws. This ice piton may be better suited to a softer, more plastic medium such as glacier ice. The Salewa Wart Hog is easier to drive than the Snarg

and can be placed into hard ice in a relatively short time (sometimes very hard ice prevents complete penetration and requires tying off). Due to a thin profile, it often can provide a secure placement in brittle ice which thicker screws would fracture. However, what is security to the leader is misery for the second. When the ice cannot be shattered around the warts to allow for a screwing removal, these hogs are the most difficult ice protection to remove and must be chopped out completely.

In summary, the Chouinard ice screws avoid most of the negative aspects of other ice screws and pitons and provide the most consistently good placements in hard northeastern ice. Wart Hogs can offer placement speed and avoid shattering in some circumstances. I carry four Chouinard ice screws and two Wart Hogs on my rack.

John Teasdale

Editor's note: In the March–April issue of Summit, Richard Doege compared Chouinard tubular ice screws and the Lowe tubular Snarg. In laboratory tests, the piton broke at 1600 pounds. The screw was intact at 1600 pounds, although the shaft was bent over an inch; at 2500 pounds, the shaft was “quite disfigured” but intact. In a second test, the screw and piton were imbedded some distance apart in lake ice and pulled toward each other by a cable potentiometer placed between them. In this test, the piton broke while the screw remained intact.

RESCUE HOW-TO

Local climbers attended a Blue Ridge (AAC)-sponsored rescue workshop on September 27 at Seneca Rock. John Markwell taught the workshop and began by emphasizing that, before the person who goes for help leaves the scene of the accident, he should be absolutely sure that he can accurately describe to rescuers where the victim is. Someone with a first aid kit will run ahead to the injured climber. The litter team, moving more slowly, will



Tying off an injured leader to permit the belayer to exit the belay system and go for help: (a) Tie a slip-knot (the loop) in front of the belay plate. (b) Tie a figure-eight in the loose end of the rope and clip this with a carabiner to the anchor (see Sallie's right hand). (c) Place a prusik on the taut rope and clip this also to the anchor.

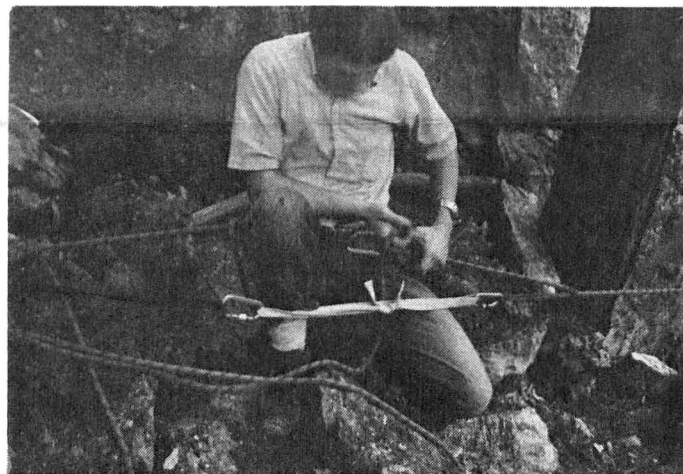


Two belayers are tied in and lower the litter and the litter-bearer. They need to coordinate so the weight is evenly distributed on both ropes.

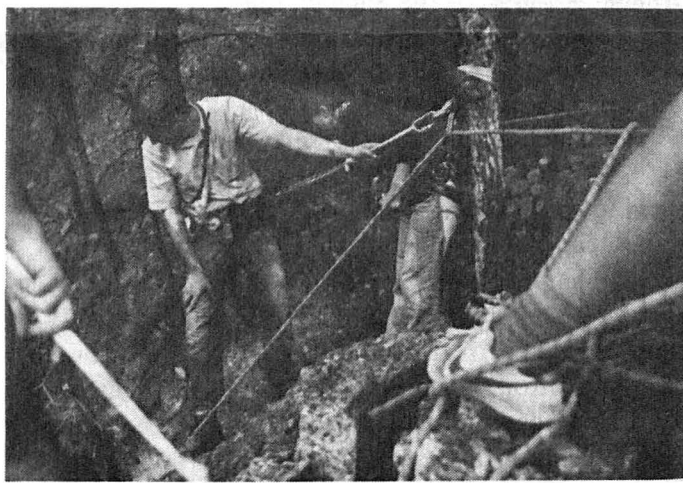
garner people as they pass to help with the rescue.

At the accident scene, someone must take charge and coordinate the helpers, parcelling out the tasks (e.g., rigging the litter, setting up belays, and litter-bearer.)

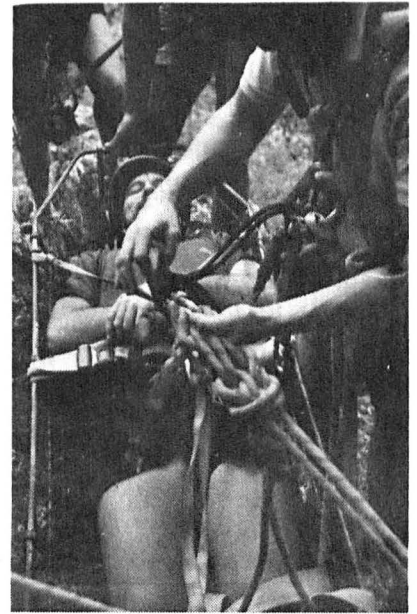
As these photographs illustrate, we practiced tying off a fallen leader, rigging the litter, and lowering it over a short, but nonetheless, impressive, drop.



Release slip knot at the belay plate. The prusik now bears the leader's weight. You should adjust things so that the figure-eight is not slack: should the prusik fail, your leader will drop the length of the slack. Untie from the belay system, and do what's appropriate: prusik up to fallen leader or go for help.



The coordinator and everyone helping is tied in. The two belay ropes feed through a single point. Once the litter is on the way down, the litter-bearer gives directions to the belayers.



The litter is rigged with webbing.

Two ropes (from two belayers) feed into the litter. They are tied together with a figure-eight. Figure eights are also tied in each rope and clipped to the litter. The two ends of the ropes go to (1) the litter-bearer, and (2) the injured person.

The litter-bearer is attached to this system also by an ingenious prusik (see dark perlon in Jeff's hand).



The litter-bearer guides the litter down the drop over bumps and overhangs, keeping it right side up and mostly level. (Note dark perlon taut prusik). This is harder than it may look, and the victim should remain respectful despite being jostled.

photos by Charlie Dorian

PUBLICATIONS

Mexico's Volcanoes, A Climbing Guide, by R.J. Secor. The Mountaineers. 1981. 120 pages. \$6.95.

It's always a pleasure to run across a book that makes you feel that the author really knows what he's talking about. **Mexico's Volcanoes** is such a book. Clearly the result of a love affair between R.J. Secor and his experiences down South, his labors have produced a lean guide for trips on Mexico's "big three"—Popo, Ixta and Orizaba—and four lesser volcanoes (but all are over 14,000 feet high!).

With the publication of this book, there is now an excellent and easily obtained, detailed, and accurate guide to a remarkable area. The volcanoes near Mexico City offer spectacular vistas, but in the midst of casually discarded trash. They can be overrun on weekends, but empty on weekdays. A visit there is memorable and rewarding, but only if you go with an open mind (and heart!).

Chapters on background information, preparations for your trip, and climbing Popocatepetl (The Smoking Mountain), Ixtaccihuatl (The Sleeping Woman), and El Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltepētāl (The Star Mountain)—with routes, vital statistics, and anecdotal information—share appreciated knowledge with the would-be mountaineer and fascinating stories with the arm-chair climber. A chapter on the other volcanoes, for warm-ups or for peak bagging, many pictures and sketches, and the appendices—including a Spanish-English climbing glossary and phrase list round out the book.

I found Mexico's volcanoes excellent for my first big mountains. They offer grandeur, altitude, challenge, and a modicum of risk, and a pleasant reward. I found Mexico itself to be equally rewarding. It has people, ruins, sights, and fantastic cooking. **Mexico's Volcanoes** is an excellent guide to an outstanding vacation.

reviewed by Charlie Dorian

Basin and Range, by John McPhee. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. 1981. 215 pages.

Hiking the Great Basin, by John Hart. Sierra Club. 1981. 372 pages. \$9.95.

Here are two recent books about the Great Basin, the inter-mountain region centered on Nevada and covering parts of Utah, Oregon, California, Idaho and Arizona, a desert, a sag where valley floors may be 6,000 feet above sea level and where peaks rise above 12,000 feet. **Basin and Range** is John McPhee's personal and poetic reaction to the Great Basin. His journey across it on Interstate 80 is a kaleidoscope of geology, history, sociology, and personal observations. McPhee is as fascinated with the science of geology as with the features that science describes: **Basin's** geological terms flow with surrealistic vitality. But such a personal and poetic structure makes McPhee hard to use as reference. Enter a new Sierra Club Totebook to guide you through this high desert country and help with McPhee's personal landscape as well. In straightforward but well-written prose, Hart provides over 200 detailed trail descriptions (accompanied by sketch maps) and introduces the area's geology, animals, plants, history, and environmental issues.

Cascade Alpine Guide: Climbing the High Routes—Rainy Pass to Fraser River, by Fred Beckey. The Mountaineers. 328 pages. \$13.95.

This June the Mountaineers released the third volume of Fred Beckey's series, **Cascade Alpine Guide**. The third volume, **Rainy Pass to Fraser River** covers an area that contains some of the finest country to be found in the North Cascades of Washington and British Columbia: The North Cascades National Park, the Picket Range, the Chilliwacks, the Hozomeen and Okanogan ranges, and the vast Methow region. Beckey provides complete trail, approach and climbing routes on virtually every mountain peak in the area. Routes are shown by means of overlays on oblique aerial photos, by topographic sketches, and special maps. Earlier volumes in the series are **Columbia River to Stevens Pass** and **Stevens Pass to Rainy Pass**.

HANGING AROUND

CAUDEY'S CASTLE, W. VA., October 3, 4
GREENLAND GAP, W. VA., September 26, 27

The "Trips to the Hinterlands" Committee (THC) expected less than crowded conditions. Its expectations were exceeded by a large margin.

James Eakin and I (the entire THC) put up a new route at Greenland Gap on Saturday. James led, so he named it "Scherr Delights". We had picked a line to try from some photos I took, but got lost on the scree slope! Ended up too far left, but climbed anyway. Fourth classed up first pitch (5.2) to ledge. Up right facing corner to roof. Traverse right using underclings on long flake—not much for feet. Exit into gully. Rest. Up gully past small overhang (hard—5.8) to easier climbing to top. Great weather, good day. Sunday spent at Seneca, for the social scene.

Entire THC met at Caudey's Castle next Saturday. Under gray skies and the threat of rain we climbed the obvious central crack on an otherwise unbroken east face. It starts near a big tree—good for tree chimney! Up and slightly left to small three inch wide belay ledge (about 110 feet). Follow cracks up and right then back left to belay near corner on left. (Peek over at the other wall!) Perhaps 60 feet on rounded holds up to big ledge. Then fourth class to summit. Four pitches in all. The view, which is beautiful, improves steadily as you climb. A very rewarding 5.6. Sunday at Seneca, we found that it had been done years before by Howard Doyle. Of course, the pitons we found suggested that it might not be a first ascent after all

Charlie Dorian

NEW UP ROPE STAFF

Joe Farness has taken over the mailing of this venerable newssheet, succeeding Don Kocher who served long and well (often with his son, Mike) in that capacity. Nori Gessler, a new PATC-MS member has volunteered to do the typesetting. UP ROPE now needs only a new editor. After three years it's time to give someone else the chance, the thrills, the burden, the challenge.

MEETING REPORT

It was short and sweet; especially short because we were overflowing with hardmen and other visitors who came to see the film of El Capitan. Patti Lemon proclaimed that Woodstock was indeed returning from Rome, to visit here with his wife for a week or so. Margaret and Chuck Wettling attended.

TAX FALLOUT

The **Internal Revenue Newsletter** reports that Seattle District IRS employees must cope with new casualty loss issues as a result of the eruption of Mount St. Helens. These range from the treatment of real estate that no longer exists to questions of damage caused by the remains of that real estate falling on what was already there.

IRAN BANS MIXED CLIMBING

Iran's Islamic regime has banned boxing and mixed mountain climbing by men and women. Tehran radio stated, "because of numerous complaints, the sport of mountain climbing is to be segregated soon between men and women."

ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION AND GLACIER GLASSES

A 1981 **Canadian Alpine Journal** article states that ultraviolet radiation effects are cumulative and that UV-induced cataracts may develop for 15 to 30 years before interfering with vision. The article cautions that topical anesthetic drops administered to relieve snow blindness delay healing and increase the chance of infection and scarring. In regard to sunglasses, the article states that since some give poor protection against UV radiation their use in extreme cases may be worse than wearing none at all. If only visible radiation is filtered a climber may not be immediately aware that anything is wrong, yet receive a high dose of UV radiation. Without such

glasses, blinking, pupil contraction, or retreat would limit the exposure to harmful UV radiation. One of the authors tested a number of glacier glasses and concluded that REI Mountaineering glasses were "close to ideal. . . blocking close to 100% of the near UV." But the discontinued REI Co-op glasses were ruled exceptionally bad because they were dark in the visible spectrum and very transparent to UV. The ACC May Gazette published a chart based on the above test. Poor ratings were also given to Loubsol and Glacier models and to Salewa Glacier. The authors of the **Journal** article are Barry Hagen, MD, and Bob Nelson, MD.

CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

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.

1718 N St N W
Washington, D. C. 20036

LIBRARY PATC
1718 N ST NW
WASH DC 20036

NONPROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON, D. C.
PERMIT NO. 9615