

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

1718 N Street, N.W. Washington DC 20036

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No. 2

AT BASE CAMP

Outgoing Chairman Tom Russell reported on the January Executive Committee meeting.

Insurance Liability: Over the past months, PATC has had six reexamine its skyrocketing insurance premiums and institute new policies to address the problem. Now only trip leaders who are PATC members will be covered by PATC insurance. PATC General Council meets next Tuesday, and will seek clarification the issue. Trip leader responsibility has been major concern over the past year, committee members have now drawn a working document to presented at the next meeting.

Andy Kauffman noted that the also American Alpine Club is about concerned the increasing litigation in mountaineering and rock climbing. (The Rock Climbing Section of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club is no longer sponsoring climbing outings because it can no longer obtain insurance for any activity involving more than 3rd class climbing.

Kauffman said that the AA will be compiling statistical data on mountaineering and rock climbing NEW PRES BESTOWS KUDOS, OUTLINES '86 AGENDA

I've been asked by <u>Up Rope</u> to share my thoughts with you as to what I have in mind for the Mountaineering Section during 1986.

First, I must again thank those who served in 1985. Chairman Tom Russell did a topnotch job. Section's membership and balance grew. Bull Run came a little closer to becoming accessible. Section acted to send relief to flood victims in West Virginia. And we did an awful lot of climbing. Joe Wagner will be missed at his Up Rope post; his attention to our newsletter has been faithful and welcome. I've also received word that Roger Slakey will be leaving town and his post as the head of our Publicity Committee. We'll miss having Roger take care of John Teasdale that. And indicated that he would like some help with Training. I hope that this doesn't mean that John intends to give this up entirely--I've had good reports from people whose introduction to the Section has been through John's courses. Marcy Logan has stepped down a Nelson House Caretaker, a post Nori Gessler has accepted in addition to her Up Rope editorship. The Nelson House has stayed in good shape during Marcy's (Cont'd on page 6)

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PATC MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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accidents, and looking at ways to unite the climbing community so that we can obtain insurance at reasonable rates.

Another problem that concerns the AA as well as PATC, is that officers and directors of the clubs can be held directly responsible for injuries on a club outing.

Bull Run: Tom reported that the easement has been settled, although the actual recording of the transaction has not taken place.

Seneca Relief: As of last meeting, the Section raised 330.00 for Pauline Huffman. Barb Llewellyn and John Christian took a carload of items to Ms. Huffman. (See article this issue).

The MS is not stopping its efforts to collect goods for the Seneca flood victims. Contact Tom and Barbara if you have items you would like to donate.

Elections: Stuart Pregnall, Pete Grant, and Karen Roussell were elected Chairman, Vice Chairman and Tressurer, by acclaim. Selma Hanel was elected Secretary of the club.

In taking office, Pregnall, voicing the Section's appreciation to Tom Russell for a job well done said, "in the past few years, the club has grown—I see new faces and returning old faces. Whatever it was Tom did, it was good enough to bring in new people and keep the old ones coming back."

UP ROPE STAFF

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UP ROPE is published monthly, except during August, by and for members of the Mountaineering Section of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club of Washington, D.C., Editorial contributions are welcome and should be sent to Editor, Up Rope, Mountaineering Section, PATC, 1718 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 before the 20th of each month.

FIGHTING ALTITUDE SICKNESS ON MT. BLANC

Soft, balmy, the afternoon breeze melted out our fatigue as we lounged at our table. The band from Mittenwald was an unexpected treat, blaring out those cheerful Bavarian melodies which were no less pleasant for being a bit incongruous in Chamonix' main square. Dale hefted a liter of the local brew, pulled a long draft, and planted his mug back on our table. He looked over at me, grinned, and with a twinkle, leaned forward, clapped me on my shoulder and laughed, "you really are a hardheaded bastard!"

I laughed back--"Now what?"

"That helicopter. I couldn't believe that you wouldn't get on it."

"You gotta be kidding! How long have you known me? There was no way you could thought I was gonna wimp out at that point."

You're right. I should have known. But that has nothing to do with it. I was really beat—just When I saw it land, I exhausted. thought, "thank God; now Bob will go down in the chopper, and I'll go down with him, to be sure he's okay. Then you had to get stubborn. You were the one who was sick--I"ve never seen you fold like that--but when you refused it, there was no way I could go down in it. My heart just sank as I watched it lift off and leave us there. You're just always so hardheaded."

Dale's grin had faded a bit as he spoke. But with another draft, we were both laughing again; laughing,

but remembering...

...the helicopter. Its distant whompwhompwhomp had penetrated but not roused my foggy conciousness. Each step called for all my feeble intelligence, all my concentration. I'd been in trouble for a couple of hours, we were all tired, the day was fading fast, a serious slip might pull us all off. Even so, by focusing on each foot placement, my steps were still sure. The Goûter ridge with its safe descent was slowly, slowly drawing The rope ahead went slack. nearer. I looked up from my feet to see Pauli peering back at me, and, fifty yards beyond, the Gendarmerie helicopter settling onto la Tournette, a small outcropping on the ridge we wanted. One crewman had already dismounted; he was signalling us. Not quite comprehending, I asked, "why have they landed? what do they want?"

Pauli, gently: "He wants to

know if you want to come off."

Still resisting, "but we haven't

asked for any help?"

Patiently, "he's probably making a last evening sweep. He must have seen us out on the face. He knows no one should be out here, off any route. He also probably saw that you're in trouble from the way that you're going. Do you want him to take you off?"

"No."

"You're sure?"

"Yes. I'm okay."

"You're sure?"

"Yes. I'm fine. Two hours ago I'd have quit. Especially if I'd known how far to go, how exposed. But now we're all the way down to the ridge. It's safe. I'll be alright going down on it. No thanks."

Pauli turned and waved off the helicopter. The crewman persisted. He wanted me off the mountain. Pauli turned back to me. "He wants to know if you want to go down."

"I said no, I got this far...I'll get the rest of the way." "Are you sure?"

"THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO WAY I'M GETTING ON THE GOD-DAMNED HELICOPTER!"

Pauli shrugged, waved off the rescue bird. Dale and Paul held silent. We slogged over to the ridge. Half an hour later, as it really darkened, we huddled in the Vallot hut, a thousand feet down.

On the morrow, I'd be fine. We'd fail the summit gain. This time, again at la Tournette (15,200 ft) at 8:00 a.m., in perfect weather, I'd feel fit to run the rest of the route—but we'd left Dale at the hut, and Paul would be too exhausted to proceed. A 1,000 ft. climb from the Vallot hut would have finished him. With adequate training, perfect weather, good snow conditions, and a good guide, why had we failed? And failed not once, but twice?

We had rendezvoused Chamonix a week earlier. Dale Cloyd, Paul Reinman and I were old military and climbing friends. comrades in misadventures, official and unofficial, on three continents over thirteen years. Pauli Seitz was a guide from Mittenwald whom we all knew and liked. Those first few days we had done some relatively easy climbs together. At no time had we ascended past 12,500 feet, and most of the time had been spent well below that. Apart from some mild headaches, none of us had had any notable altitude problems. wanted Mt. Blanc. A traverse, via Mt. Blanc du Tacul and Mt. Maudit would be interesting, with descent via the Grand Mulets. This route would pose a long day, but not one of excessive technical difficulty.

We caught the day's first telepherique out of Chamonix about 7:00 a.m. Relaxing as we zipped up from 3,000 ft. to over 12,000 feet atop the Aiguille du Midi in under twenty minutes, we noted no apparent problem from the altitude change.

Our first task was a quick 1,000 ft. drop to the Col du Midi. The day was brilliantly clear, the air relatively still. We warmed up fast. The 1,500 ft. climb up to the shoulder to Mt. Blanc du Tacul deemed a surprisingly long slog, but posed no technical problem. As we rose, we felt the height in our breathlessness, felt otherwise well. Noon was approaching as we crested the shoulder. Since we were later than we had planned, Pauli elected to skip the 300 ft. climb up to the summit of Mt. Blanc du Tacul, and to press straight for Mt. Blanc itself.

The afternoon passed on a high traverse over easy ground under a blazing sun. We flanked Mt. Maudit to its north, crossed the Col de la Brenva, and paused for a brief 14,000 ft., and I still felt good. I downed a half quart of water and some munchies. Gazing up from my snack to a far off ridgeline, I noticed that the distant peaks seemed doubled. "Must be more tired that I feel," I thought as I tried to align the doubled images. To my surprise, I simply couldn't they persisted. merge them. Looking to my hands, I that nearer objects united properly into one image; back up to horizon my sight was doubled. I pondered this apparent neuromuscular deficit for a moment, the delusion of clinical detatchment protecting me from the realization that the problem was almost certainly altitude related, and a harbinger of worse to come.

When I mentioned my problem to partners, they quickly agreed my needed to speed The fastest progress. Our problem: route down lay over the summit 1,500 above us. Our course now steepened considerably, and as we set off, I found that my wind had gone. Each group of three or four steps was purchased only by stopping to This dysapnea was sudden, and totally disproportionate to that of my comrades. Perhaps the increasing slope had unmasked a process that been stealing up on unnoticed. At any rate, within half an hour all of us could tell that I'd never made it up another 1,200 feet summit. I could barely breathe where we stood. Pauli opted for a traverse northwest around the summit to the Gouter Ridge. traverse of perhaps a half mile at 14,300 feet. This distance was to take up close to an and a half over easy potentially treacherous ground: inch or so of windpack over an ice base of a 30° slope with several hundred feet of dropoff a hundred yards or so below our line.

Standing still, leaning on my axe, I didn't feel too bad. Looking at my feet, I could ignore the doubled distance. A mere three or four traversing steps, though, and I'd be immobilized by gasping for relief. My inability slowed us to a All the others seemed fine. crawl. All the others were fine. Couldn't quit. No place to stop. Sun setting. Colder. Too slow to stay warm. Each step, gasp, sure. Gasp, gasp, no slips, gasp, in this stuff, gasp, qasp. Absolutely amazing, gasp, how fast, gasp, gasp, gasp, my strength, gasp, had faded, gasp. Not right, gasp, to risk, gasp, gasp, my friends, gasp, gasp, because, gasp, gasp, you're weak, Stop and breathe, gasp. breathe, deep breathe. Paul: "Keep going, Bob,"

am." Right, gasp, foot. gasp, left, gasp, foot, gasp, axe, gasp, gasp, right, gasp, foot, gasp, gasp, left, gasp, foot, gasp, axe, gasp, gasp, gasp, right, gasp, foot, left, gasp, whomp, gasp, whompwhomp, foot, whomp, gasp, gasp, whompwhomp, gasp, whompwhompwhomp. Why, gasp, is that, gasp, helicopter, gasp, gasp, landing? Rage. There is heat in rage, strength in fury. Had I come all this way, imperilled my best friends so I could scuttle off the mountain, and then, in Chamonix, my strength restored by the lowland airs, saunter off a helicopter? When we'd reached the ridge on our own? When a fast descent on a safe route promised its own relief? When the next day held a new chance? NO WAY!

An hour later, I sat in the gloom of the unlit Vallot hut. With the thousand foot drop, sitting still and warm, I felt alright-beat, alright. My head seemed clear. for my sight, who could tell in the dark anyway? Was I kidding myself? A thousand feet doesn't seem much. much, perhaps, but mavbe Actually, it didn't enough! matter...we were stuck for the night. No more choices, no more effort. One thing did remain. My head was clear enough to remember that in the mountains food and fluid strength. I wasn't hungry. I wasn't thirsty even though my throat was so dry it hurt. The bread and cheese tasted like dirt. They stuck in my mouth, then in my throat. Force them down-now again. Then water. One mouthful at a time, slowly I got down a half quart, then another. knew it would make the difference when the sun rose.

Morning broke clear, glorious. I crawled out of the hut, into the sun. How was I doing? Great! I felt great! The distant peaks were sharp, clear, singe in image. I walked with ease, rapidly loosening the muscles cramped by a night on the floor of the hut. I was bursting with energy. The summit loomed a mere 1,500 ft. above me, at most two hours away on a route two-thirds of which I'd descended yesterday. Piece of cake-we had it! Today I'd be up and down before the altitude could get me.

Next out was Dale. He looked a bit unsteady. He tied in. He looked around, then untied out. "I'm played out, Bob. Just weak from yesterday,

I guess. You guys go up. I'll pick you up here on the descent."

He didn't look sick, hust exhausted and weak. "Dale, when we got in last night, what did you do?"

"I crawled into the bivvy sack and tried to sleep."

"Did you eat or drink anything?"
"No. Too tired."

So that was the problem. He'd be okay on the descent, though, especially if he started to drink now—he still had a couple of hours to rehydrate and replenish before we'd get back from our summit bid. Then I remembered—Dale and Paul had shared the same two—man bivvy sack. "Paul—did you eat or drink when we got in last night?"

"Nope, too tired."

So. This wasn't going to be so easy after all. I'd spent the night recuperating; my friends, anything, were worse off than they'd been when we'd reached the hut. Paul, though, was still game. Paul, Pauli, and I roped up and started up. We reached la Tournette again. the point where we'd reached the Goûter ridge from our traverse the night before. There Paul called it quits. "Can't do it. Sorry." I felt fit to run the rest of the way, but there was naught to do but turn back with him. We had a long descent ahead of us; I had to respect his judgement about his own strength, especially in view of the lack of complaint from any quarter when I'd failed the day before.

What's the lesson? Several, and all, as usual, old ones. Hours on a altitude traverse, with inadequate acclimatication, had given us enough time to develop the effects of altitude illness. The fact that I most stricken was was perhaps chance, perhaps due to my greater (age confers relative protection). A surprisingly brief descent had restored me. Fatigue, anorexia, and lack of thirst had obscured their true needs for water and food from my friends.

failure to replenish left them both sapped the next day when I was primed for the top. If we had wanted the traverse of Mt. Blanc, we should have taken a few days above 10,000 ft. to acclimatize ourselves. Barring such preparation, a rapid ascent to the summit, with immediate descent would have avoided the hours at altitude that mountain sickness needs to set in. Once in the hut, forced food and fluids would have restored my friends as it did me. The conditions had been perfect throughout. We had failed through lack of thought and discipline. Next time...we wouldn't make these mistakes again.

-Bob Gasser

(Cont'd from page 1)

tenure, and we all thank her for that.

Okay, so where do I want to guide the Mountaineering Section over the next year?

First—continue the Section's growth. I want to broaden our representation in the area, and that means new members. I'm looking for Hospitality and Membership Committee person to tackle that job. organization seeks dynamic persons to expand base membership. Must be willing to travel. resumes to PATC-MS Chairman."

Second—resolve some of the issues facing us that may alter the Section's present structure. These issues are: 1) liability and insurance; 2) trip leader guidelines, and 3) safety guidelines. These are dull, boring, bureaucratic, papershuffling issues that we must nevertheless address.

Fourth—encourage more Section activity. This means more climbing, more trash removal, more membership participation, more climbing, more cooperation and coordination with other outdoors groups, more climbing, more DuPont Villa, more climbing. You get the ides. I'm counting on

Pete Grant to continue the trend he and I began last year by scheduling trips to interesting places such as Caudey's Castle and Stover State Park/Stoney Ridge. Let's do some exploring this year. So if there's something you'd like to become involved with, let me know.

Finally, I don't want to get in the way of our slide show. If our monthly meetings go on and draaag, stage a coup, relive me of my duties, and get on with the fun.

SENECA RELIEF

On Monday, December 16, John Christian and I drove out to Seneca with a check for \$330--the amount we had collected by December 11-and a carload to household goods (towels, sheets, blankets, kitchenware, dishes, etc .-- the kinds of things our adoptee, Pauline Huffman indicated her family needed most). The transfer went very smoothly and naturally, aided in large part, I think, by the fact that she knew John Christian already. very grateful, but relaxed, remarkably cheerful, considering that the flood had been her 56th birthday present, and she was living, at the moment, with one of her relatives in a two-room trailer.

We asked her to let us know, through John Markwell, if there was anything else she needed, or needed more of, in the immediate futures, after she had a chance to look through the things. At the moment, she obviously has no room for larger items, like furniture. In a call to John Markwell on January 7, he said he thought she was pretty well fixed up for now, considering her current available space, but that he would check with her and let us know.

-Barb Llewellyn

NELSON HOUSE

Nelson Gap road is now truly impassable for anyone but the most intrepid in all-terrain vehicles. Friday night Gary Beil and I parked near the one-room schoolhouse (the road is O.K. to that point, although some might not agree) and slogged through the mire to Nelson House at 2:00 in the morning.

Saturday dawned Springlike. James Eakin, Selma Hanel, Gary and I drove to Davis, optimistic that behind the next ridge would be miles of white. It was not to be. At the White Grass Ski Touring Center, people in T-shirts and muddy knees were portaging from snow patch to snow patch.

The wax-of-the-day slate bore the dreaded words, "Red Klister". I hid my Gore-Tex and new synchilla pullover, tied back my hair, rolled up my sleeves and squeezed the rambunctious red stuff onto my skis.

James used a sort of klister aerosol which, although initially tidier, required several messy reapplications on the trail.

Off we slogged. The snow was somewhat better on the higher, north facing sections of trail. Near the top of Old Baldy, three deer bounded through the wet snow and crashed down the mountainside.

We made the most of sorry conditions. Dodging rocks, sticks and run-off debris is wonderful for balance...and like the man with the hammer, it felt so good when we stopped.

Much later, rehydrating with hot cider at the warming hut, we met up with Clair Witt, Rich Cunningham, Bob Gasser, and Tom Russell who had driven up that morning.

A muddy midnight trudge got us back to Nelson House, where Bill Smith, up with his family, had built a rip-roaring fire in the wood stove. What with the heat, the flies, the



sodden wool and polypro underwear, the cabin soon took on a monkeyhouse reek. Space on the porch was fiercely contended for.

It rained all night, and the morning was again, Aprillike. Having breakfast at Rocks View and staring at the rain shrouded cliffs, the hopes of even most zealous among us were dashed, and we straggled home.

End Notes

The Nelson House was unharmed by the recent flooding. However the driveway was washed out, and the spring will need some excavating. Nearly every gully from the top of the hollow to the second gate was ravaged by enormous mudslides.

A Department of Soil Conservation team surveyed the area on Saturday, and may do some repair work in Nelson Hollow on the streambed and road. They are presently returning streams in the area to their pre-flood courses—a process called rechannelization.

Tom discovered a working pump by the Schoolhouse's outhouse that can be used for hair- and dishwashing, though not for drinking.

-Nori Gessler

SUMMER IN THE SELKIRKS

The Alpine Club of Canada is holding its General Mountaineering Camp this year in one of the premier climbing and hiking areas in the Canadian mountains. It will be a two-week camp based at Fairy Meadows in the northern Selkirk Mountains.

The peaks are all granitic and offer great rock and snow/ice climbing. An outfitter will supply essential services and all gear will be helicoptered in and out. During the second week there will be guides. Cost will be about \$380/week (about \$300 US) plus \$33 for membership in the ACC.

This would be a great opportunity for climbers of all degrees of ability to do rock and snow/ice climbing in a spectacular mountain environment. The climbing would be similar to that in the Bugaboos (but uncrowded).

I am planning to go for 1 or 2 weeks. I would like to hear from others who would be interested. One can go with or without a climbing partner. There will be people there who know the area and with whom one might join. Or in the second week one could join a guided party.

Since the camp will get filled early, let me hear from you ASAP. I plan to get my application in by March.

References: Interior Ranges of British Columbia, 1971, pp. 66-80; numerous articles in AAC Journal (eg: 1985, vol. 27, p. 217) and ACC Journal.

-John Christian

REVIEWS HARDWARE/SOFTWARE

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA ICE CLIMBER'S GUIDE

Directions and general descriptions for 24 ice climbing areas now available for \$2.00 from Mike Pantelich, 1002 Brethour Court, Sterling, VA 22170 (703/430-2496). This <u>Guide</u> does not describe specific routes, since they are likely to vary somewhat from year to year, but unless you already have this kind of information in head or at hand, the <u>Guide</u> seems well worth the price for anyone who is interested in finding climbable ice in this part of the country.

-Contributed by Lloyd MacAskill

CHRISTIAN CARVES CALMAS, GETS RELIEF FROM BLACK TOES

I don't regard losing big toenails as a badge of courage, nor do I believe in the need to suffer to do something I like to do like rock climbing. So, wanting some relief from narrow-toed climbing shoes I took a knife to my new Calmas. made one cut from the tip of the sole upward through the rand and backward to the beginning of the tongue (see sketch). I put the shoe on and my foot forced the rand apart at the cut about 1/4" and it felt reasonably comfortable. Off with shoe, stuffed the toe with newspapers to keep the same openness of the cut, and worked in a piece of Saran wrap to cover the exposed newspaper. Then squeezed (Cont'd on page 9)

EDITOR'S CHIMNEY

Never thought it would happen: Trav's, haunt for rowdies and rednecks, climbers and strollers, bikers in black leather and businessmen in gray three-piece suits served its last bowl of chili garnished with onions and a napkin of Kraft American. (Don't forget the Sneaky Pete Louisiana Hotsauce.) At Trav's, it was O.K. to crush up the saltines and mush them in with everything else. It, like its patrons, had a few rough edges.

Beer came in heavy chipped glass mugs, although sometimes they'd throw in a plastic ringer, and you'd douse yourself with draft, miscalculating the heft.

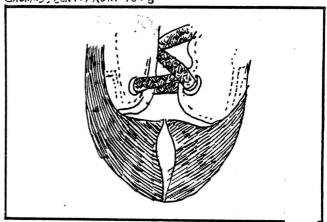
There was a ragged line of red vinyl-covered stools at the bar. Most of them had lost their floor bolts, so you could veer and cant and free-The booths were highbacked wheel. dark wood partitions, reminiscent of pews, polished by years of fidgeting bottoms to a fine old patina. And the tables? Thick slabs of oak bearing the intials of lovers and friends, the old carvings black, seasoned by countless greasy elbows and chili spills, the newer ones raw and pale. Mine are there, aren't yours?

The women's room had an ancient pedestal sink with evil mineral stains in the bowl and knobby porcelain handles that read "cold" and "hot" even though you only got rusty warm. You'd wring your hands dry, or wipe them on the seat of your pants rather than use the pulldown towel that had never been washed, The toilet is best left unever. described. Grafitti was innocent: "Ricky + Carmen = True Love"; or scatalogical: "S-t or Go Blind". No philosophical musings on those walls.

Trav's had seen everything slamming in and out of its screen door—killings in the parkinglot, drunken brawls, lovers' trysts, nursing babies, good times, bad times—a crazy quilt sewn from the whole cloth of life.

The doors are closing for six months of renovation. When they open, you can bet they wont be made of rusty screen or bang on their hinges. And you can bet the new won't replace the old.

CALMAS, CONT. FROM PG. 8



in many layers of plastic rubber (available in hardware stores. Shoe Goo for running shoes would probably work equally well) until it was at least as thick as the original rubber. When it was partially cured I took out the newspaper and with some difficulty got the Saran wrap separated from the plastic rubber. Then put a short stick crossways in the toe box to keep the cut spread and tried to smooth the plastic rubber on the inside.

I have used the Calmas several times and the patch is holding well. The plastic rubber appears to be harder than the rand. Oh yes...my toes are happier!

-John Christian

CLIMBER'S CALENDAR

For program information, call PATC tape (202/638-5306) during daytime; for trips call the leader or Tom Russell (301/869-8058). Day trips to toprope or short multipitch climbs require no partner. Weekend trips (identified with an asterisk*) are to lead climbing areas. Please arrange for your own climbing partner(s) in advance.

March and February rock climbs will be announced. Ice climbing and cross country skiing will be organized on an impromptu basis, depending on weather, ice or snow. Call Stuart Pregnall at 202/338-6140 if interested.

Feb. 5	Executive Committee Meeting/Paul Torelli 301/299-8039
Feb 13	Monthly Section Meeting, PATC HQ, 8 p.m. Business and Program (to be announced)
Mar 5	Executive Committee Meeting
Mar 12	Monthly Section Meeting, PATC HQ, 8 p.m. Lila Bishop Trekking in Bhutan





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