

Up the Nose

FOUNDED BY
HERB AND JAN CONN

April 1995

Vol. 50 no. 2

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

WINTER TREKKING IN NEPAL'S WILD WEST

Relatively tired of the crowded trails in the Annapurna and Solu Khumbu regions, and feeling the need to discover some new country, I decided to "Go West," a somewhat ambitious project, particularly in January. But after spending almost two weeks in over-crowded, over-polluted, aggressive and noisy Kathmandu, even the thought of possibly spending a week snow-bound in my little Westwind tent was no deterrent.

My plan was to trek in the Dolpo region, first to Rara Lake, a roundtrip of about eight or nine days north from Jumla, and then on to Dunai and Phoksumdo Lake, northwest of the Dhaulagiri Himal.

After obtaining the necessary trekking permits, I hired a couple of porters/guides in Kathmandu and sent them off by bus to Nepalgarj loaded with the supplies we would need.

Rara Lake (9,800 ft.) is a clear lake three miles long and the largest body of water in Nepal. It is located in the middle of Rara Lake National Park, probably the least-visited national park in the world. If you ever want to get away from the hordes, you won't be disappointed. We met only a few local people travelling from one rare village to another, a group of about 25 Tibetan traders, and several "trains" of goats carrying their homespun side packs loaded with salt. I attracted a good deal of attention in Jumla, and everywhere else, as "the very first tourist" they had ever seen in winter. The police at the checkpoints weren't quite sure what to make of me, and they never seemed totally convinced that I was there, alone with a bunch of Sherpas, for nothing else but my own pleasure.

The peaks in western



MS member Anne Baron recently returned from her fifth trekking tour of Nepal. Anne's latest sojourn took her into the remote areas of western Nepal.

Nepal are not quite as high as in the central and eastern regions, but from the information I was able to gather locally, most are unclimbed. The region is a large and sparsely populated area, with vast forests, blue pine, hemlock, fir and the tallest spruce I have ever seen, topping over 150 feet, and numerous, long, winding high ridges, called "lekhs," rising between 12,000 and 17,000 feet, and reaching back to the southern ridges of the Dhaulagiri. I was told that the Nepali government is planning on "pushing" the area in the future, to relieve the pressure from the Annapurna and Solu Khumbu.

Being completely new to the area, we hired a local guide, a dark-skinned Chetri named Chandrah. He was friendly, strong and helpful; unfortunately, he also knew every single short-cut in the area. We started by

EXECUTIVE MEETING

To Precede May 10 MS Meeting

There will be an executive officer's meeting on May 10, at 7:15 p.m., right before the regular monthly meeting starts at 8 p.m. All MS members are invited to participate in the executive session. (And there are probably a few committee assignments available for you willing volunteers.) Put it on your calendar. See you there.

LEAD-CLIMBING

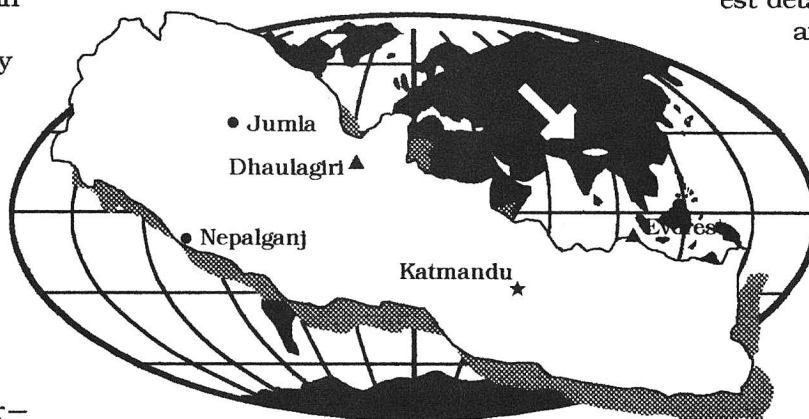
Session Slated For Seneca

The first lead-climbing weekend of the season is set for April 22-23. Check the Climber's Calendar on the back page for details and contact person.

sunny and clear weather, and I stripped down to a T-shirt while climbing the first of a number of high passes: Danphya Lagna (12,000 ft.), right above Jumla. The temperature dipped to way below freezing at night. By the next afternoon, we were in the middle of a snow storm, and when it finally stopped, the snow was waist high. The going was pretty rough, breaking trail while dropping several thousand feet into V-shaped gorges in short, awfully-steep switchbacks to tiny villages—some of them abandoned for the winter—only to climb immediately back up again.

Worse luck for me was a trail already travelled by local people. Walking either barefoot or wearing thin sneakers, they left behind a narrow and “wavy” sort of duck-walk trail of hardened and slick snow—impossible to follow in my big plastic boots. My

porters were happily falling in their tracks. I was unhappily trying to break my own trail on the side, sinking, falling over, sweating and swearing, in the end moving back into the snaky



tracks, kicking furious steps so my feet would fit in, walking like Charlie Chaplin and looking as if I had downed a bottle of Chang for breakfast. My mood was particularly foul when I discovered that Wong Chu, my head porter/guide, had decided, in his infinite ignorance and great cunning, to leave

my snow shoes behind in Jumla. It certainly did not improve my mood to know that it was my own fault. After so many trips, I should know that, no matter how good or knowledgeable the Sirdar/guide appears to be, every smallest detail must be checked and rechecked personally.

Thanks to Chandrah, we did not get lost—a real and somewhat scary possibility—we always found water, and a reasonably flat place for the tents, including the flat, dirt-roofs of houses. Not a bad

solution in itself; the snow was usually cleared and the ground not so cold.

Thirteen days later, we were back in Jumla, surprising the Himalayan Lodge owner who was already betting on our demise. We started the next day for Dunai, but another snow storm

UPROPE BETA BOX: Getting to Nepal

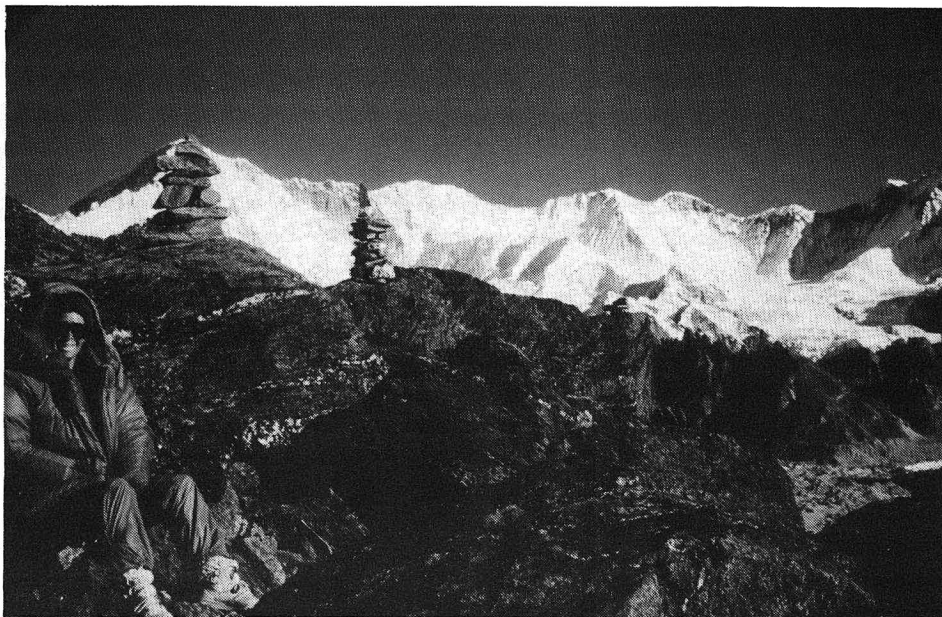
Nestled between Tibet and India, Nepal is home not only to the Himalayan mountains—but to some of the world's highest and most difficult and dangerous trekking routes.

Getting there: My plan was to trek in the Dolpa region, first to Rara Lake, a roundtrip of about eight or nine days north from Jumla, and then on to Dunai and Phoksumdo Lake, northwest of the Dhaulagiri Himal. It involved flying, via Royal Nepalese Airlines, to Nepalganj, in southwest Nepal, and catching a connecting flight to the packed-earth STOL (short takeoff and land) airfield close to Jumla, a rough, frontier-type of hill town.

In the two and a half years since my last visit, I found a Kathmandu that is no longer the “Shangi-La” for Westerners in search of “exotic charm.” By any standard, it has become overcrowded, and that was during the “off season.” The pollution is comparable to that of Mexico City and the crime rate is not far behind. The traffic din is deafening. The “Honk Please” admonition, painted on the rear end of all trucks and buses is enthusiastically obeyed—unlike any other traffic laws.

On the good news side, Mike's Breakfast has re-opened in a new location, identical to the old one, and Kathmandu now boasts a good French baker called “Hot Breads,” a brand new Italian pizzeria, “Fire and Ice,” and an even-newer small (four or five tables) and exceedingly hip restaurant, located in Thamel, called “Simply Shutters.”

Expect the unexpected: After six days of waiting for a Nepalganj-to-Jumla flight—and despite having booked, reserved and confirmed the seats—I had to find an alternate means to make the flight. I finally decided to join the cargo on an MI17 helicopter, flown by Russian pilots. It was not cheap, but it definitely was leaving. My porters had no complaints.



Anne Baron, at the summit of Gokyo Ri, 17,700 Feet, Solu Khumbu.

area of Nepal was nothing like I had ever seen or imagined. I was constantly told that no tourist ever came that way, for all sorts of various reasons. I certainly don't regret having been there, but I am not sure I would recommend it to anyone. Surkhet had all the charm of a poor and rough, end-of-the-road small town, offering no incentives to linger.

The bus left at four in the afternoon (on time, surprisingly) and was due to reach Kathmandu the next morning around 9 a.m., giving me plenty of time during the ride to consider that—in spite of surviving several really close calls on my trek—I might still not make it back after all.

~Anne Baron

was waiting for us. After spending two days in my sleeping bag, listening to the snow dumping on the tent and the lively snoring of the guys, I decided to retreat back to Jumla. Laughing in anticipation, my crew figured they would be treated to a return helicopter trip. I had other plans. With about 14 days to spare, and no desire to spend them in Kathmandu, I decided we would walk out to Surkhet (south of Jumla), where we would catch a bus back to Kathmandu. "Can't be done. Too much snow. Not enough time. Too dangerous. The passes might be closed," they said. They tried hard for that helicopter ride, but having talked to the locals and gathered all the information I needed, I just smiled and lit a fire under Wong Chu's backside. We made it in 12 days.

The trail was varied, starting in high snows, travelling over a number of high and steep passes (11,000 ft. or more), little by little, dropping down to lower lands and warmer climates, passing through small and very poor villages, crossing the largest Sal tree forest in Nepal. One entire morning was spent fording the many bends of an icy cold river, sometimes waist high. This



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HOSTS "BEST OF BANFF" FILM FEST

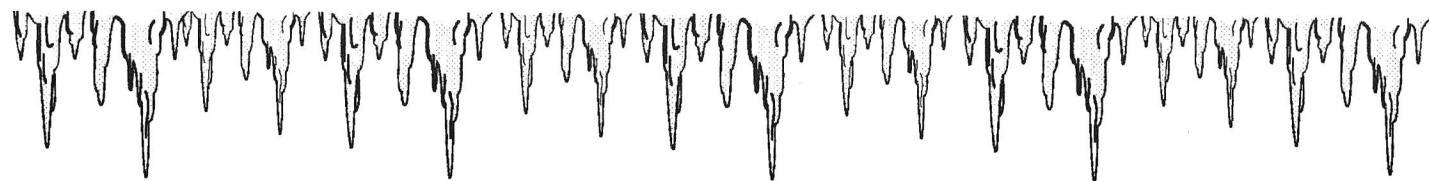
Five separate award-winning films from the "Banff Festival of Mountain Films" played to a packed auditorium last month. It was the first time the "Best of Banff" tour has stopped in Washington, DC, and National Geographic's first opportunity to host the event. The five award winners included two films of exceptional note: the winner of the Best Film on Climbing ("Banana Mango Mix II," about a 1993 Spanish attempt to summit the Great Trango Tower via a new route), and the double-winner of the People's Choice Award and Best Film on Mountain Culture, "Zongman and the Cormorant's Egg," about the life of a South China fisherman who practices the ancient tradition of using cormorants to catch fish. The portrait of Zongman's life and relationship with his 12 birds was fascinating. The three other films

shown were: "L'esprit de la coupe d'Icare", a French documentary covering a paragliding festival in Grenoble, France; "30 years of CMH Heli-skiing", chronicling heli-skiing in western Canada from the 1960s-90s, and "I really wanna know", which had plenty of action-packed scenes of white-water rafting on British Columbia's Ottawa River.

The films were culled from an original group of 117 films submitted by 21 countries to the festival. That list was further trimmed to around 35 finalists, each vying for one (or more) of seven prizes. With luck, National Geographic can be persuaded to ask the festival for a return engagement next March or April. If you want to try and attend the Banff, Alberta festival in person, this year's fest will run Nov. 3-5.

~Tony Sanders

LOOKING FOR THE ICEMAN



Ice!, ice!, where's the ice? That was our pondering when we arrived to Keene Valley, New York for the annual MS ice climbing trip this past January. It seemed that El Niño was playing another one of his pranks. The weather was so warm that we should have brought our shorts and flip-flops instead of Gore-tex suits and crampons. What a contrast to last years trip with twenty below zero temperatures.

Peter Hsi and I arrived at Ed and Ann's Rock and River on Friday afternoon, after 10 hours of beautiful, sunny and warm driving weather. We were the first ones to get there, since everyone else was leaving after work on Friday evening. After checking in, we went to do a little chimney climbing (literally) inside the lodge. Eight 5.9's and four Sam Adams later, we were ready for dinner. NOTE: If you like good German food, the Alpine Cellar in Lake Placid is a great place to go. The Combination Platter for two is a good way to get a taste of several of their specialties. It is reasonably priced, and very fulfilling. Also, they have a great selection of German beers.

The next morning we got up around 6:30 am, had a little breakfast, and got ready for some possible ice climbing. Over dinner the previous evening we decided that, if after inspecting the ice conditions there, if we found that they weren't good, we would go onto New Hampshire, in search of

climbable ice. The weather was sunny and beautiful but warm (as in "let's go to the beach" warm).

The first climb we checked was Roaring Brook Falls. As the name says, it was a roaring water fall. Overnight it had melted mostly and was unclimbable.



The view down Tuckerman Ravine from the summit.

Next on the list was Chouinard's Gully. From across the semi-frozen pond it seemed to have some ice left to climb, so we suited up, and went for a closer look. After rounding the pond and jumping over a couple of streams we got to the base of the climb. Well let me tell you, again, the place was a waterfall. The ice was very thin, and it would have been very foolish to try to climb in those conditions. So off to New Hampshire we went.

After six hours driving, which included several stops at climbing stores along the way, we arrived at Frankenstein Cliffs, near Crawford Notch and New Hampshire's White Mountains. The cliffs didn't have any climbable

ice either, but it looked to be a wonderful place to climb when adequate ice forms. We definitely have to go back there again! Note: There is an AMC hostel one mile from the climbs.

Next? Mount Washington! We arrived in the evening, and checked out the facilities at the Pinkham Notch AMC Campground and Visitor's Center. (See Beta Box.) North Conway seemed to be a happening town. It is a tourist and climbing town with five ski slopes in the area. The place was somewhat crowded with skiers. The weather forecast was for more very warm days, and the ice climbs in Tuckerman Ravine, and in Huntington Ravine were subject to ice ava-

lanches. Peter and I decided to check out more climbing stores. At I.M.E. (International Mountain Equipment), we asked for some beta on the climbs. The answer? Don't climb! Upstairs, we saw some of the equipment that the New England Everest Expedition used. After a couple of bows and prayers in front of the Boots and Ice Axe that had touched the top of the world, we decided to go to dinner. We stayed at the Comfort Inn in North Conway. (\$50.00 per night) Hint: Don't try the Chinese restaurant located across the street. Horrible food!

The next morning's forecast was for sunny and warm (upper 50's), so we were off to do some hiking. Since neither Peter nor I

had ever been there before, it seemed a good time to gather some beta. We took the Tuckerman Ravine Trail which starts at the AMC Campground in Pinkham Notch. With lightweight backpacks, we headed up the Tuckerman Ravine trail, which starts at 2,022 feet and is wide. Some parts were very icy, so much so that we had to use our crampons. Our first objective was to go up the Lion's Head Trail to the Alpine Garden (5,300 ft.) and back down, but because it was getting late, we decided instead to take the Fire road to the Harvard Cabin (3,538 ft.). The hike took under 2 hours. (I would add another hour or so to that if carrying climbing and overnight gear.)

From the cabin we headed toward Huntington Ravine (4,039 ft.) to get a closer look at the gullies. The approach above tree line to the bottom of the climbs went over some snow patches and 3rd Class scrambling. We would post hole our feet at times into the running water under the snow. Odel's Gully had a huge crack on the right ice flow. It looked as though it might be about to crumble at any moment. It took about an hour to get to the bottom of the gully from the

Harvard Cabin. After shooting a couple of pictures, we traversed to Pinnacle Gully. There was a party of three climbers already on it. Half way up the first pitch the leader backed down, a smart move considering the ice was in really poor condition, and chunks were falling in some places.

Pop! Pop! Fiss! Fiss!....Oh, how I would have loved to have had a nice cold beer right then, but settled for hot-cocoa and granola bars. The party of three whizzed by us glissading, jumping, and running. It looked as though they probably had some cold brews waiting for them at the cabin. More pictures and down we went! It took about one hour to get back to the Harvard Cabin. The only people at the cabin were the three climbers, who were from Quebec. But very disappointingly, no brewskies!

Cerveza, Bier, Brew, Malted Water, Suds..... That's what kept me going for the one- and- a - quarter hour trek back to the AMC Camp. There were two Sam Adams waiting for us in the trunk. After guzzling them down, we removed the crampons from our Flip-Flops and headed back home!

~Ozana Halik

MISTER SAFE-T'S TIAS FOR SAFE CLIMBING

About this column

One weekend last fall, I saw a pair of climbers at Great Falls using a top rope with a single anchor off one smallish, semi-dead tree, two non-locking biners, and climbing a traversing route off to the side of the anchor. Yikes! Most of my climbing friends have similar tales of climbers endangering themselves needlessly.

To help prevent this type of situation, I thought newcomers could benefit from some helpful hints in a column of observations from my 15 years of climbing. For those other MS members who have experience and comments for safe climbing, please feel free to contribute to this column.

I hope to cover such topics as: retiring old equipment (or old partners), altitude sickness, helmets (you really should wear one), basic racks for natural gear routes, rappelling practices, and many more. If you are new to the sport, feel free to send in questions. I will also try to pull some relevant discussions from the rec.climbing Internet newsgroup.

Lots of climbers have their own ideas about what constitutes safe or unsafe climbing practices and not all will agree 100% with what I have to say. There are, however, certain generally-accepted rules and recommendations. Use your best judgment and learn from experienced people you know and trust.

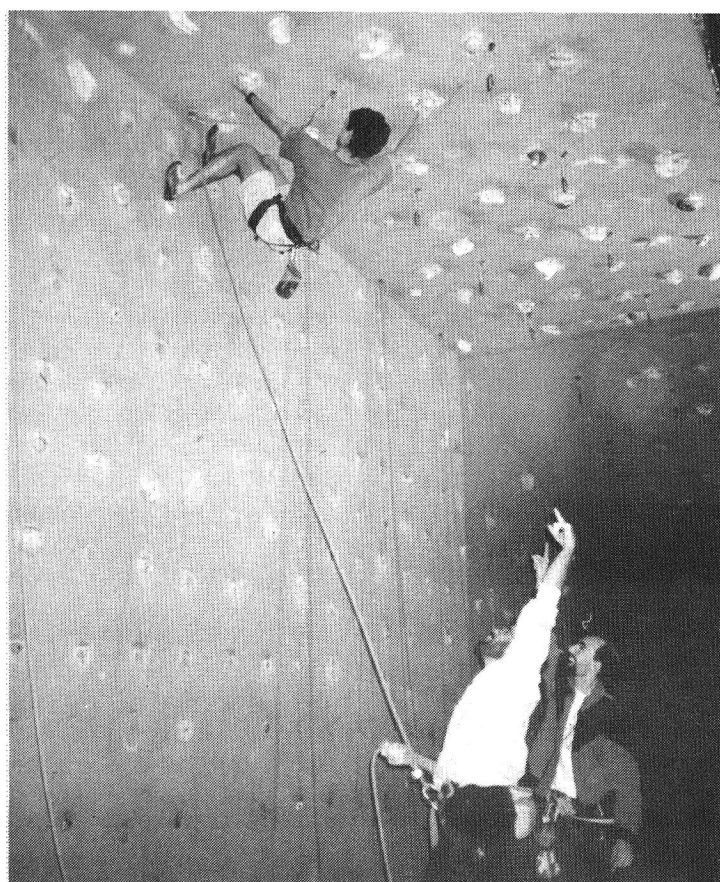
The Mountaineering Section runs weekend trips where you can get hands-on experience following the safety practices described here. This month's weekend trips are on April 1, 8 and 29. Check the PATC-MS climber's calendar on the back page of this issue for details.

UPROPE BETA BOX:

Mt. Washington's overnight facilities

The AMC Campground and Visitor Center (where it is required that you Sign-in and Sign-out) has the following great facilities: parking; bathrooms with showers; a lodge house with sleeping bunks; a restaurant; and a gift shop, which rents and sells some gear. Also, you can get the latest weather forecast for the mountain.

The Harvard Cabin sleeps 18 people, has cooking stoves, water, and an outhouse. There is an \$8.00 charge per person/ per night. Reservations can be made at the AMC campground, and are recommended. If the cabin is full, or if you'd rather camp out, there are tent sites available, too.



Alex Tate and Dave Godwin giving bad BETA to Demian Larry

Topic #1: Safe Top Roping

The top rope set-up I described above has a multitude of problems that could lead to climber injury and/or death. Too many accidents happen at "safe" local top roping areas, even to experienced climbers. How you set up your top rope rig is integral to your climbing safety.

My primary complaint with the above Great Falls example, is the same one I have with a general top roping practice in this area: relying on a single anchor. The practice probably started because of the plentitude of large trees near the tops of our local

craggs. Many climbers tie a single static line to a single tree anchor. This set-up is only okay if: the tree is truly "bomber," the static line or slings attached to it don't cut on a sharp edge, and all the biners in the system do not fail. A single failure = trouble.

It may seem unlikely that any of those things could happen, but why not stack the odds in your favor? Setting up anchors for top roping, rappelling, or leading, involves building some redundancy into the system. If one piece fails, you are not faced with a major fall. Use at least two "bomber" anchors when you set up a top rope. The two

anchors should have separate slings or static lines leading to the biners through which you set your sling shot belay. With two anchor lines, a single failure = no problem.

Equalize the load between the two anchors so that they both receive less force in a fall than a single anchor system. For a comprehensive treatment on equalizing anchors, see John Long's 112-page book, *Climbing Anchors*, published by Chockstone Press, Evergreen, Colorado.

Three anchors are even better than two! I spent a lot of time climbing at Devil's Lake in Wisconsin and the climbers there had a very strong local practice of using three anchors for every top rope set-up. They lacked easily accessible trees. Since they were using placed protection, they considered three a safe number. Most books recommend three anchors at a belay ledge while lead climbing or for a rappel station, so why not when top roping?

Static ropes and slings are tough, but a sharp edge can easily cut through an anchor sling. Don't take lightly the possibility of a sharp edge cutting a static line. Two lines are less likely to be cut than one and a second anchor that is placed significantly to the side of the first anchor provides a triangular arrangement that stabilizes your biners at the edge of the crag (see diagram).

My next point about the Great Falls duo is don't completely trust those trees! Some trees that used to be good top-rope anchors have recently fallen. While I don't know of any that have been pulled out under stress from a falling climber, don't risk it. Use only live trees that are over 4-to-6 inches in diameter and girth hitch them near their base to reduce the levering action on the roots. And back them up.

Carabiners in the System

Finally, a few words about placing biners. Most people around here tie static line directly to a tree. I do, too. It keeps your system simple and uses fewer carabiners. I subscribe to the "fewer links in the system is better" school of climbing. With two static anchors (or one long one doubled, see diagram) you can set a top rope system and only use two biners at the end for the sling-shot belay.

Make those two biners (some people use three!) locking biners! Two non-lockers with properly opposed gates are relatively safe, but if one of your biners is lockable then you can be assured of no open gate problems. Locking biners are stronger, too. Oppose the gates for these biners and have the screw collar tighten down (in direction of gravity's pull) so that rattling will end up tightening, not loosening, the collar (see diagram).

Also, make sure you place these biners well over the edge of the crag (see diagram). You do not want them hanging at the edge so they can be pulled against a sharp angle! It's not a stress they were designed to handle.

If your top-rope anchor runs over a sharp edge, use padding for your anchor lines or sheath your static line with some tubular webbing where it crosses the edge. Better yet, use both. You also want the end biners to hang low enough to reduce rope drag—but high enough so no one has to climb past the biners to finish the climb. Climb safe and climb on!

~Mr. Safe-T (a.k.a. Alex Tate)

NEXT ISSUE: *Harnesses and Helmets.* Send any comments or questions to Alex Tate:

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Up Rope,

a publication of the P.A.T.C. Mountaineering Section, is published bi-monthly and written by Mountaineering Section members who possess ordinary writing abilities. We're always looking for newsworthy items to print, regardless of subject so long as it's climbing or mountain related. Articles can be on trip reports, book reviews, gear reviews, good beta to climbs, red points -- heck, we don't care. To submit articles and photographs for Up Rope, please write with your favorite word processing program, and either send via Internet, or copy to a DOS diskette in plain ASCII text format, and mail to the literary editor, marked ATTN.: UP ROPE. The deadline for the next issue is May 17.

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Climbers' Calendar

Mountaineering Section of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
118 Park Street, SE; Vienna, Virginia 22180; Climbers' Hotline: (703) 242-3501

Date	Destination/Event	Point of Contact	Place & Time	Remarks
4/1 Sat	Crescent Rocks, Virginia	Alex Tait (301) 587-8085	TC 9:00 am	beginners welcome
4/8 Sat	Carderock, Maryland	Jim Southward (703) 684-6206	CD 9:00 am	beginners welcome
4/12 Wed	Membership Meeting: program TBA	Climbers' Hotline (703) 242-3501	HQ 8:00 pm	food, drinks, slide show; all welcome
4/22-4/23 Sat & Sun	Seneca Rocks, West Virginia celebrate Earth Day on top of Seneca!	Peter Hsi (703) 591-2540	TBA	please arrange for your own partners or call Peter
4/29 Sat	Great Falls, Virginia	Dave Godwin (703) 276-2291	GF 7:30 am	beginners welcome call to verify meeting time
5/10 Wed	Executive Committee Meeting	Dave Godwin (703) 276-2291	HQ 7:15 pm	all welcome
5/10 Wed	Membership Meeting: program TBA	Climbers' Hotline (703) 242-3501	HQ 8:00 pm	food, drinks, slide show; all welcome
Dec 1995 or Jan 1996	Aconacagua, Argentina (6,950 m)	Jim Southward (703) 684-6206	TBA	start practicing those mountaineering skills!
Mid-week	Climbing after work and other ad hoc adventures	Peter Hsi (703) 591-2540	TBA	call early week for arrangements

- **General:** Please call the trip leader by mid-week to make arrangements and contingency plans.
Call the Climbers' Hotline (703/242-3501) for the latest additions and too-late-to-be-published events.
- **Executive Committee Meetings:** Held first Wednesday of every odd-numbered month or by special arrangement. Everyone is invited.
- **Membership Meetings:** Held second Wednesday of every month except August. Everyone is invited to attend.

RENDEZVOUS LOCATIONS

CD	Carderock, Maryland
From I-495 in MD, exit #41 north onto Clara Barton Pkwy. Take 1st exit and overpass to Carderock entrance. Turn right after entering park, go to last parking lot. Cliff is beyond restrooms.	
GF	Great Falls National Park, Great Falls, Virginia
From I-495 in VA, exit #13 to Rte 193 west (Great Falls). About 4 miles and turn right at 1st light into park entrance. Sharp right after toll booth into lower parking lot. Late arrivals check at climbers' sign-in.	
HQ	PATC Headquarters, 118 Park St, Vienna, Virginia
From I-495 in VA, exit #11 to Rte 123 south (Vienna). Approximately 11 lights, left at Park St - OR - From I-66, exit at Nutley St north. Right at Rte 123. Right at Park St. Building is on the left.	
TBA	To Be Arranged
Please call the Point of Contact for directions or the Climbers' Hotline for updates.	
TC	Roy Rogers (24 hrs), Tyson's Corner, Virginia
From I-495 in VA, exit #10 to Rte 7 west (Tyson's). At Gallows Rd, U-turn onto service road. Next to Crown gas station.	



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