



FOUNDED BY
HERB AND JAN CONN

Newsletter of the Mountaineering Section of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club—October 1998

MS Trip—Buzzard Rocks, VA

July 19, 1998

—Pete Grant, trip leader

"Little El Capitan" is the nickname given to a particular face of Buzzard Rocks, a crag on which I remember playing years ago. To my recollection, the face offered some great, airy climbs of moderately hard difficulty.

Description of the area in Jeff Watson's *Virginia Climber's Guide* suggested that my memory was wrong and the face consisted only of 5.9-5.11 climbs. Rigging up top ropes and actually climbing the routes revealed much more reasonable 5.6 to 5.9 ratings in our combined opinions.

On one side of the crag we were even able to rig up ropes on what turned out to

(continued on page 3)

Russia, the Tien Shan and Mountaineering

—PATC-MS member Matthew Lavington lived in Almaty, Kazakstan and writes of the vast possibilities in the region.

An incredible mountaineer's landscape stretches some 40 plus miles south from Almaty, Kazakstan to the Northern shores of Lake Issik Kul in Kyrgyzstan. Found here are many dry, craggy summits exceeding 13,500 feet, and almost a dozen peaks over 15,000 ft. The area is extensively glaciated and all north and northeast slopes feature glacial ice above 11,500 ft. Most notable is 14,209 ft. Peak

Komsomol cresting above Almaty. Its spectacular, icy north face climbs over 11,00 ft. in the short horizontal distance of

15 miles from downtown Almaty. Peak Komsomol offers serious mountaineering on all sides. The classic West Ridge is an excellent mixed rock/ice route, 2-4 hours

longer in duration than the normal route. Steep and glacial, Komsomol's 3,500 ft. north face serves up a couple of very serious ice routes, while the harder to reach east face offers longer mixed terrain. Exposed multi-



pitch rock routes round out the south face.

Most weather blows in from the west/northwest. Being so far from ocean sources, winter precipitation is generally light. May tends to be the wettest month with landslides and avalanches common during the spring rains. The best seasons

(continued on page 2)

Climber's Calendar

For additions and updates check our website at http://patc.simplenet.com/mtn_sect/. Please contact trip leader if you are planning to go on a trip! Submit new trip info or anything else for the *Up Rope* to editor Alex Tait (taait@erols.com)

October 31st to November 1st (Sat and Sun)

ROCKS STATE PARK, MD and RALPH STOVE STATE PARK, PA--toproping and lead climbing

Rocks State Park is about an hour north of Baltimore and Raph Stover is north of Philadelphia. Join us for Saturday at Rocks State Park or for the whole weekend.

Meeting time and place: contact trip leader

Leader: Pete Grant, (h) 703-960-6033 (7-9:30p) or e-mail (pref.) grantpk@classic.msn.com

November 8th (Sunday)

ANNAPOLIS ROCKS, MD--toproping and leading possible

Another trip to this western Maryland hot spot. Don't be put off by the hike in, there are some great climbs here.

Meeting time: 8am; Meeting place: McDonald's in Gaithersburg. From beltway, I-270 North, to exit 11, Montgomery Village Ave (MD-124), stay in right lane, drive a short block east on MD-124 then turn south (right) onto MD-355, turn right at first light onto Perry Pkwy, McDonald's in shopping center on left.

Leader: Greg Christopoulos, (w) 202-622-0418, (h) 703-876-0957 or e-mail goclimb@erols.com

Nov 11th (Wednesday)

MONTHLY MEETING of the Mountaineering Section.

Theme: Get Psyched for ICE!! Short business meeting. Pizza and beverages! Please bring your 10 best ice climbing slides and good stories to go along with them!

Meeting time: 7:30pm for pizza, 8:00pm for meeting and slide show

Meeting place: PATC Headquarters, 118 Park St., SE, Vienna, VA

Contact MS Chairman: Tony Sanders (h) 202-362-3819 or e-mail tsanders@ix.netcom.com

MS Trip: July 18 Learning to Lead Workshop a Real Hit! Four leaders help seven climbers learn the ropes.

—Tony Sanders, trip leader

This could be the start of a real trend: experienced climbers helping new leaders jump onto the sharp end. That's what happened at the MS's July 18 trip to Seneca Rocks, when 11 MS members met to camp and climb and brush up on their trad-leading skills.

Four leaders—Tony Sanders, Pete Grant, Scott Pearson and Bart Hogan—volunteered to give up one or two weekend days and to help some aspiring leaders hone their skills.

The trip was a real success and, frankly, it was only possible because my co-leaders were there to help. If it hadn't

(continued on page 4)

(Climber's Calendar continued on page 4)

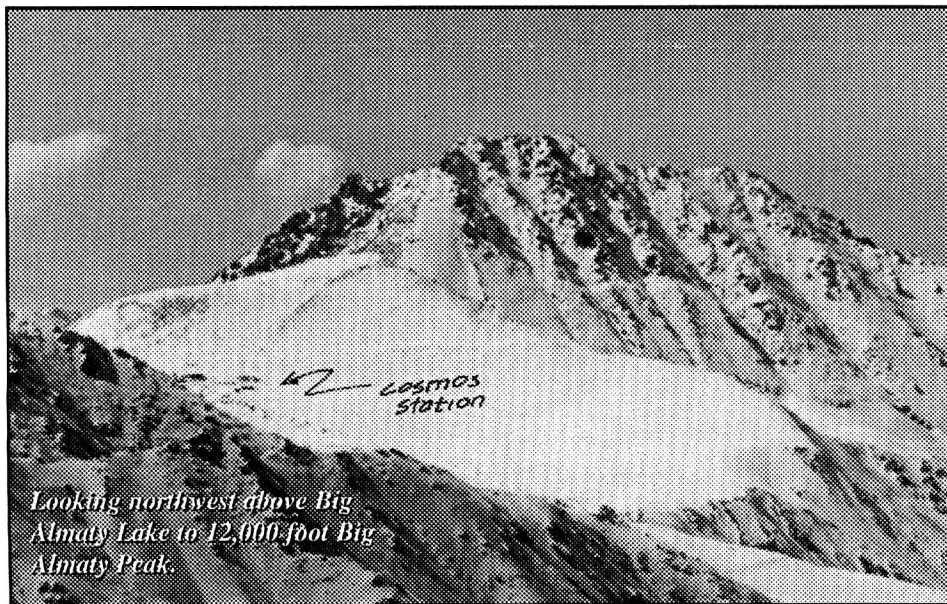
Tien Shan (continued)

for hiking and climbing are July through mid-October, with the occasional afternoon shower or snow into October. The starting point to ascend Peak Komsomol is the Chimbulak ski area, approx. 30-40 minutes and 20 USD from Almaty by taxi (Negotiation is essential in Russia and the regions). A good guide to the areas hiking and trekking is Frith Maier's Russia and Central Asia Trekking Guide. The approach to the normal route on Komsomol is from Talgar Pass atop the ski area, once on top the rewards are breathtaking views of snowcapped peaks to the south, Talgar to the east, the Altai Mountains to the northeast and endless Steppe to the north and northwest.

Also from Talgar Pass, in the opposite direction from Peak Komsomol is the broad and magnificent Dimitry glacier basin. Enclosing this basin are SDKA Peak at 14,383 ft., 13,983 ft. peak Oleg Koshevo, 14,429 ft. Young Guard Peak and two other summits over 14,000 ft. which enclose the basin on the west and northwest sides. On Almaty's eastern horizon the beautiful northwest face of 14,460 ft. Peak Talgar beckons. This precipitous face climbs over 6,000 ft. above the north Talgar River. The last 3,500 ft. is great grade 5 climbing which will seduce aficionados of steep ice and rock. Peak Talgar resides in the Alma Atinski nature Reserve boundary, which encompasses the Talgar massif and more than a dozen other spectacular peaks. Peak Talgar was formerly a popular destination for more experienced climbers and an alpinist's camp has been established in the valley below Talgar's west face. Access into the reserve requires special permission or Propoosks. However, these take time and can cost foreigners a surcharge. Local guides are the best way to go as they can clear the paper work and keep the fees local. The normal route on Talgar winds halfway around the mountain past some very pleasant alpine scenery. On summit day we descended north-eastward on the glacier then turned north into a shallow cirque and ascended steep neve snow to the pinnacled and serrated ridge. Despite some thin afternoon haze the view from the summit was fantastic. All told we were six days on the mountain greatly enjoying the natural scenery and climbing.

For more hiking, Big Almaty Lake at 8,200 ft. is a good starting point to access lower peaks and the infamous Cosmos Station. The Geographical Institute has a couple of houses at Big Almaty Lake and accommodations are good. Big Almaty peak is a stone's throw away from the Cosmos Station and is a popular day hike from the lake.

Good maps are available from Slavetsky Mechislav at ZHER fax; 7.3272.509562. Two other contact names for those wishing to experience the region are; Karlagash Makatove at 322.767/fax 7.327.581.1576 and Sergey Bukharov at 678.290. They both speak english and frequently organize excursions outside Almaty for expats and foreigners. One good thing to remember in Russia and the regions is that redtape and bribes are normal and all part of the experience. Good luck!



Petzl Grigri—Boon or Bane?

—Pete Grant, New Technology Editor

For a long time I viewed mechanical belay devices with suspicion, thinking of them as gadgets that could do the wrong thing or fail just when needed.

When the Petzl Grigri was introduced, I automatically included it in the same category with others that have appeared on the market in the past. Then, on one of our Gunks trips, I saw an expert climber use one and I decided to follow suit and buy one for myself.

In its initial use as top-roping belay, the Grigri worked just fine. It took an extra second or so to set up, but once in place, it was relatively easy to use and posed no special problems. Lowering a climber after reaching the top anchor took a small amount of practice, but soon that too became just another motor skill in the climber's bag of tricks.

Then, I used it in leading. As the leader, again, the Grigri posed no special problems, but had the drawback of requiring an adjustment to the rappel system, or carrying a separate device; e.g., ATC or figure-8, for a double rope rappel. But, when using it as a second, problems surfaced. Every time the leader made a quick move, or pulled the rope to clip into a high protection, the Grigri would bind. Anguish!

I tried several times to anticipate the need for rapid rope travel and pull a little extra slack in preparation for the event; however, that practice had a couple of drawbacks. First, in order to reduce the distance a leader falls, there should be as little slack in the belay system as possible, making this procedure undesirable. Second, when the leader proceeded out of sight, anticipation was no longer possible.

I attempted to solve the problem by pushing the rope into the belay device with my belay hand, but that only worked if the amount of rope needed was small; i.e., 12" or less. I also tried to prevent the lockup by pressing the top of the device with my non-belay hand, but that meant that the leader had to pull the rope through the device—another unacceptable solution.

Pete's bottom line

From now on, whenever I go lead climbing, the Grigri is left at home.

MS Trip to THE GUNKS

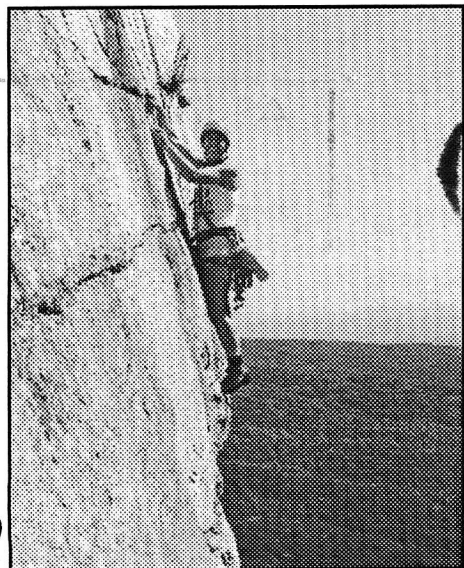
—Pete Grant, trip leader

New Paltz, NY, 7–9 August 1998.

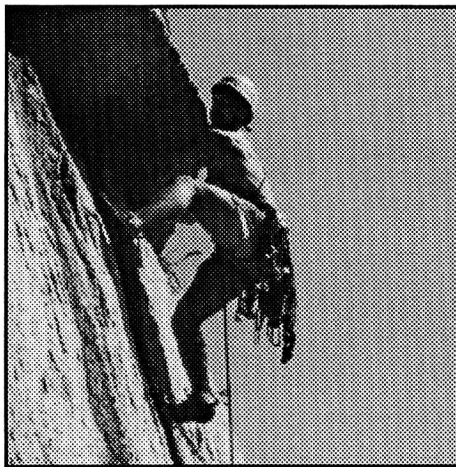
I cheated! I'm ashamed! Please forgive me, I promise to do better next time. I pulled on protection on the first move of Classic (5.7). Those of you who have done the climb probably understand... (It's 5.7 if you know the trick - 5.10 if you don't). Other than the embarrassment mentioned above, the trip to the Gunks was just wonderful! None of us did anything really serious, but, nevertheless, we all had a good time. The Shawangunks is such a great place! I hope there will be many, many more trips there.

The advance party of five -- Helen, Todd, Bruce, Larry, and I -- departed Washington early in the morning, meeting for breakfast in Harrisburg. Because it always takes a group longer than individuals to do anything, we arrived at the Gunks parking lot two hours later than planned; i.e., at 1:00 p.m. After quickly donning our gear, the three of us (Bruce, Larry, and I) headed out to do Three Pines (5.3), while Helen and Todd did Simple Ceilings (5.5) right next to us. This was Bruce's and Larry's first Gunks climb and was an excellent introduction—especially the exposed traverse on the third pitch. This climb is highly recommended for first timers. Simple Ceilings, however, turned out to be grungy and less pleasant. Not recommended.

Because of the late start, as well as the heat, we decided to go explore the Coxing



Trip leader, Pete Grant, loving the exposure on CCK.



Steve Golob leading the Gunks classic, Cascading Crystal Kalaidoscope (CCK).

Kill swimming hole instead of doing another climb. Saturday, after filling up our tummies with yummies from the College Diner, we all headed to the Uberfall for a beautiful day of climbing. Mack teamed up with Ron, Bruce with Larry, Helen with Todd, and I with Tim. Disneyland, Betty, Jackie, and Dennis were the targets of the group's first assault. Later on, Wonderland (first pitch only), Horseman, and Hawk saw the onslaught of PATC climbers.

Bruce then joined me and Tim for a jaunt up Horseman, done in two pitches with a semi-hanging belay. Jeff appeared on the scene mid-afternoon, became the third on my rope, and the three of us did Classic (5.7).

Sunday, the Plaza Diner was selected for breakfast and day's planning. Jeff, Tim, and I did Shockley's Without; Bruce and Larry did Betty, Helen lead Todd up RMC, and Mack was on the sharp end of the rope up Hawk (5.6) followed by Ron. Betty turned out to be the route that saw the most action, being the one of choice for those just starting to lead. Bruce, Todd, and Ron used Betty to test their leading skills. Bruce even went back for seconds! Mack reported to having been "thoroughly frightened" on Hawk (5.6), then the next day managed to get lost on Disneyland (5.6) winding up on a 5.10 variation. His comment was that he had attempted "to prove the route depicted in the Todd Swain guide, while wrong, is possible."

Here's who were there: Bruce Eberle, Larry Parsons, Mack Muir, Ron Alt, Jeff Hosken, Helen Withrow, Todd Withrow, Tim Harris and Pete Grant.

Buzzard Rocks (continued)

be 5.4'ish. So much for the credibility of that guide book.

After an hour's drive and nearly another spent hiking, we arrived at the rocks in time to rig our first climb by 10 am. Some of the climbs—all of those on the Little El Cap wall—were too long for a single rope so double ropes were rigged for the three routes initially selected.

Three top ropes were set up on Little El Cap and its neighboring wall. One beginner's climb was also rigged for the benefit of those wishing to warm up on something easier. Soon, however, the group all gathered around the Little El Cap area and climbing was concentrated thereon for the remainder of the day. The walls face West, providing climbing in the shade during the morning hours and even partly into the afternoon.

After 1:00 p.m., however, the sun blasted the climbers with its full power and sent many of us to seek shade and gulp down some liquid, whenever practical. The rock consists of very abrasive (sticky!!) sandstone, and is full of little pockets that serve as hand/finger holds.

The lower-angled slabs on the bottom part of the climbs provided excellent friction practice, many of us not bothering to use hand holds at all, even though nature had provided a number of them. There were bolts, some new and some old rusty ones with new hangers on the wall suggesting that sport climbers had visited the cliffs recently.

A number of hikers, ignoring the hot and humid conditions, passed by on top of the cliffs demonstrating the popularity of the area. Anyway, in spite of the heat, everyone said they had a good time and several said they wanted to return to the area to try some of the routes that we did not have time to rig up.

Participants: Joe Landrum, Stephanie Zions, Kevin Burkholder, Mark Lutterman, Carl Bock, Ken Roberts, Judith Smoot, Bruce Eberle, Larry Parsons, Mack Muir and Pete Grant.

FOR SALE

North Face "Steep Tech" jacket, Med, grey fleece with red & black. Can be zipper mated with North Face outer jackets. Like new, worn only a few times in clean environments. \$50 or make offer. John Christian 301-229-1533

Climber's Calendar (continued)

Nov 15th (Sun)

GREAT FALLS, the Maryland Side!

Take this opportunity to explore the rocks a short distance downriver along the Billy Goat Trail on the seldom climbed Maryland side of the river at Great Falls.

Meeting time: 8 am; Meeting place: Great Falls, MD, main parking lot.

Leader: Pete Grant, (h) 703-960-6033 (7-9:30p) or e-mail (pref.) grantpk@classic.msn.com

Nov 26th to 29th (Thursday to Sunday, Thanksgiving weekend)

NORTH CAROLINA ROAD TRIP!!

Note from Pete: Planned sites are Stone Mountain (everybody's gotta try Stone Mountain at least once in his/her life), Linville Gorge (been rained out every time I've been there), and Moore's Wall (this is a new one even for me). This is strictly lead climbing (I can't see driving 300 miles to go top roping) so everyone participating must have had instruction on leading/seconding. There will be climbs of all grades except the very easy 5.3 and below.

Meeting time and place: to come

Leader: Pete Grant, (h) 703-960-6033 (7-9:30p) or e-mail (pref.) grantpk@classic.msn.com

Jan 16th to 18th (Saturday to Monday, MLK, Jr. Weekend)

ADIRONDACKS ICE CLIMBING: International Ice Festival

Great ice climbing, classes for novices and experts, too. Details to come.

Meeting time and place: to come

Info: Greg Christopolous, (w) 202-622-0418, (h) 703-876-0957, or goclimb@erols.com

December

MOUNTAINEERING SECTION CHRISTMAS PARTY!! Details to come

SECTION NOTES

Reinstatement of Liability Waivers

Over the years, the Mountaineering Section has had very little, if any, reason to be concerned about getting sued by club members for any mishaps or accidents that might have occurred during an MS-sponsored trip. Even though that's been the case, the MS has typically (and wisely) erred on the side of caution by having all members sign a liability waiver form when they renew their membership dues. During the last year, however, the MS hasn't kept its files current with membership liability waivers, so, please make the effort to fill out a waiver form the next time you attend our monthly meetings. If

you don't regularly attend the monthly meetings (and there are a lot of you in that category), please take the time to fill out and return the waiver when we send it to you at membership-renewal time.

MS Gets E-mail Server

Thanks to Ron Alt and the good folks at the Federation of Tax Administrators, any MS member can start to get timely email notices of upcoming MS events and climbing trips and have a forum for discussing climbing-related topics. All you need is an email program and to subscribe to the MS's listserv email server.

Here's how it works. To become part of the email distribution list, send an

Lead Workshop (continued)

been for Pete, Scott and Bart, I would have been in a world of trouble; facing seven other climbers who all wanted to lead or second. Fortunately, what did happen was our happy band divided up into three sets of three-on-a-rope and one two-man team. The three-person teams had a trip leader tied in the middle with the other two climbers swinging leads.

Trip participants included two new MS members (who signed up on the spot!), Mark and Stacy Ehrlich. Other trip members were: Tim Harris, Ron Alt, Bruce Eberle, Dan Barclay and Jim Pasterczyk.

Thanks to everyone who came. You made the trip worthwhile. (And we got to scratch up all that shiny, new gear, too.)

email to: "mtn@lists.taxadmin.org" (don't include the quotation marks!) and type the word SUBSCRIBE in the SUBJECT line.

Any message you send to the address (mtn@lists.taxadmin.org) will be distributed to other MS members who also subscribe to the listserv. Make your subject line as descriptive as possible, to help users sort through the messages. Also, if you activate an automatic reply on your email (when you go on vacation), please unsubscribe from the listserv, otherwise it can cause problems for other users.

If you're unfamiliar with how listservs work, please email a message to either Ron Alt (altr@worldnet.att.net) or Tony Sanders (tsanders@ix.netcom.com), and we'll forward a copy of the help file to you! See you online!

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