

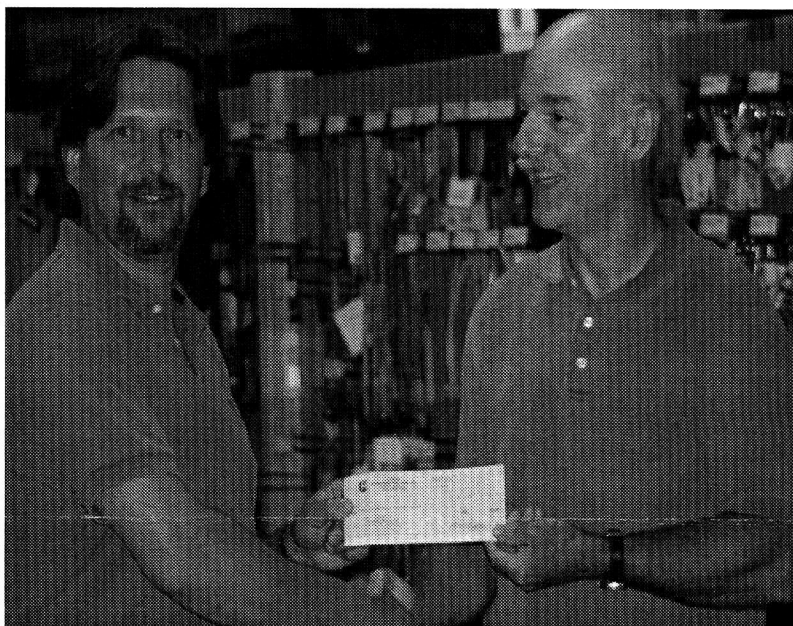


Volume 60 Issue 2

Summer 2005

Rockin' Chair Credited with REI Grant

The Seattle based REI company returns a portion of their operating profits to non profit organizations to promote outdoor activities in the local community. PMC Chairman, Ozana Halik (left) proudly accepts a grant check in the amount of \$3000 from REI Bailey's Crossroads Manager, Mark Nelson. The new climbing equipment includes ropes, helmets, harnesses and much more to be used at Carderock Wednesdays and other PMC climbing events. Thanks REI. Thanks to Ozana Halik

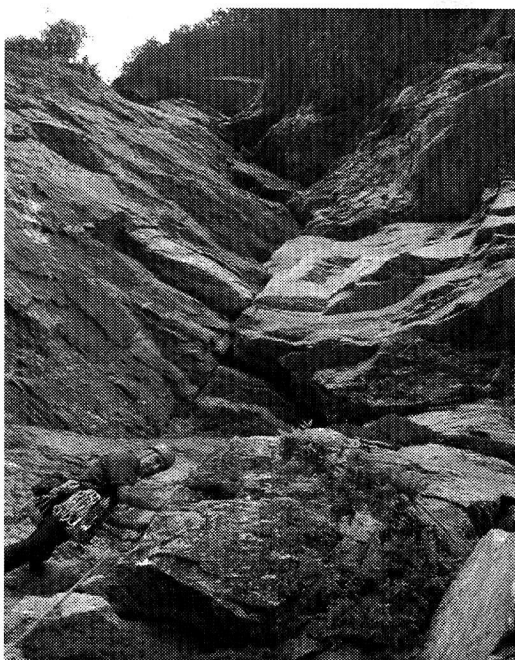


SHIPROCK NORTH CAROLINA

By Doug Halonen

It was cold and spitting rain Saturday morning as we scrambled up through the forested talus to Ship Rock, the dreary weather putting a damper on our expectations. But once we reached the base of the crag, nobody in our delegation from the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area was ruing the up to eight-hour drives and sleep deprivation invested in making the visit possible. Many of the overhanging routes looked dry enough to climb in the rain. Soon, the rain stopped and the sun came out, and Edge of a Dream, a spectacular 5.7, and other lines on the crag's upper tier were also accessible. And, talk about a dream, we had our pick of the routes because we only had to share them with five other climbers the entire day.

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Seneca Rocks, Annual Trip: An unprecedented Success

By Milton J. Fligna III

Maybe it was the lure of Italian sausages slowly simmered on a bed of sweet onions and green peppers or the highly advertised event and spectacular weather that brought so many to this climbing mecca in West Virginia. In fact, there were so many who came for this weekend through the PMC, that the campground host issued \$5 overflow parking violations. The event(s) was a cantankerous success, overshadowing similar trips in the past.

The numbers of participants had escaped from our city in mind, as many diversions such as hiking in the dolly sods, vertical hiking on the Via Ferratta at Nelson rocks, mountain biking, and swimming at the base of Seneca Rocks, vied with this annual trad climbing trip.

This annual event excluded many in the past from participating if they didn't have a climbing partner or worse a leader. This year, the PMC events planning committee decided to include Nelson Rocks Preserve, to opened up a more rounded climbing experience. Nelson Rocks has many sport routes and of course the via ferratta, all of which have an approach that is significantly less than the approach up Seneca. (my kind of approach) This brilliant insight paid off as this event has never seen this level of participation and set a precedent for the coming years.



ROCKFALL

- John Smith new vice-chair
- Welcome New Members!!!!!!
- Club directory out soon
- Club Calendar on-line
- Discussion Boards on-line



Smuggler's Notch VT

By Ozana Halik

John Smith and I flew to Burlington, VT on Independence Air on **Friday, Feb. 18, 2005**. When we got there we met up with Eric Pihl who was catching a ride with us to Stowe. Also we met Jeff Siedler, Rodrigo Riadi and his girlfriend. Rodrigo didn't have a car rental reservation, but he lucked out, I had made 4 reservations with different companies just in case. Jeff was staying with friends and Riccardo and girlfriend stayed at a B&B. We would not see them again on the trip.

John, Eric and I drove 1 hour to the Alpenrose Motel in Stowe VT. Much closer than driving 2 1/2 hrs, from Manchester N.H. Dave Raboy, Mitch Hyman and Kurt had

arrived earlier, so we went to Dave's room for beers and plan the next day's climbs. Mack Muir had an accident in NJ; he decided to drive and during a freak snow storm a tractor trailer jackknifed in front of him and his car crashed under the truck, Mack's face ended up 6 inches from the back of the trailer. Mack didn't incur any injuries but, the car was a total loss.

Saturday, Feb. 19.

John and I got up at 7:30 am, got ready and went to buy some breakfast sandwiches at the convenient store close to the motel. We met Dave Raboy and Eric Pihl at the trail parking lot, Mitch and Kurt showed up a couple of minutes later. The day was cold, sunny, clear and a bit of wind.

Since it was John's first time at the Notch, he was open to do anything. I wanted to do Elephant's Head gully, so up we went. We had brought snowshoes for the approach. They worked fine for the first fifty feet, but not as good when it got steeper. There was a party of two already on the first pitch, but by the time we got there they had moved up to the second pitch.

I took the first pitch; John belayed me from a couple of bolts at the base of the gully. The party ahead of me was dropping a lot of ice; I had to move fast during their rest times. The pitch ended at an anchor on the right side. From there we could see the climbs across the road, one gully in particular attracted our attention, "Hidden Gully", so we decided we would have to climb it.

The second pitch is a 20 ft. steep ice flow followed by short ice bulges. The gully acts like a refrigerator, it was really cold. John was having problems sticking his tools since the ice was very hard and brittle. I followed and then we rapped down from a sling attached to a couple of trees. The second rap was from the bolts at the top of the first pitch.

After we got down we decided to drop our packs and take a look at the other climbs down the road. Dave Green had car trouble on the drive up. He got it fixed, but missed his 7:00 am rendezvous with Pete Grant who decided to go back home since he didn't see anybody at the meeting place. Dave and a friend went

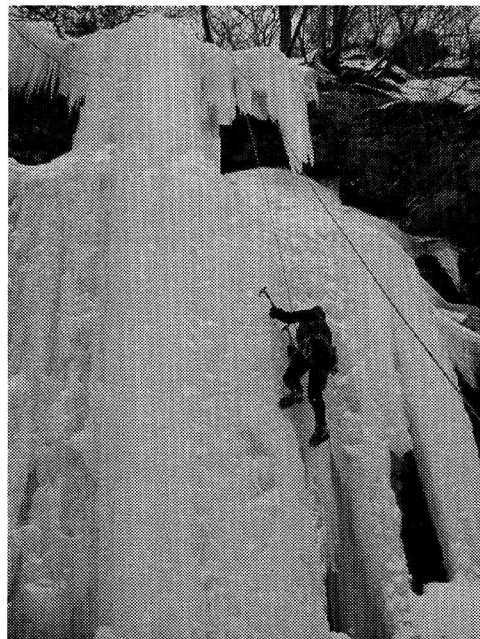
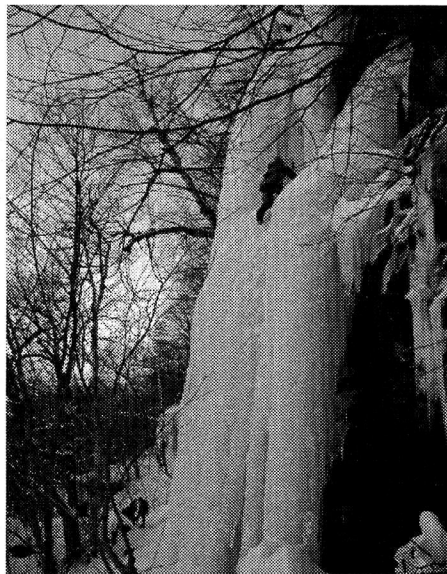
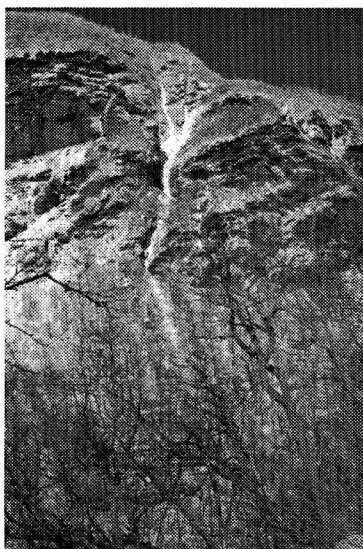
skiing to the top of Mount Mansfield. Dave is going for the U.S. 50 summits. That night after a nice hot shower we jumped into Dave's suburban and went to dinner to Picasso's Pizza. Dave Raboy, John, Dave Green, Eric, and I met Mitch and Kurt who already were there, it is a small place but they have very good pizza and beer.

Sunday, Feb. 20.

We decided to take an easy approach day. Dave, John, Eric and I hiked to the work out wall. They went up to set up top ropes while I started the Jetboil stove. The stove works great in summer but when the fuel can gets cold, there is not enough pressure. You have to keep it warm close to your body before firing it up.

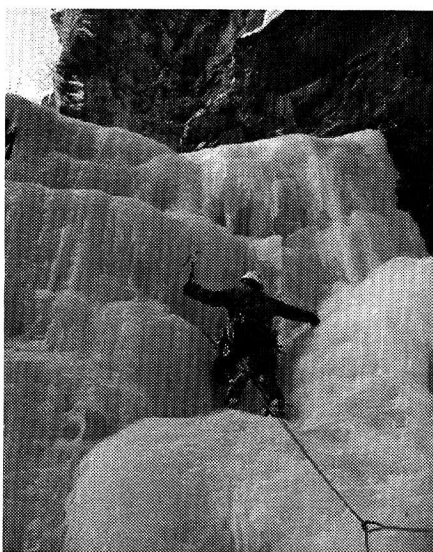
We all climbed several times and had a good time. Dave Green showed up later for hot chocolate, he had been skiing the trails around the notch.

On the way back to the car we met up with Ted, Mitch and Kurt, who were coming down from climbing "Blue Ice Bulge". For dinner we got in on Raboy's suburban again, and went to check several restaurants. They were very crowded and we had no reservations, next time I will make sure we have reservations, specially during holidays. Mitch mentioned a Chinese restaurant, we went there, no crowds, no reservations needed and all you can eat buffet, not to bad.



Smugger Notch (con't).**Monday, Feb. 21**

We got up at 4:30 am, got ready and went to the trail parking lot for our start to "Hidden Gully". The weather conditions were bad, snowing, windy and very cold, great blizzard conditions. We headed up the slope breaking trail to the start of the gully, on the way up we had a small avalanche detach, but no problem.



At the base we got suited up and got ready to go up.

I took the first pitch; so much snow was coming down the chute you could not look up. After a couple of ice bulges I got to the first snow field, I was aiming for a tree on the

right side of the gully; problem was that I was running out of rope (60m.). I just kept pulling until John started to "simulclimb"; I finally made it to the tree, put John on belay and brought him up.

John took the second pitch, it went up a second snow field and then up a rotten ice section, John had to dig in to find solid ice for a screw placement. I moved up the snow field and reset the belay closer to John so he could have extra rope. After moving up, he set up a belay on an ice bulge. I followed and then continued up another snow field, over some ice bulges and traversed right under a rock face. I ran out of rope again, so I had to set a belay anchor on the rock wall with a couple of pitons I had brought just in case, the blizzard was still raging on. John came up and finished the traverse to some trees.

We set up the rappel to drop into "Easy Gully"; the wind was so strong that when we tossed the ropes it blew them back up. John went down first and found a sling around a rock for our second rappel. I came down and found John freezing; he didn't want to get his down jacket out because he thought he

would drop his pack. He felt better after we opened a set of hand warmers.

On the way down the second rappel I was searching for our next rap anchor, but couldn't find one so I built a V tread on an ice bulge. John joined me and then he continued down to a tree where he set up our fourth rappel. I set up the fifth rap on a small tree, that took us to the top of a large rock where the trail back to the road starts.

After reaching the road we packed the ropes, had a quick Goo, and headed back to the car. It was a long day 13 hours, car to car. For dinner Dave and Phil joined us for Fajitas and Margaritas at the Mexican restaurant.

Tuesday, Feb. 22.

Stowe got a great snow dumping the day before so for our last day we decided to go skiing. John rented skis and I snowboarded. The day was beautiful, sunny and calm. We had hot sugar filled waffles and hot chocolate at the top of the mountain, yummy. Dave and Phil drove back to Virginia that day. Our flight back home was at 6:30pm so we had plenty of skiing time. Burlington airport is just 45 minutes from Stowe.

I believe the trip was a success; we had a good turnout of ice climbers and skiers. There was plenty of ice, even though it was hard and brittle but everybody had a good time. I'm looking forward to next year's trip, there are a couple of lines up "Hidden Gully" I want to try.



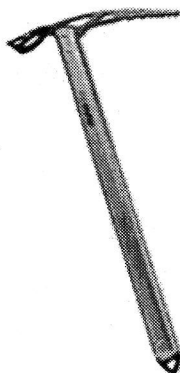
Short gear review

by
James Pasterczyk

Back at that sale REI just had there was a pretty nice looking and feeling alpine axe for sale, reasonable price, the Petzl Showalker. Pretty much your standard glacier-duty piolet, somewhat lightweight without being specifically designed that way. One caution I'd keep in mind is that the holes in the head for slinging your leash through don't have rounded edges, so if there were some kind of a major stress on the leash with the axe planted, for example you were using the axe shaft as an anchor that was shock-loaded via that leash all of a sudden, there's a possibility the nylon in the leash could be cut by those edges. A way around that would be to buy a three-foot spectra sling and girth hitch it through one of those holes, then girth hitch it to your wrist or clip to your harness; the spectra doesn't cut as easily as ordinary nylon. And by the way, there are good, sneaky reasons other than lightening the axe for having a hole in the head and the spike; check out Bela Vadasz's neat trick for rappelling from two axes then being able to retrieve them from below in Climbing's "Quick Clips" book.

Thrifty book buying: Amazon seems to have a good assortment of not-quite-new books in its listings at much lower than retail prices. Don't be scared, they're just retailers' remainders and they're perfectly good, though often they have some kind of felt tip pen mark across the pages marking them as book jobbers' remainders. I've picked up a few climbing guidebooks and "inspirational mountain photo books" with no adverse problems and it sure beats shelling out retail.

The REI in Fairfax has some nice looking Simond axes that are light, have no sharp edges to chop your leash with (except the pick and adze, of course); these look a lot better than the Charlet Moser ones I just talked about.



SugarLoaf Mountain

This past Saturday a good showing of folks made their way to Middle Earth and the Boy Scout Ledges at Sugarloaf Mountain.

Attending were: me, Margit Jochman, Eric Pihl, Jeanette Helfrich, Carol Garfinkel, Kurt Ferstl, Christopher Biow and his daughter Abigail.

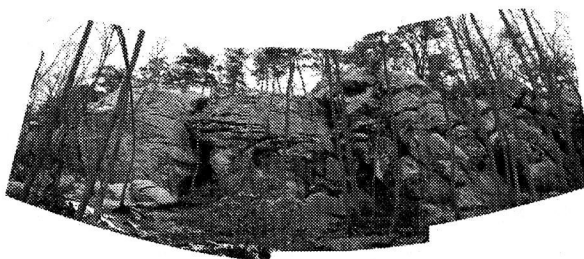
We met up with a couple of local climbers as well as some guys from the Eastern Shore of MD. We were sitting on the bottom of the cliff when someone yelled "rope!!" Sure enough, an entire rope (both ends) came raining down. That definitely cracked us up.

We mostly top roped, finding routes with plenty of variations from 5.4 to 9. I led a couple of easier routes like Flake Called Lee.

Best beta of the day: "Follow the crack out from the blood, and there's a hidden crimper."

I'm hoping to climb locally this upcoming Sat--either Shaeffer or Ravens. I'll let you know as I make a decision (will post on the calendar). Also planning the Gunks at the end of the month--before my annual pass expires.

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Devil's Kitchen



Boy Scout Ledges

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Climber's Calendar

We haven't done away with the climber's calendar. We have however made posting a club trip, no matter how soon or far into the future, a snap. Use the link below to access the PMC calendar. Select the date you wish to add an event and click "add event". Be sure to include pertinent details of the trip and contact information like email or cell number. Trips can always be edited even cancelled at a moments notice, so try it!

www.localendar.com/public/pmccalendar

CARDEROCK

WEDNESDAYS

Climber's Discussion Board

PMC has on the website a discussion board link with a number of different topics related to rock, ice and mountaineering.

In time, as participation grows, the discussion board will become a repository of rock, ice and mountaineering information which can be accessed using the discussion board's SEARCH feature.

I copy articles and pertinent beta to the discussion board under easily indexed subjects. Visit the board, register and help me clutter it up!

Thanks for checking it out.

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New River Gorge Trip

by
Carolyn McHale

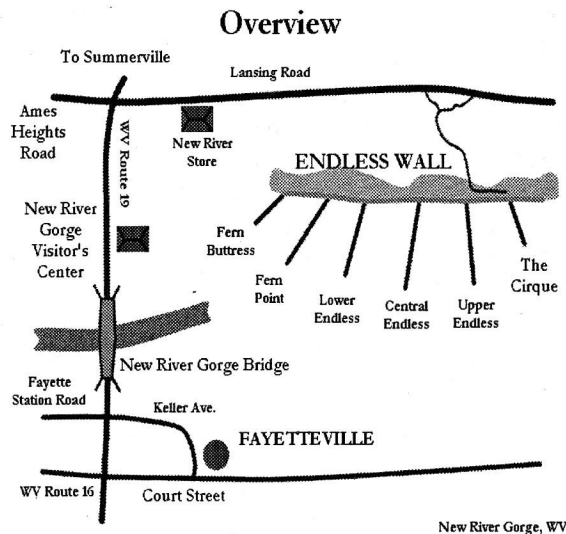
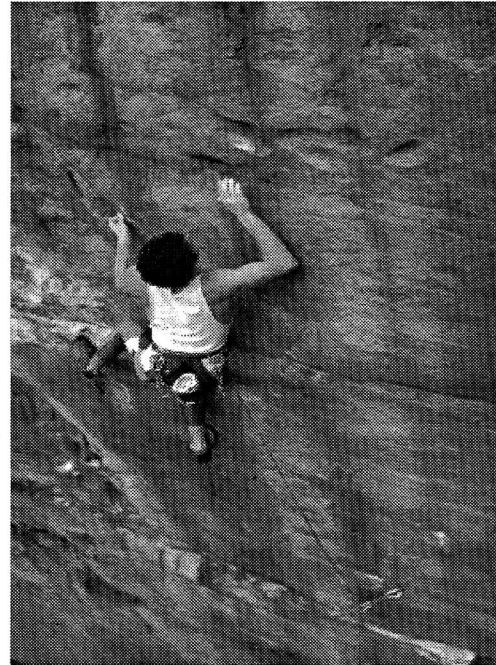
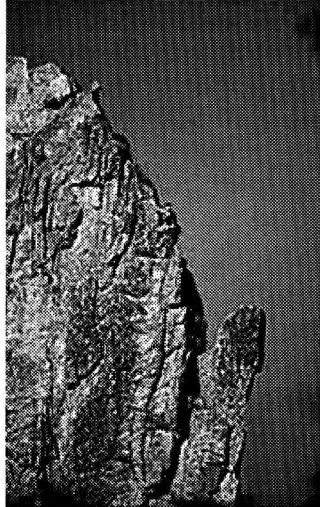
The New River Gorge's Rendezvous was awesome! About 700 people descended on Burnwoods to camp, climb, dance, dyno, sumo, slackline, socialize and just have fun.

The DC folks nabbed the primo-screamo tent sites behind the far pavillion, which proved quiet, private, and with a dry place to cook... Not that it was much of an issue. Although it dumped rain Thursday night and was cloudy (with periods of rain) Friday, the rock dried nicely throughout the gorge for the weekend.

The organizers and sponsors did a fantastic job of providing free food, music, beer/sodas/coffee/red bull. They arranged bouldering, trad and sport comps, raffles, massages, demos and workshops for folks to participate in. There was never a dull moment.

The sumo wrestling was hysterical, the dyno comp impressive, the workshops educational. I went bouldering with a bunch of women on Sunday, most of whom did not boulder, and watched them encourage one another up problem after problem. Well after we had no skin on our fingertips, we were still working it thanks to the encouragement of locals Elaina Arenz Smith, Rachel Babkirk, Keri Conte & Heather (last name unknown).

In other words, you missed an incredible time, so get your butt down there next year (rain or shine)!



Little Stony Man

By Vintoch Dadiovinavinovitch

There was a time when it was easier getting up and ferrying gear to and from the truck for climbing expeditions but this was a labor of love. A few years have passed since I last visited Little Stony Man Cliffs in the Shenandoah National Park. I have waited a long time for this trip.

The rally point was the parking lot in front of Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que, up the street from the Old Appalachian Outfitters store at 0730. Dave Raboy was there already filing people into his tank as more and more of our climbers flocked to this meeting point. By the time we kicked our spurs into the horses under our hoods, we had amassed a small assault force of 16. The climbing caravan pulled out and headed west in front of a blinding plume of dust that trailed far behind the last vehicle, a scene reminiscent of mad max.

The trip to the park entrance was uneventful. The group milled about the parking lot, quickly rifling through gear bags and at last we assembled for the group picture in the parking lot. The parking lot emptied as we silently filed up the trail to the base of the crag.

With all the climbing resources we had, the ropes, SLC devices, wired nuts, runners, tubular webbing, and some big rope guns-female and otherwise, we stood around scratching our heads doing the "*climbing guide, where we at*" boogie. The climbing guides and topos we had were terrible. Luckily we had a great mix of climbers who made short work of the confusion and set up lines in a flash.

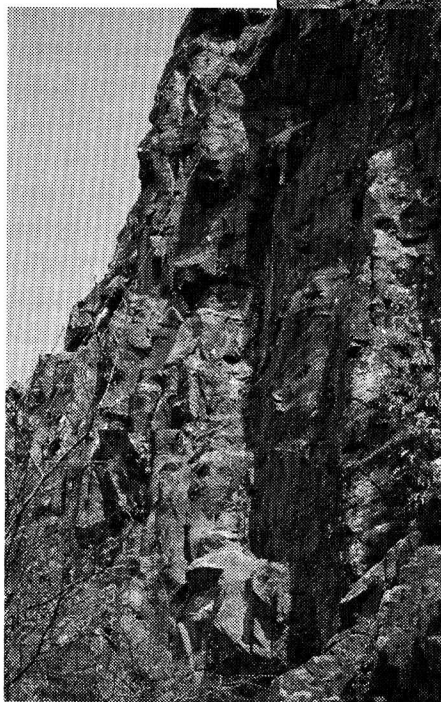
The rock was blocky and the lines straightforward. On every climb once you at least half way up, you reach a section that was beautifully exposed. The routes were at least three times longer than great falls. Most of the routes were easily accessed from the top. Many of the routes were led and the top ropes set.

Before too long the grill was smoking wieners and everyone settled back to lunch with all the fixings.

The weather began to loom ominously in the distance and our heroes began retreating one by one. 3p rolled around and the everyone who was leaving had split. The four of us sat in the parking lot and had a victory beer for our efforts.

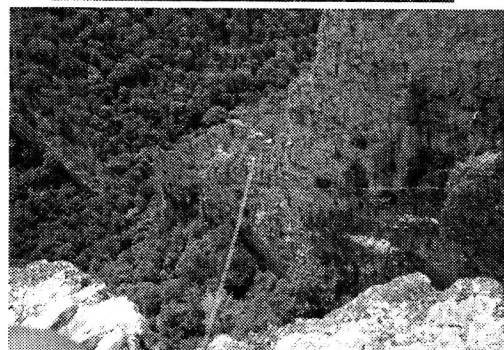
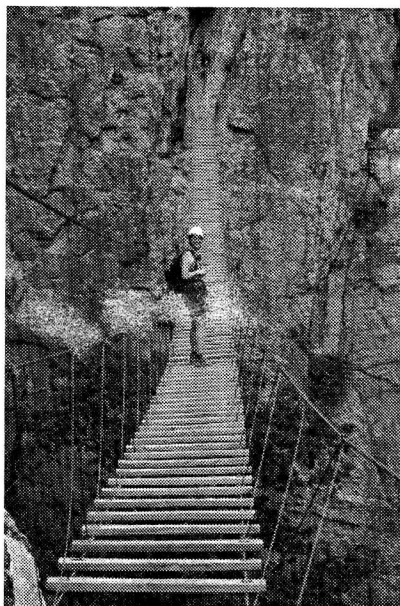
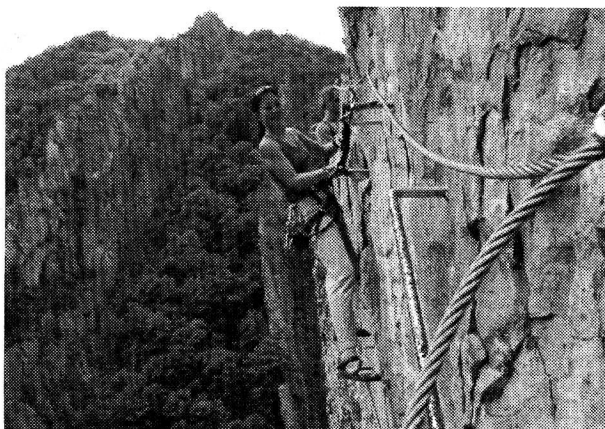
This had been an unprecedented turnout for a climbing event this year. All in all, 25 climbers came and went. Then it began to rain like hell all the way home.

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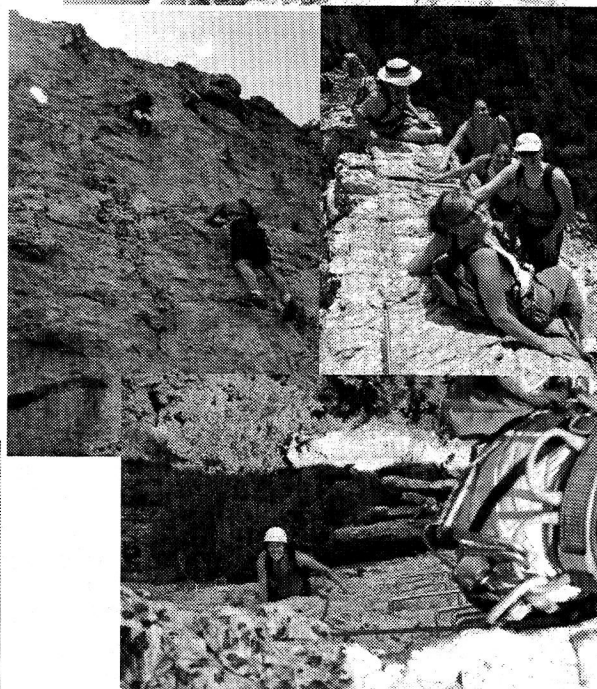


Nelson Rock's Via Ferratta: No Skills Fun for Everyone.

Rock climbing brings to mind a dangerous sport where the skill level of the participants is measured in years not feet. Nelson Rocks Preserve, a few minutes away from Seneca Rocks, offers the non-technical "rock envy" enthusiast, the experience of rock and exposure in an afternoon. The annual trip to Seneca Rocks included the via ferratta this year at Seneca Rocks and participation surpassed the trip leader's wildest expectations.



After weeks of spamming everyone on the list serve, the Fourth of July weekend finally arrived. The weather was Fabulous. Electricity filled the air. Several groups arrived at the NRP office and after a brief pep-talk by Stu Hammet the owner himself, the participants were equipped with the special slings used for clipping the stainless steel rungs and thick cable on the via ferratta. One by one the three groups began the routes staggered by approximately 1 hour apart. The route was so much fun. The route begins with a series of rungs that leave the approach trail straight away. Here's the technique: climb the ladder and clip into the rungs as you climb and/or the cable that lines the route. You are basically climbing rungs of a ladder with plenty of scenic rest stops. The route is very exposed at times especially at the bridge which spans the east and west fins, 200 feet above the earth. The route continues around and up towards the north to the optional headwall which is relatively the most strenuous part of the climb. Fun is the name of the game. Players: Miriam, Judy, Tim, Dan, Catherine, Lauren, Laurie, Kim, Tina, Scott, Ian, Judy, Joe, Harold and Vincent.



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

SHIPROCK(Continued from front page)

I will always remember Ship Rock because it turned out to be the site of my first 5.9 trad lead—Borrowed Time. With Vanessa following, I also may have inadvertently pulled the wrong roof at the top of the second pitch of Boardwalk, turning a 5.8 into something a grade or two harder. (It sure seemed hard for 5.8 anyway.)

Topping out was the prize, and what a prize it was. While the longest climbs at Ship Rock are maybe 200 feet, the crag looms high above the Blue Ridge Parkway near Boone, N.C. So at 4,400 feet, the view is nothing short of spectacular. A whipping wind added to a top-of-the-world feeling that can't be conveyed in photographs. Along with the other members of our climbing group—Simon, Duncan and Laurent—we sampled several of the crag's other lines that afternoon, before heading back to our campsites and a group dinner at the Julian Price Campground five miles north on the parkway. (Special thanks to John for somehow snagging sites for us on the Memorial Day weekend.) If you plan to visit, be forewarned: for all practical purposes, the easiest route at Ship Rock is 5.7. One guide book claims a couple of easier lines. But on closer inspection, those appeared to be too dirty to be worth the trouble.

On Sunday morning, we headed south for Linville Gorge and Table Rock. It's easy to understand why Table Rock is one of North Carolina's most popular climbing destinations. Unlike Ship Rock, it offers a variety of moderate multi-pitch routes in the 5.5-5.7 range, many of which are bolted. (Many of the bolted routes are run out between bolts. So bring a rack along for the ride.) In addition, the approach from the parking lot is a short one.

When we arrived, it became clear that we would be sharing the crag with dozens of other climbers. But there are enough routes that we didn't have a problem getting on choice ones.

With Simon off mountain-biking for the day with his wife, Amy, Laurent and I teamed up to climb Jim Dandy, a three-pitch 5.5, while Duncan and Vanessa went around the corner to check out a couple of classic 5.8's: Second Stanza and White Lightning.

"Good to the last drop," said Duncan, after successfully leading both routes.

Vanessa, who has been focusing much of her energy on caving recently, quickly demonstrated herself to be one of the group's strongest, most positive and enthusiastic climbers. In fact, she sprinted up 5.8/5.9 terrain so quickly that one of her belayers had trouble keeping up. "It was like reeling in a marlin," he said.

"I have two speeds: fast and stop," she said.

From Lunch Ledge, the end of the line for Jim Dandy and other popular climbs from the crag's base, Laurent and I decided to shift into a slightly higher gear, taking the three-pitch My Route, a 5.6, the rest of the way to Table Rock's top. *Jim Dandy*, in my opinion, was just okay. But *My Route* impressed me as one of the more interesting 5.6's I have been on. It has great exposure, a couple of fun overhangs and a roof to pull—exhilarating terrain for the grade.

The view of the Linville Gorge from Table Rock's summit equals or surpasses the one at Ship Rock.

"It was gorgeous," said Duncan. "No pun intended."

Laurent found the third pitch of Jim Dandy to be particularly memorable, because that's where he took the sharp end for the first time in some time.

"It was a come back," Laurent said.

Walking off the back of the crag, Laurent and I also came upon an immense boulder with a tiered roof system jutting over the path. So we put our climbing shoes on and, joined soon thereafter by a South African who had also just topped the summit, worked out several pumpy bouldering routes.

"It was a bit of satisfaction," Laurent said.

Monday morning, Vanessa, John and Amy went for a hike. So Simon, Duncan, Laurent and I returned for one last whirl around Ship Rock. Simon and Duncan used the occasion to bag a couple of Ship Rock's 5.10a classics: *Linn Cove Lullaby* and *KB Capers*.

Said Simon of *KB Capers*: "Easier than Linn Cove Lullaby. Not that steep, more technical."

Worn down from two days of hard climbing, I opted to goof around on a top rope. Both Laurent and I easily got up Harpoon, a 5.10a crack that offers great protection. Laurent also managed to handdog his way up most of the Angst of Captain Bligh, a desperate 5.11 b/c, before we called it quits and headed back to the parking area.

I was in no hurry to get home, so I decided to take the Blue Ridge Parkway all the way to Roanoke before cutting off to Rte. 29. The parkway turned out to be a beautiful alternative to I-81, particularly with the wildflowers out. I was thinking that climbing and camping with friends makes for a mighty good weekend. Hopefully we'll be able to return to North Carolina soon to check out the rest of the Table Rock moderates.

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The crew: l-r, John Graybill; Vanessa Krabacher; Duncan Thomson; Laurent Andre; Doug Halonen; Simon Carr; Amy Heller.

SELF BELAYING ON A TOP ROPE

By Marty Comisky

We have all been there - the weather is great; sunny, mild temperatures with low humidity; you find yourself with a little free time and you decide you want to go climb. The only problem is you have no partner. What do you do? Of course, you could always do a little bouldering.

For various reasons, bouldering isn't always a satisfying option. Your local crag may offer poor bouldering, or you may find bouldering not as challenging or as much fun as climbing "vertically."



Several years ago, I happened upon a method of self belaying on a top rope that has been tested and approved by the manufacturer. Petzl sells an ascender called the *Basic* that can be used for a variety of uses, including:

- hauling systems
- rope climbing
- self-protection on a fixed line (the topic of discussion here)

In a nut shell, the system works like this:

- you fix your top rope anchors as usual.
- you fix/attach your climbing rope to the anchor's

carabineers

-you either rappel down or down climb to the base of the climb

-you attach the Basic ascender to the rope and your harness

-you climb back to the anchor

-you rappel back down

-repeat

To be honest, when I first tried this system I was a bit hesitant and untrusting. What if it didn't work? Over time, I tried various different techniques to booster my confidence, some of which you may like or dislike.

Great Falls, VA., my usual climbing crag for when I have a little time for impromptu climbing, has relatively short climbs and does not need the full length of the rope. When I fix the climbing rope to the anchor I tie the middle of the rope into the carabineers with a figure 8 on a bight, giving me two fixed lines.

As I said, when I first starting using this self belaying system, my confidence in it was low. To raise my confidence I improvised a back up system. Since I now had two fixed lines, I took one of them and tied a series of figure 8's on a bight every 6 to 8 feet apart. Now, when I climbed on the other fixed line using the Basic ascender as the self belay device, I could periodically clip these bights into my harness as a backup in the event of a fall and a failure of the Basic ascender.

To further booster my confidence in the ascender set up, I purposely fell (in a controlled environment) on it to test it. It works; the ascender bites the rope quite well and there is little or no shock load when falling. It is as smooth and comfortable (or more so) as falling on a conventional top rope with a person belaying.

I'm comfortable now using the Basic ascender as a self belay system and on most climbs no longer use the pre-figured knots for a back up. However, I still have and use the two fixed lines.

After climbing one line using the ascender, I attach myself to the anchor using a cow's tail on my harness. This allows me to hang safely at the top. I then attach my rappel device to the second fixed line, disengage the ascender from the first fixed line, remove the cow's tail from the anchor and rappel back to the bottom.

For illustrative purposes, I have included some drawings from the Petzl catalog showing the correct setup and use of this device. Enjoy and climb safe.

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Old Rag Trip Report

By Ross Hess

We had six climbers, including Andy, Eric, Jeff, Nancy, Taylor, and me. From Weakley Hollow, we took the Ridge Trail to the top, the Summit Trail down to the saddle, and the Weakley Hollow Fire Road back down to the trailhead. Along the way, we pointed out a number of the prominent climbing areas on the mountain, as well as the side-trails to reach them.

Due to time constraints and summer vegetation, we didn't have time to fully explore every area. The hike/scramble to the top was great, but with full packs, it was a workout. As mentioned in the Horst book, the Berry Hollow trailhead is a viable alternative for a shorter approach.

We climbed at the Skyline/PATC Wall, as seemed fitting. With six climbers, we dropped two top-ropes. Natural protection is available for many climbs, and is mostly rock, with a few trees. We also had a few leads. As a crack-heavy climbing area, most climbs are trad-leadable.

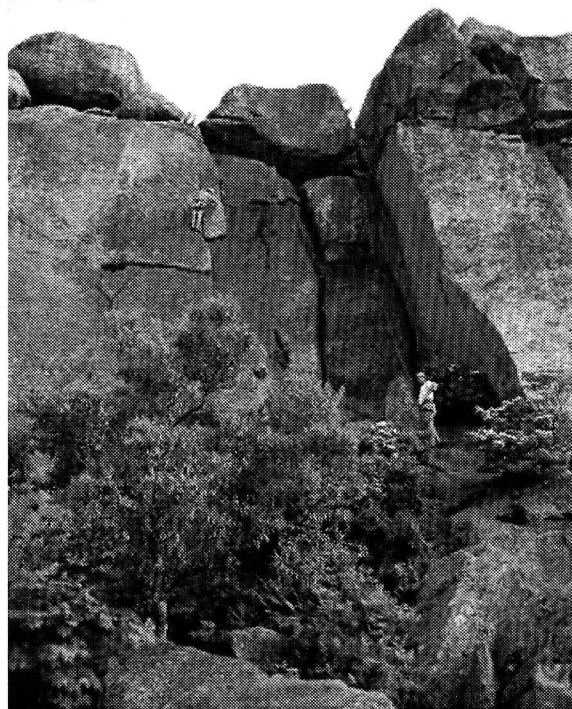
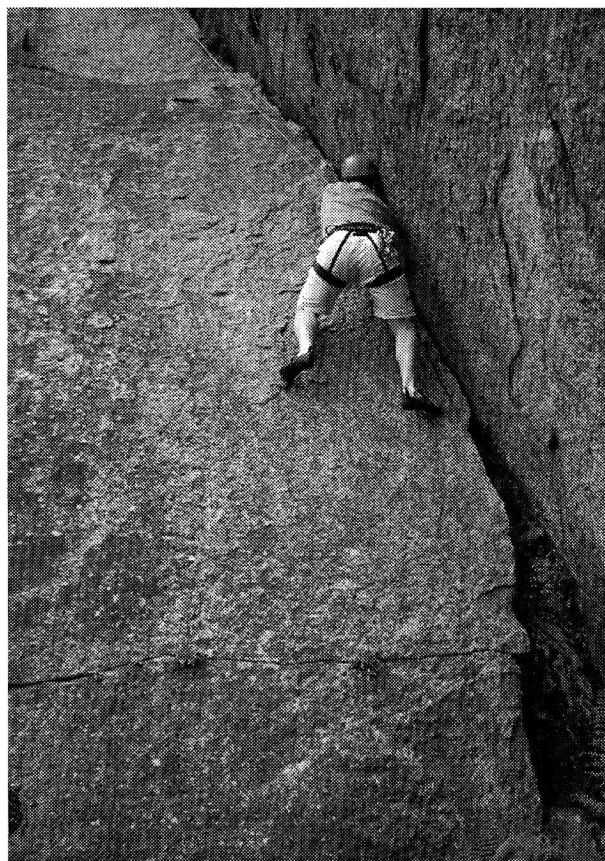
The four routes we climbed, along with the numbers in Horst's book, were: *Thrash* (5.7, #30) *Rhodey Crack* (5.6, #32), *Rusty Bong* (5.8, #34), and *Fern Crack* (5.7, #35). These routes provided a great afternoon of climbing.

The weather was perfect, and there were just a few other climbers. It was great to climb on granite, though it took more than a few bites out of us. Tape and durable clothing are recommended, and next time, I'll take my own advice.

The trip went very well, and I hope that we'll see more trips to Old Rag in the future.

Climb on!

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Buzzard Rocks, May 21 Trip Report

Saturday, May 28, 2005

We had a great trip to Buzzard Rocks on Sat. May 21, 2005. There were 14 members in attendance including:

Lee Jenkins, Kate Reid, Reed Bumgarner, Doug Halonen, Andy Yeagle, Nancy Haden, Patrick Morineli, Kurt Ferstl, Matt Haskins, Mary Smeby, Dave Raboy, Chris Biow, Taylor Terry, Eric, Others?

I also had my dogs Kato and Sasha with me since Brenda was in Colorado. They carried their own packs full of food, treats and water. They were amazingly well behaved.

We enjoyed the nice cool weather for the 45 minute approach to East Massanutten Mtn's ridge line above the cliffs. Once there we scrambled down to the northern most section that includes a great easy lead (Three Amigo's) and a nice but runnout 5.8 slab. Dave setup "camp" here with those that wanted to get in either their 1st or just an easy lead. Kurt and I headed to the next section with several newbies that had never climbed outside before. I lead the classic Raising Arizona (5.7 ***) and set up a top rope that could be used on this route plus Failure to Communicate (5.7 **) just to the right. It was great fun for me to belay and watch the new folks play around on their first outside route! Kurt and I then both led Failure to Communicate before moving to the next section.

At the third section Kurt and I climbed with the new folks up until around 2 p.m. when he had to leave. We both led several routes and either had the newbies second while we belayed from the top since many of these routes are 110 to 130'. We climbed the following routes in this area (noted from North to South):

Pulp Friction - 5.10*** (5 bolts - take a few small cams for the top and bottom, one move wonder above last bolt, the rest felt 5.8ish).

Kimberly - 5.7R (2 bolts, take a few small cams/nuts but still runout, dirty).

Melungian Brotherhood - 5.8*** (7 bolts plus a few small cams for the top and bottom. Nice route!)

After Kurt left Matt, Kate, Mary, Andy and I took the trail south and then bushwacked to the bottom of Anonymous Flake *** (110' 5.9R, one bolt). This route is the area classic so I had to give it a go...

This is where things got interesting. The bottom 40' or so is runout with no gear at all, fortunately the climbing is about 5.6 and on a laid back slab with good friction. Once above this area there are a number of cracks and flakes to place gear up until you come across the one and only bolt (well actually two right next to each other but one is a rusty antique). The next few moves are tricky and runout until you reach the huge flake for which the route is named.

Once at the flake I placed a solid #2 Wild Country Technical Friend (Red). I started to traverse to the right and was about 80' up trying to make a blind placement while underclimbing and off balance with poor feet. I called to Matt to "Watch Me!" then bent down and tried to look under the flake. Well after 8 years leading Trad routes up to 5.9+ all over N. America I "finally" took my first leader fall! My left foot blew and the next thing I knew I was airborne! It happened so fast it's hard to believe how vivid the sub-second events were (and still are). I yelled something, probably jibberish and watched as I started to turn my back to the cliff, the next thing you know I'm on both feet without a scratch. The landing was very soft and flat footed, like you jumped of two stairs! It was a perfectly clean fall. If you are going to take a Trad leader fall then this is the way to do it...

I've always heard that there are two types of Trad leaders, 1) those that have taken a leader fall and 2) those that are waiting to take one. I'm glad to get it out of the way with lessons learned and no damage!

Matt, my belayer (and first time outside and Trad belaying/seconding!) did everything right. He was anchored and got pulled into the cliff face but did not let go and only received a minor abrasion. Mucho Kudos buddy. I'll climb with you anywhere, anytime...

Fortunately the #2 Friend held! But I really had little doubts about it. It was a "bomber" placement and is now pretty much pasted in the crack and will take some tools and energy to remove it...

Well after all the excitement I rested a minute then finished the route with style...

Lee Jenkins, Vice Chair,
Potomac Mountain Club 2005
Colorado bound...



Big Devil's Stairs

By Ross Hess

We had six climbers on the trip: Andy, Chris, Eric, Mirian, Nancy, and me.

As previously mentioned, the canyon is relatively wild; this played a large role in Saturday's trip.

The 2 1/2 mile hike from the trailhead to the overlook was relatively easy. We passed many piles of bear scat along the way, but no bears. We also saw a large toad.

At the overlook, we had a wonderful view of the canyon. There are large rock faces on each side. Unfortunately, the summer growth obscured many of the routes. This made route finding very difficult. Scrambling to the base of the overlook entailed scrambling over large rocks, down short cliffs, over trees, around lots of brush, and down the stream. In short, it's not an easy scout from the bottom.

Back at the top, we decided to set top anchors, and belay from the top. This proved challenging as well, for the number of natural anchors was limited, and most crossed the trail. Once we finally set a climb, we noticed that it went right over a resident snake, likely a copperhead. As we moved along, we encountered a bush filled with bees, and other challenges.

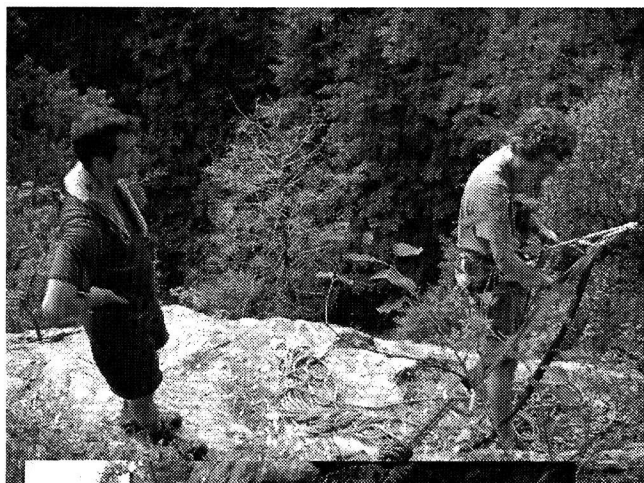
Further down the line, we did set one climb. All six of us climbed it, but faced challenges on it. Since the rocks are rarely climbed, they are covered with lichens, plants, and webs. As the walls of a canyon (rather than a summit peak), the rocks were rather wet. The wet lichens greatly diminished our foot power. The climb was fun in an adventure sort of way.

On the way back up, we moved against thunder. A few minutes before reaching the trailhead, the rain let loose. All were safe, though.

Overall, we had a great day. The area is beautiful, but it's far from a developed climbing area. For those who are interested in climbing there, I would strongly advise waiting until fall or winter. The lines should be much clearer then. Also, I'd advise going during dry weather. Just for hiking, though, go when it's wet; we saw a number of waterfalls.

Climb on!

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Movie Check out List

The PMC has the following movies on DVD for club members to check out on an honor system at the monthly club meeting. The way it works is you sign out with the club secretary excom-peeps and you are free to go! ENJOY these Classics!

Alpine Ice, Jeff Lowe's climbing techniques, Instructional video, 170 min.

Avoiding The Touch Self Rescue Pt1, Instructional video.

Cliffhanger, Movie.

Climbing Fast, Instructional video.

El Capitan, 60 min.

K2 The Ultimate High, Movie.

Masters of Stone III.

Rock Climbing Skills, Instructional video.

Stay Alive, a guide to survival in mountainous areas, Instructional video, 90 min.

Training To Rock Climb, Instructional video, 37 min.

Touching The Void, Movie, 1hr. 47 min.

Up Rope, PATC Instructional video.

Vertical Limit, Movie.

Vertical Rope Skills, Instructional video, 70 min.

The Eiger Sanction, Movie, 129 min.

The Video Guide to Aid Climbing, Instructional video, 75 min.

The Video Guide to Knots, Instructional video, 50 min.

Waterfall Ice, Jeff Lowe's climbing techniques: Instructional video, 180 min.

Learn to Climb Rock, Instructional video by John Long series 60 mins

The art of leading by John Long, Instructional video 60 mins

**Up Rope Editor
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A standard linear barcode consisting of vertical black bars of varying widths on a white background.