

*Up Rope*

FOUNDED BY  
HERB AND JAN CONN

## Royal Arches - Yosemite

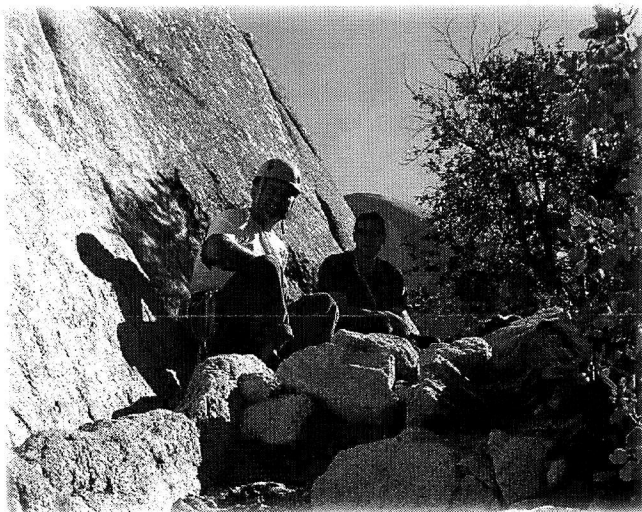
Bob Graver and Joe Martinet

2007 Volume 62, Issue 2

### Ten Hot Tips from the Valley

Joe and I had both been yearning to get to the valley for most of our climbing years (as I suspect most climbers do). There was always some reason not to go though; not climbing hard enough, don't know our way around the place, not enough vacation days, etc. As we got talking about this situation sometime over the past couple of years we came up with the scheme that we would take a long weekend sometime and just go find something within our abilities and (try and) climb it. We quickly agreed that the Royal Arches (5.7, A0 or 5.10b) was a likely objective and settled on a mid October date.

Almost immediately upon reaching the valley we realized the error of our ways. **HOT TIP #1: Go Now!** If you've ever imagined climbing in Yosemite, there's no reason to put it off. There are routes of all abilities, easily identified, AND almost all starts are within 10 minutes or so of the road. Another friend of mine had warned that I might be surprised at how compact the area is but I was still amazed.

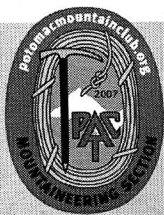


Bob Graver and Joe Martinet  
on Royal Arches, Yosemite

We arrived late afternoon and spent the remainder of our first day stopping and gawking at the incredible and familiar sights en route to our campsite at the far end of the valley (we stayed in the Upper Pines campground). After registering and setting up our tent, we spent the rest of the day reconnoitering the approach to the start of our objective (all five minutes of it) and figuring out where to eat. **HOT TIP #2:** There are several places to eat but the cafeteria at the Yosemite Lodge opens earliest (0700), closes latest (2100), has the greatest variety, and most reasonable prices (I only spent about \$10 per meal).

We went to sleep that night after deciding that, given the short approach and the success of our recon, we'd just get going "whenever we get up". The next morning, that wound up being about 0600 due to the time difference and, I'm sure, a bit of excitement. This early start would serve us well later. After a quick breakfast at the cafeteria, we racked up in the parking lot of the Ahwahnee Lodge and made our way to the start of Royal Arches.

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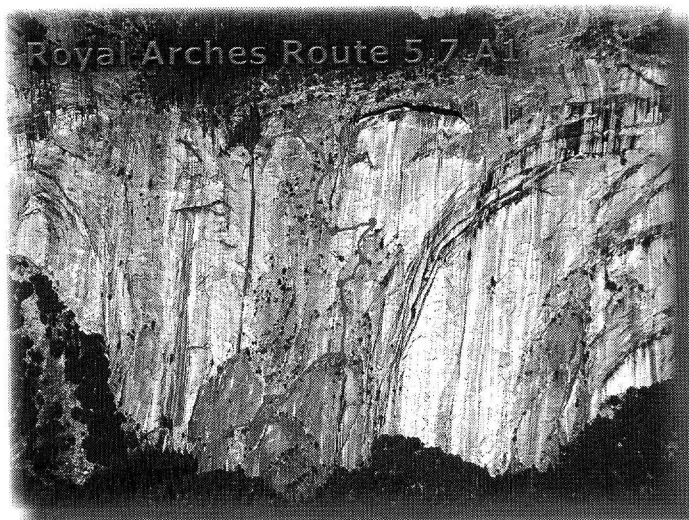
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I think we did rock, paper, scissors or some other finger drill and I wound up with the honors. Pitch one is a great wake-up pitch, a committing 5.6 off-width corner with intermittent but bomber natural pro. After looking around a bit for the alternate 5.7 crack start (no off-widths for me if at all possible) I tucked my right shoulder into the crack and began working my feet up the steep, polished face on the left. I slung a large chockstone, wove my way behind another (Joe thanked me for this later!), and slung the tree at the top of the pitch for gear before bringing Joe up.

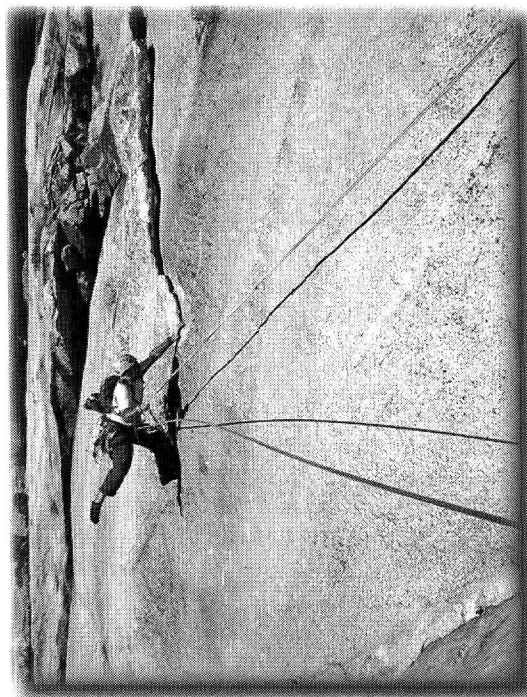
We scrambled across some third class terrain and Joe made short work of the nice left facing corner and a section of fingers work to get us to the second belay. From there we scrambled across a pitch or so of third and forth class terrain before we were enticed (off-route) by a gorgeous right facing corner with a difficult undercling finish. I took two falls on the

finish before relinquishing the sharp end to Joe who finished the final ten feet or so in fine style. We later determined that this probably was a 5.9 pitch of a 5.12 route called The Cobra (or something like that). Once we both got to the top of the pitch we rappelled back to the bottom and continued across the third class terrain to the right. I then noticed that this is also probably the section marked "off route" in McNamara's guide. **HOT TIP #3:** Go all the way to the END of the third class ramp before turning up hill.

After making our way to the end of the ramp, Joe led us nicely up the gorgeous 5.7 fingers crack, pin scars, and an enjoyable right facing corner to the next belay. Did I mention that (as luck would have it) Joe seemed to draw all the cool pitches while mine all tended to have "off width", "chimney", or even "munge" in the description? I guess I actually lost the rock, paper, scissors at the start! From there I continued up the 5.6/5.7 terrain of the next pitch and Joe took us up pitch seven that featured a pair of parallel hand/fist cracks just about two arms length apart. This we decided was the "bear hug" pitch described in the *Fifty Classics*.

Pitch 8 started with a grovel up a short 5.5 off width (of course) section and finished up easy terrain to the next belay. From there Joe took us up to the anchors for the pendulum pitch. Being anchored by a couple of bomber bolts directly above me and believing that the pendulum goes free at 5.9 (the original grade), I thought to have a go freeing across this nearly vertical section on the dime-sized edges. Well, it only took me a couple minutes to realize that thin 5.10b (the modern grade) is beyond me and I reverted to the traditional means of spanning this gap (I guess I did have a "cool pitch" or two after all!). After a balance across the top of the flake that is the prize of the pendulum I built an anchor and brought Joe across.

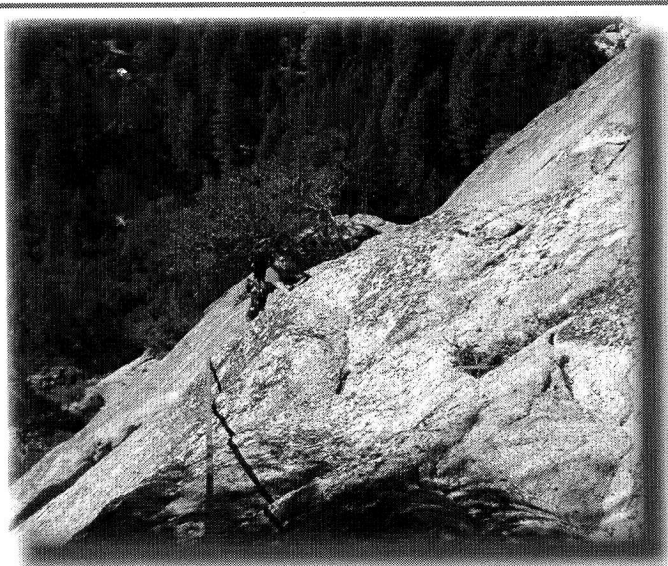
From there we moved quickly across a couple of indistinct pitches (one of which is the alternative to the "rotten log pitch" of the original route and another that included "climb THROUGH the tree" in its description) to get to the start of the last few pitches. Joe led pitch twelve that started up a nice steep 5.7 fingers crack and finished with a squeeze behind a large pine bough to surmount a large right facing corner that stood between us and the routes final difficulties. I led the next pitch up easy terrain to a trough of sorts and an enjoyable arête finish. From there we stretched our 60m rope a bit and Joe led us up the easy terrain of pitches fourteen and fifteen.



At this point, we're within spitting distance below the valley rim and can see the grove of pine trees that has been our goal since just after sunrise an easy traverse away to our left. On top of that I know the last pitch is only 5.4 so I figure it's a walk in the park. Well, apparently I didn't read the fine print regarding the run out, blank, and exposed nature of that final 5.4 pitch. The first half was the cruise I'd imagined but I spent what seemed like an hour on the last fifty feet or so trembling my way across the slabbage on fingernail sized exfoliations, brushing pine needles off the "bomber" dime thin ledges where I could rest before making moves, sometimes as short as six inches. Needless to say there was no way to get any gear through this section and all I could offer Joe was a weak "I'm sorry and good luck" as he seconded the pitch and repeated the adventure.

We accomplished our objective and climbed Royal Arches on FRI. What an incredibly intricate route-and what a job of route-finding on the part of the first ascensionists! We climbed 18 pitches in a leisurely 8 hours and pretty much

had the route to ourselves with the exception of two parties soloing the route. Yes, I know the guide says 16 but we took a slight detour in the middle and added a short pitch after the final slab pitch getting on top (we're both pretty sure we missed something here). Before the climb Joe and I decided that we wanted to do the "classic" decent down North Dome Gulley (and so only brought one rope) so off we went. **HOT TIP #4:** Bring a second rope and **RAP OFF THE ROUTE.** While the descent trail is interesting and in beautiful position (directly across from Half Dome), the warnings in the guides are well warranted. It is long (~3 hours or so for us) and there are numerous opportunities that entice you to start down too early. **HOT TIP #5:** Make sure you know where Washington Column is and then don't start down until you're east of it. Even then, there's a spot that we never would have found if it weren't for a local who'd was kind enough to hang out at the critical juncture to make sure we found the down-climb under the limb and behind the trunk of a large pine.

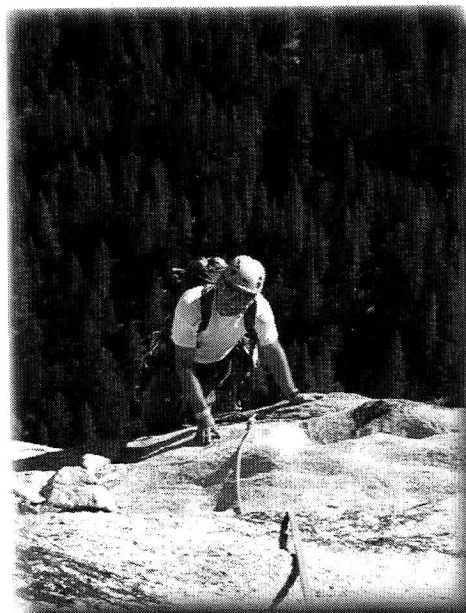


From there it was just long with no route-finding challenges and, of course, we were out of water. We were both elated but a little worked when we finally got back down to the horse trail that would take us to our car, water, and dinner. **HOT TIP #6:** Start early. Joe and I found the guidebook estimates of 7-10 hours to do the climbs and 2-3 hours to descend accurate and counted ourselves lucky that we got the early start that we did. That evening, after extensive rehydrating and food in the cafeteria, we bought a couple bottles of wine and found our way to an AAC sponsored slideshow by Ivo Ninov. Completely satiated, we turned in and slept very well that night.

The next morning we slept late and then climbed a short route (Pine Line) on El Cap in between the Salathe and The Nose. There we had to wait for a National Geographic film crew to film the initial shots of a film they were doing on a former climbing ranger Lincoln Else climbing the Nose. Chris McNamara who we'd just seen belay Caldwell on the second half his valley double in one of the films we saw at the Gunks was belaying for this endeavor as well. After they departed, Joe and I both led the route and then decided to spend the rest of the day just tooling around the valley and getting poised for our departure the following day.

We drove up to Glacier Point, found the free showers, and hung out in the Curry Village bar. **HOT TIP #7:** Curry Village is the place to stay if you're not interested in sleeping on the ground. It has all the amenities of the other lodges (beds, bathrooms, showers, restaurants, shops, etc.) at reasonable (\$70 dollars or so per night for a four person room) cost. It also may have been the original Anglo settlement in the valley.

After breakfast the next day we packed up and headed to the Manure Pile Buttress intent on doing Nutcracker (5.8). Nutcracker is the first route in the Valley (and perhaps the country) done exclusively using "clean" protection. After leading the first pitch, and with aching elbows, I decided that I didn't want to commit to eight pitches onsite on our departure morning so we rapped and spent the rest of the morning climbing the first pitches of several of the routes at the base of the buttress. **HOT TIP #8:** The Manure Pile Buttress is a great "cragging" spot with a 3 minute approach, grades 5.6 thru .10+, and an easy walk-off or rap for most. The highlight of this morning was Joe's lead of the 5.9 1st pitch variation to Nutcracker (40' unprotected 5.5 slab to gorgeous 5.9 fingerlocks in pin scars to a final 30' of wonderful hands).



We also wandered down the cliff to the left and climbed a couple of fun lines. Joe led Just DoDo It, a fun mixed route with a very bouldery start and later still we both led Jump for Joy, a fun, thin, bolted (thank goodness) 5.9 further to the left before packing up and heading to Curry Village for showers before heading to the airport and separate flights home.

What a fantastic and grand adventure. Joe and I enjoyed incredible, uncrowded climbs under perfect weather conditions (daily highs in the 60s and nights in the 40s). **HOT TIP #9:** October is a great time to go, it's off-season but pre-winter.

I'll close with the same tip I started with: **HOT TIP #10: GO NOW!** I definitely put this trip off WAY too long. Yosemite is much more accessible from both a travel and climbing perspective than I ever could have imagined these fabled and legendary walls could ever possibly be. Please let me know if you would like any further information on logistics.

# Mount Elbrus

Tony Pierce

*Mt. Elbrus is the highest peak in Europe. Its Western summit rises to 18,513 feet. The mountain, located in the Caucasus Range which borders Russia to the north and Georgia to the south, is an extinct volcano. Because it is the highest peak in Europe (one of the Seven Summits), Mt. Elbrus is attempted by climbers from around the world; most use the Standard Route via the South Face & Azau Valley. The best climbing months on Mt. Elbrus are July, August, and September.*

## Our Climb

A short bus ride delivered us to a tram station near Terskol. We carried packs with climbing gear and clothing to see us through the next three days. I compulsively checked and re-checked my pack to make sure I had forgotten nothing. A forgotten pair of gloves, for example, could mean no climbing above the high camp on the mountain.

The tram is in two sections, which meant that at the end of the first section we changed to another car and then continued on. At the top of the tram line we each took a single-person chairlift up to the mountain proper at a site called The Barrels; so named because of the half-dozen shelters made from metal containers shaped like huge barrels. There was a great deal of activity at The Barrels, with people wandering about in climbing gear. We saw a huge contingent of Asian climbers when we arrived. Many climbers stay in the barrel shelters before attempting the climb.

We soon began trekking up the mountain to a shelter owned by Igor, who is assisting Phil and International Mountain Guides with the guiding and many other aspects of the trip. Igor is from St. Petersburg, is in his 30's (my guess) and owns a trucking firm in St. Petersburg. Back in the Soviet days, he was one of the national champions in climbing. Phil met Igor on Aconcagua, and then spent time with him in 2002 when the two were in Nepal; Phil and his wife Susan were climbing Everest and Igor was climbing Lhotse.

After a few hours we arrived at Igor's hut. We squeezed into two sleeping compartments, each containing two platforms. A common room contained a stove and dining table. The hut was cramped, but proved very snug and certainly adequate for our team. In comparison to the accommodations on some climbing trips, this was luxury. An outhouse was placed nearby along the cliff edge. We spent the remainder of the day settling into our new quarters and taking photographs. I noticed that the superb weather of the previous few days was starting to worsen...

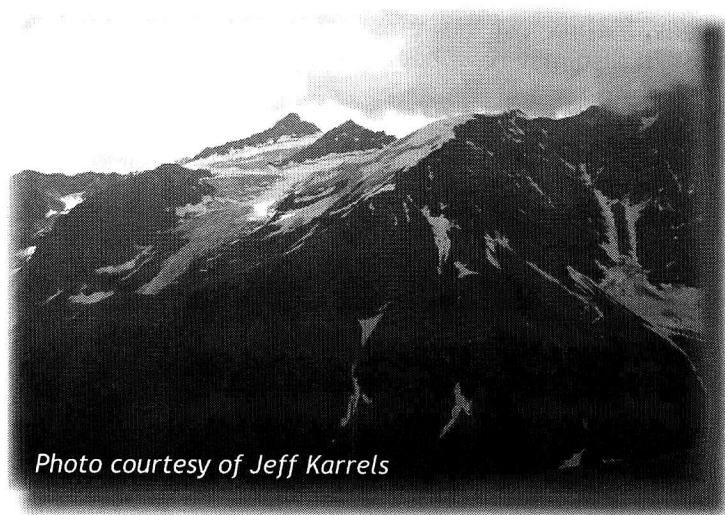
## The Hut

The hut sits at an elevation of about 13,200 feet on a rib of rock along the normal climbing route. The goal of the day is to complete an acclimatization hike to a rock band known as the Pashtuhova Rocks at about 14,600 feet. This hike will also help us "dial in our systems," a phrase Phil uses to describe a person's awareness and familiarity with clothing, gear, and tools. It is a necessity to know exactly where everything is stored on one's pack and what layers are needed, etc.

Phil wants everyone to be efficient and quick. He doesn't easily tolerate delays with equipment while climbing. We climbed unroped in a line that gradually stretched out as time went by. The pace was moderately slow, but the stronger climbers gradually pulled ahead of the pack. The climb to the Pashtuhova Rocks took several hours.

During the climb, a snow caterpillar passed us ferrying climbers up the mountain, and later passed us again going down. The machine is a diesel-powered tractor fitted with tank treads, and is capable of moving people and supplies from The Barrels to as far up the mountain as the Pashtuhova Rocks. Phil will have no part of the snow cat in assisting his climbers up the mountain, and all of us agree it doesn't seem like fair climbing (it should be noted that some groups first hike up to the Pashtuhova Rocks for acclimatization, as we were doing, and then later use the snow cat to cover ground they have already covered).

At 14,600 feet, we stopped for a short break near the rock band, and then Phil told us to head down, which everyone did at his or her own pace.



*Photo courtesy of Jeff Karrels*

## The Summit Attempt

At about 1:00 am I heard Phil's voice as I lay in my sleeping bag in the hut: "Okay, let's go climb Mt. Elbrus." Soon everyone was hustling to get geared up. We had hot drinks and Pop Tarts for breakfast. At about 2:00 am or perhaps a bit later, we had our backpacks and crampons on and were poised at the glacier's edge.

Phil stepped in front of the group and told me to get in behind him. Climbing behind Phil was the best thing that could have happened for me. He can maintain a precise pace, never speeding up or slowing down. And he knows how to best place his feet with every step. So for an hour or so I put my boots in every step he made. Sometime between the first rest stop and the rock band, word drifted up the line that Joe had decided to turn back. By this time, Igor had assumed the lead directly in front of me. Phil had moved back to monitor everyone's progress. He sent the third guide, a Russian climber, down with Joe.

At the rocks, we stopped for another quick drink of water. I realized that beyond this point anyone who wanted or needed to go down would cause a problem -- Phil would send Igor down with any client in such a situation, leaving him alone with more clients on the mountain than he could easily manage should problems arise. Although I felt pretty good, I knew I was one of the marginal climbers, and I was worried that if I could not make it, Phil would force others to go down, too. He couldn't safely lead a team of ten people when the need to rope-up came near the top. Realizing I might slow the group down or cause Phil to turn others around, I told him I was feeling tired. I thought I could probably convince him to let me walk down to the hut alone, something all of us had done just the day before. I was thankful, however, that Phil had no intention of having me go back.

Instead, Phil told the group to get climbing and suck it up. That's pretty much what we did. We caught up and passed some of the team members from the group that had taken the snow cat up earlier. I began to feel excited about the climb, and fell into a rhythm that helped me manage my breathing. As the sky began to brighten, I realized we were climbing in a cloud, and I soon was able to turn off my headlamp. I was directly behind Phil again when the sun broke through the clouds for a brief moment. It was just above the ridge off to our right, and it cast the shadows of the climbers in our line far down the snowslope to our left. I was in awe at this sight, and buoyed by the sudden warmth of the sun on my face.

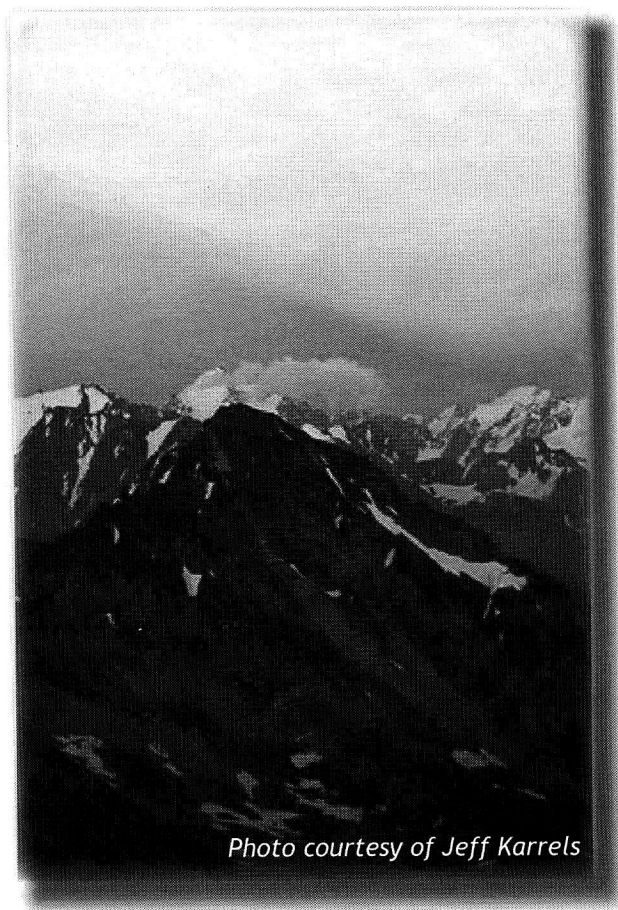
I mentioned this to Phil and he said, "I'm glad you're looking around and seeing this." At that moment, I was probably as happy and serene as I have ever been in the mountains. There is no other place like high on a mountain at sunrise. After this moment of sunshine and serenity, however, our climb became increasingly cold and windy. We moved in cloud and blowing snow and ice particles.

Phil had again moved back down the line while Igor led us up toward the saddle between the East and West peaks of Elbrus. The ground became less steep for awhile, and we followed a trail marked occasionally by wands through powder snow. We stopped for a rest break and word came up that Matthew was out of gas below. Phil had parked him against a boulder and was coming up to join us. I knew immediately what would have to be done. And when Phil arrived he confirmed what I was thinking: he would send Igor down to get Matthew and lead him back down the mountain. By this time the wind was so fierce that Phil was forced to shout so that we could hear him. He told us he needed everyone to honestly evaluate their condition before deciding which way to go, up or down. He told Ed that he felt Ed was climbing well, but that he didn't know if Ed could fully take care of himself given the conditions. I asked Phil if he was going on as the lone guide. When he confirmed he would be alone with the team, I told him I would go down with Ed and Igor and get Matthew.

Phil and Igor made sure they each had their radios turned on, and they exchanged a few words. I gave TA my Alti mitts but we could not get her ski pole straps to adjust to them. I returned her gloves and told her, "You've got it made now. It's in the bag." I wanted TA to make the top.

## Coming Down

Igor, Ed, and I retraced our steps from 17,100 feet down perhaps 100 vertical feet. We located Matthew and he joined us as we marched down. All the way to the hut the wind kept blowing. I was soon very tired, mostly from the



*Photo courtesy of Jeff Karrels*

disappointment of not reaching the summit, and from constantly fighting the wind. It took several hours to get back to the hut. Soon after our arrival, the team members who had gone forward with Phil started to drift into camp. Jeff actually caught up with me just as I came in. They reported high winds had turned them back at the saddle, perhaps 600 feet from the top. With everyone safely back at the hut, we all settled in for a rest. The weather at the hut deteriorated and we had strong winds and snow of about an inch or so.

We had a brief meeting in the morning at which Phil agreed to make another summit attempt with anyone who wanted another shot at the top. TA and Jeff agreed to stay with Phil and try again the next morning. The remaining team members decided to go down. We collected and packed all our gear and Phil distributed some of the group gear to everyone. At 9:00 am Igor led the way down to The Barrels, with everyone wearing crampons. The chairlift was not running, so we continued to hike from The Barrels down to the tram. Two sections of the tram and we were back in the valley. Igor bought us beer from a place near the tram station while we waited for our bus. We were soon at the hotel enjoying hot showers and a good lunch.

Phil, Jeff, and TA eventually turned around at the Pashtuhova Rocks due to high winds and low visibility. Even though none of the team members made the summit, the trip was a great experience. The mountain will be there anytime we choose to try it again.

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## Buzzard Rocks

*Ross Hess*

We had a great time at Buzzard. Climbers included Chris and Abigail Biow, Steve Brown, Jason Salmanoff, Scott Hartsock, Doug "Pamela" Halonen, and myself.

The weather ended up being great. We were surprised to start with a very cold wind on the ridge. Eventually, things calmed down, the sun came out, and it was beautiful.

After hitting some area classics, we finally wandered further down the trail to some of the climbs past the wall with Melungian Brotherhood and Ass Cannibal. I've known other folks (myself included) who have wandered down the hill, bushwhacked, and retreated. It took Scott to point out the obvious. A very large branch had fallen across the trail, obscuring it. It was so well placed, it almost seemed intentional. We moved it down the hill, and the path came clearly into focus. In my opinion, there's no need to rap down from the top; hiking across the base is easy enough. Kudos again to Scott for identifying the easy pathway.

Hiking over, there seems to be an undeveloped wall, at least an unbolted one. Further over, you will reach a slightly overhanging base, with long, slight arch. This wall holds The Bulge and Half and Half, each of which we climbed.

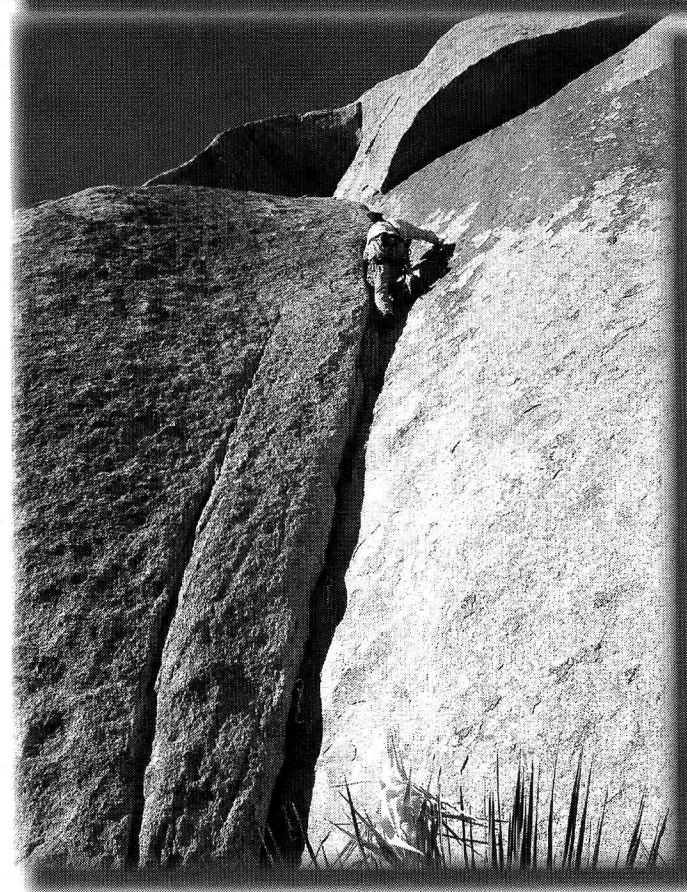
The Bulge comes first, and has an easily visible bolt right above the first bulge. It is a satisfying move right off the ground. Further up, there is a very large, difficult bulge. Fortunately, there is a bolt that offers good protection just above it. Impressively, Scott pulled directly over the bulge, on lead.

Next is Half and Half, which has an easily visible sandstone-colored bolt above the first bulge. This one also starts with a good bulge to pull, follows with some slab action, and has a nice bulge in the middle. Unlike The Bulge, the bulge on Half and Half has good feet. To me, the toughest part was the very end, with a near-vertical "slabby" wall. The climb is topped by two bolts with rap rings, which are easily visible from the ridge trail. I led the direct version of the climb, and enjoyed it very much.

Since this wall hadn't seen many climbers in a while, there was quite a bit of dirt and pine needle mixture in the holds. A good brushing would help. We also trundled a few very loose rocks that were accidents waiting to happen. Afterward, we wandered further down the line a bit, but didn't have time to climb other less visited ones. Nonetheless, we had a great day.

# Joshua Tree

*Doug Halonen*



It's certainly possible to imagine having a better climbing experience, but PATC's March 24-31 trip to Joshua Tree will be hard to beat as far as that goes, according to expedition members: "Excellent companions and climbing," said Reed Bumgarner.

True, it was a wee bit cool, particularly in the shade, on occasion. It even snowed one day—starting just as I finished leading 5.7+ Mental Physics, an hour hike from the Wonderland of Rocks parking area. But the snow just provided an otherworldly backdrop for a beautiful walk back through a desert frosted in wintry glory. Even with the chill, we managed to climb seven days in a row, mending sore fingers with New Skin. It helped that we had rented Mike Huhn's beautiful Yucca Valley home for the trip, providing comfortable beds in which to recover overnight and allowing us to avoid the bongo-thumping revelers in the campgrounds.

One of the reasons we had so much fun is that JTree offers a full spectrum of climbing problems—cracks, slabs and face holds—often on a single route. For instance, Fote Hog, a sandbagged two-pitch 5.6, provides cracks, a traverse, a lay-back dihedral and a roof (big jugs but huge reach required) all over the course of one climb. Many of the choice JTree climbs are also very close to the road and parking areas. But be forewarned that the more remote climbs can be difficult to find, with the approaches sometimes involving convoluted scrambles. In addition, some of the downclimbs can be hard to figure out and may involve harrowing sections.

Trip highlights: Geoff "Rope Gun" Cohen led Colorado Crack, 5.9. Reed led it on Geoff's gear, and I toproped it with icy fingers. Geoff also led the much harder Pope's Crack, 5.9, which Reed cleaned. Geoff's other top picks included Fote Hog; Young Lust, 5.9; Dapple Mare with Roan Way variation finish, three-pitch 5.8/5.8+.

Reed's recommended leads: The Swift, three-pitch 5.7; Mr. Michael Goes to Washington, 5.8, and Feltoneon Physics, 5.8. I'd suggest trying Practice Rehearsal and Minotaur, a pair of 5.7's, when you are in the area. Our newbie Lee easily followed husband Craig Yamaoka up The Eye, a beautiful climb that has been rated up to 5.4. Now there will be no stopping Lee.

We were all "knackered," as Geoff put it, when we finally got back to the Washington area. But we'll return to JTree next year, if not sooner.

While climbing at Thunder Bird on 16 February (Up Rope Vol 62 Issue 1), I lost my footing at the base of the ice cliff and started to slide down the slope. While perhaps not as dramatic as the description, I want to expand on the experience. I successfully executed an ice axe arrest and my response was automatic. I owe this to training I received on McKinley, Rainier and other places in addition to refresher training during a PATC snow skills workshop conducted by Andy Britton at Whitetail last year.

The lesson here is that training to arrest a fall is essential if you are planning to climb on steep snow or ice. If you do it often enough, a fall is not a question of IF, but WHEN. On ice you accelerate rapidly.

## Thunder Bird Ice

### *Ice Arrest Axe Training*

*Andy Huttner*

# Saranac Lake Ice

## Last Ice Hurrah 2007

Wayne Stone

My wife - Jennifer  
- landed an ER rotation through her PA program in Saranac Lake - what a dream come true! I only wish it had been slated to start in mid-January when the temps were a

bit cooler and the ice was more solid. I packed for one last ice trip of the season and we drove up; took us about 9 hours. Vince Penoso indicated he was game for one more chance at sticking some picks - so he flew up and met us in Saranac Lake. The objectives were Positive Reinforcement, Central Pillar and anything else that looked in. I was a little worried about the conditions of Positive Reinforcement and more optimistic about Central Pillar. Both were DRIPPY - did I mention they were DRIPPY?

On Saturday morning after breakfast at the City Diner, we hiked down to canyon and had a gander at Positive Reinforcement. It was runny, but looked OK to climb. It was way different looking than when I was there in January. I decided it was climbable and racked up. Basically, the screws were crap - they spun out so easily because of the percolating water running through the ice. Talk about the leader not wanting to fall - I sure did not. I managed to get up to the big cedar tree, set a belay and bring Vince up. The climbing was fun - some stemming, vertical, and bulges. Vince made chopped meat out of the climb - climbing like a well oiled machine - you needed to be oiled to climb the running water-ice without rusting. I convinced him to lead the second pitch, I mean, we were there, right? This pitch was tube-able and what a wild ride it would have been - Class 3 tubing - ye-haw! Vince placed some screws into the gurgling ice (this was more a mental exercise by now) and went up. He made nice work of the steep headwall at the top, set a BOMBER belay on some trees - gotta love the trees, and brought me up. In one way, I could not believe that we were climbing this stuff - it sounded like a babbling brook underneath and the water cascading to my right made for a nice waterfall. Once I made it to the top, we rapped down and set a top rope anchor on a great stump and tree. We TR'd a steeper line of Positive Reinforcement on the left side of the cliff. Then it started to rain/snow - so we left.



Vincent Penoso seconding P1,  
Positive Reinforcement

On Sunday, we decided to check out Central Pillar on the North Face of Pitchoff - surely this would be more solid? To my surprise it was not really that solid. The left side of the climb was finished, the middle was climbable but looked too mushy for screws to do any good, so we settled for the seemingly less steep, gelatinous right side. I started up and pounded a spectre into the slush-puppy ice - this was just for kicks. Vince said it seemed pretty solid. I continued up the pitch - scouring snow off the climb (there was about 4 inches of new, wet snow on the ice). The climbing was fun, I thought it would be about WI3/3+, but soon I was definitely in WI4 territory, vertical mire - yikes! I knew this was a no-fall situation. I plugged in several screws on my way up, made a few more moves and put the last screw in before the last 12 feet of vertical terrain. I might as well have been climbing a big stick-of-butter falls - the screws went that easily. My one reassurance was great feet. Just 4 moves, pull the bulge and it will be all good - so that is what I did. A wee traverse got me over to my favorite thing - a cedar tree! Vince started climbing and I could not see him. It sounded like he was moving well. I saw some chards of ice fly and I knew he was close. He pulled over the bulge - smiling of course - what a great way to finish the season! We did one rap down a flowing waterfall and called it a day.



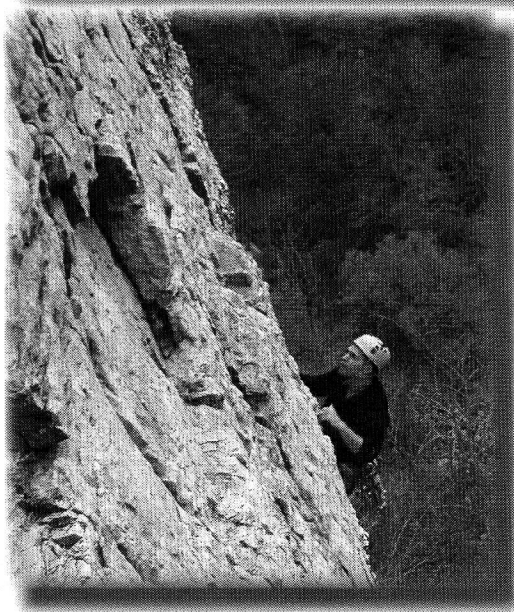
Wayne Stone on lead,  
Positive Reinforcement, WI3+

In the meantime, Jennifer had started building a snowman on the pond below the climb so we joined in and finished it. We decided it looked like a beaver. Then to Lake Placid for sandwiches at SIMPLY GOURMET. This place is awesome - fresh baked bread, 46 sandwiches to choose from and a friendly staff. It is right near the mini-golf place on NY86 as if you are leaving Lake Placid and heading towards Saranac Lake. When I returned to DC, I bought a 10 lb block of ice to store my screws in until next year in the freezer - they needed to bite some solid ice. In all, a great trip for the end of the season and good times. Next, rock!

# Seneca Rocks

## "My First Trad Whipper!"

Jeff Karrels



So there I was; accelerating head first towards the deck thinking, "so this is what a free solo rappel feels like." 15 seconds before this I had a track record of never falling on trad lead or follow.

Now before you make judgments on my falling orientation, let me explain how in the world I got myself into this situation. In order to fill some time while waiting for "Ecstasy Junior" at Seneca Rocks to open up, I decided to make a quick ascent of "The Burn." As I'm racking up, I feel a little droplet of water hit me in the face. Are the climbing gods teasing me? Ignoring it, I double check my rack for completeness, give my belayer a heads up, and start up "The Burn." I was completely comfortable and moving at a decent pace. As I move up, I feel more and more of those devilish little droplets touch down. At this point it doesn't bother me though, I have been on this climb before and remember the rock on the crux section being like sandpaper. More importantly I am at a safe distance off the deck with good gear in. I continue to move up to the overhang that is located at the same level as the "Ecstasy" belay niche. I am stoked! I have never noticed the crack under the overhang that Chief Seneca himself created solely for the purpose of putting in my "comfort piece" (a yellow Metolius cam). Like a kid on Christmas morning, I ecstatically grab for my Metolius #2. It sets even better than I predicted. Throw a sling on it, clip it, awesome!!!

I take a second to grab a breath and notice that there is someone sitting in the "Ecstasy" belay ledge. Embarrassingly I said hi. (Embarrassed because I have a tendency to talk to myself on lead and worse yet sing songs. I have no clue what was coming out of my mouth before I noticed her.) I chatted

a bit and then saw that the follower on EJ was set to take photos of me pulling the overhang. So back to work...

I reach up for a hold, slightly wet. Pulling back a bit to take a breath and chalk up I think back to "The Rock Warriors Way": Don't focus on the bad, focus on what you have available to you. The holds may be a bit moist, but feel the friction underlying. There are a couple pretty good crimps on the left of the overhang. I move up on them, moving a bit more cautiously now. A rhythm prevails: chalk, search for hold, chalk, commit, and move up. I pull the overhang, both feeling strong and wanting to get to the finger locks above; I pass up the placement right over the overhang. I decide that the energy it is going to take to put in gear off of those moist crimpers is not worth it, so I opt to find a better stance. After all, my piece below is my comfort piece.

With my right hand on a decent crimp I search out two smears for my feet. Shake out my left, chalk it up and search for the next hold. The hand, a small sloper finger pad width, isn't great, but I felt as though I could move on it. After re-chalking, I place my left hand and start shifting my weight. There it goes - just like that. The left hand comes off loading my right crimp. OOOOO my this is going to be exciting!!! My right crimp stays on for a fraction of a second and then airborne! Wow! With time itself slowing down, I instantly thought ledge, ledge, ledge remembering the 1 foot wide ledge below the overhang that I was standing on at one time. So as soon as I feel some rock near me again I push away from the wall. The push throws off my orientation and I then get a very not-good feeling. I'm falling horizontal, perhaps even upside down. I start this exhale/low groan just waiting for a sharp pain in the upper body region. This is followed up by an outstanding feeling. Deceleration!!! I start feeling the rope stretch and tighten and I finally come to rest, upside down. After I upright myself I assess any damage. A little blood on the hands, but not bad and everything is functioning. I climb back up to my top piece, say hi to the "Ecstasy" belayer again, and decide to bail due to the strengthening drizzle.

The aftermath: my right hand got a little banged up...the tips of my fingers took a good deal of abuse from unexpectedly loading my body weight on a 3 finger less than horizontal crimper. A scratch on the ankle, and that is it. A freakin' ~25 footer and just a couple of bruised fingertips, my GA was definitely working overtime! Or maybe it was those virgin biners I sacrificed to the climbing gods last season. Whatever it was, I was thankful to be on the rock the following day.

In retrospect, that fraction of a second that my right hand stayed on I feel gave me just enough time to orient myself to my surroundings thus avoiding some ankle shattering ledge action. However, in the unfortunate event that the climbing gods wanted more than biners last season, I had a great population of PATC-MS'ers within yelling distance from me (good to see you all out there).

So there it is. I don't hate climbing after all, the falling thing is kind of sucky.

# Carderock

## Beginner's Day 2007

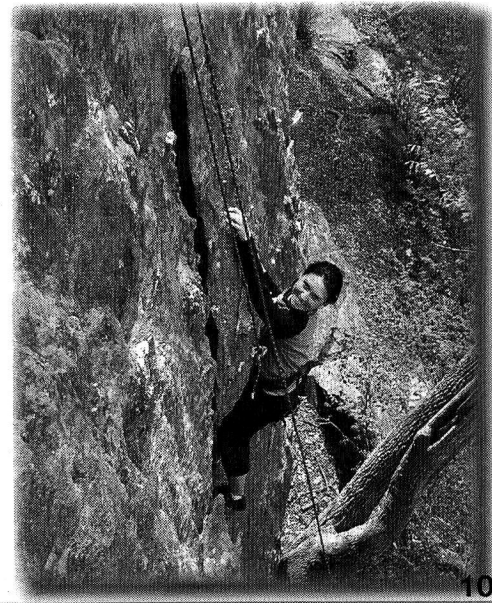
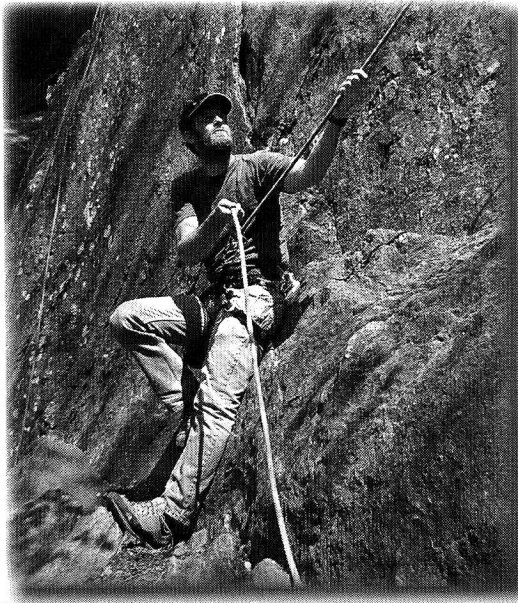
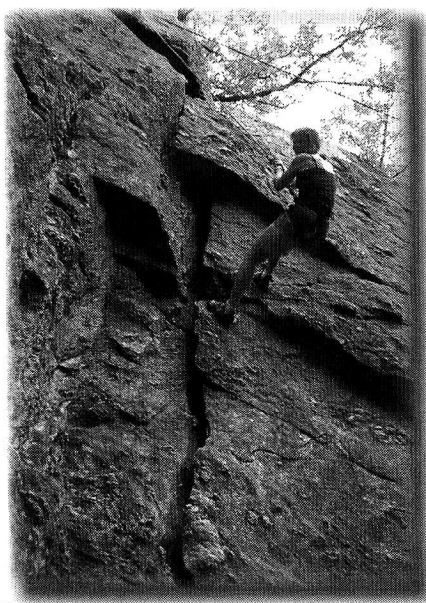
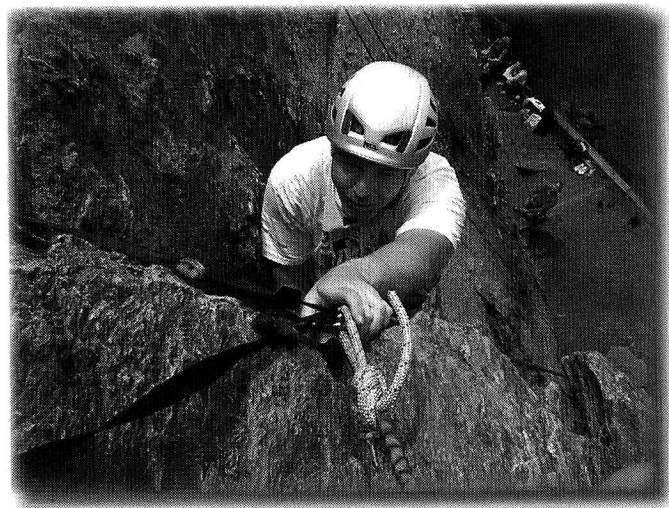
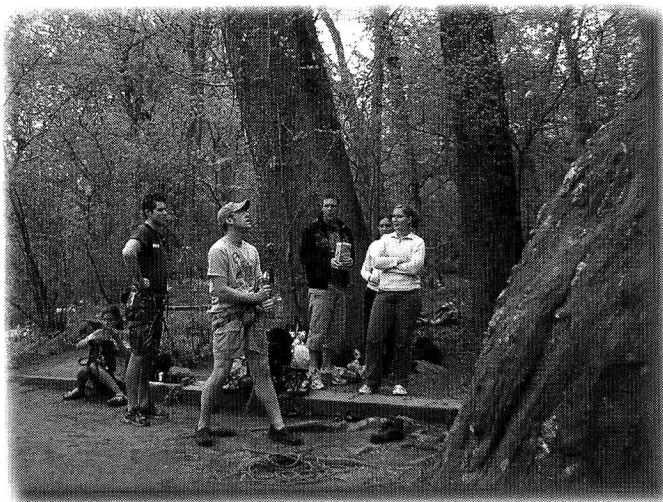
Annette Rebellato

At my first PATC-MS meeting as an "official" member, Dave and Vince were asking for volunteers for the annual Beginner's Day event at Carderock. Since Joe is so experienced in climbing, loves showing beginners how much fun it is and used to teach the Outdoor Program in college, I poked him until he volunteered "us" to lead the day. Us meant he did all the work and I helped carry ropes!

As my first club event, it was amazing! I was worried that we wouldn't have many people or they wouldn't have any fun, but I didn't have to bother - the day was fantastic! That day Joe and I, not morning people by ANY stretch of the imagination, woke up about 5:30 to clean up and get dressed. We were on the road slightly after 6:30 and arrived at Carderock about 7 a.m. We quickly decided on five good climbs to set up and got to work; again, Joe doing most of the work! Almost immediately after finishing this, a group of 4 climbers walked down the path and said they were there for the Beginner's Day! About 5 minutes later, Bill showed up with a couple more ropes and volunteered to drop a few more routes.

We decided to let Joe handle waivers and instruction on gear, while I took over showing those around who had never been to Carder. We had quite a few people who were not beginners by any means, so I gave them a quick tour of the two main walls and the climbs on each, and let them go at it. More and more people were coming, so I kept on acting as tour guide and soon there were climbers spread ALL over the rock! Dave showed up and dropped a few more ropes on some of the super-beginner climbs, and all told, I think we had upwards of 10 ropes set up.

We climbed late into the day, and every time I turned around, someone new was asking more about the club, someone was pulling a move they had never tried before, and everyone was smiling, laughing and enjoying the perfect day! We got SO many "THANKS" from people that I was a bit overwhelmed! What a great event that the PATC-MS sets up each year and I'm proud to have been a small part of it!



## Odds & Ends

### Submitting Articles

- Keep articles 1000 words or LESS.
- Most picture formats will work (prefer .jpg)
- Most text documents (prefer Word)
- Send pictures separately and please do not imbed pictures in text documents; it makes for formatting nightmares. Original images, highest resolution, work best. Please include a caption/description.
- Snail Mail: send to UPROPE NEWSLETTER

### How to join the Potomac Mountain Club

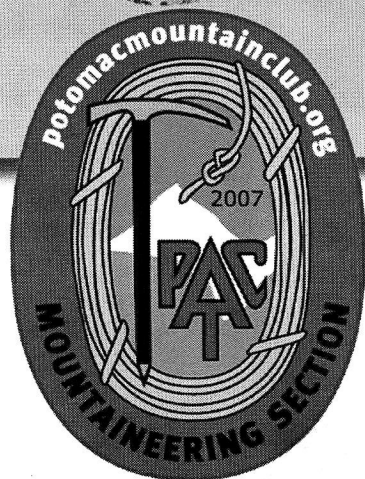
Go to [www.PotomacMountainClub.org](http://www.PotomacMountainClub.org) and click "Join" at the top of the page.

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Go to [www.PotomacMountainClub.org](http://www.PotomacMountainClub.org) and click "ListServer" at the top of the page.

### ROCKFALL

- View PMC pictures at <http://patc.biow.org/gallery/>
- See the UpRope Newsletter online in brilliant color!
- New club t-shirts, long or short sleeve: \$10
- Read current events & notices online
- [www.PotomacMountainClub.org](http://www.PotomacMountainClub.org)
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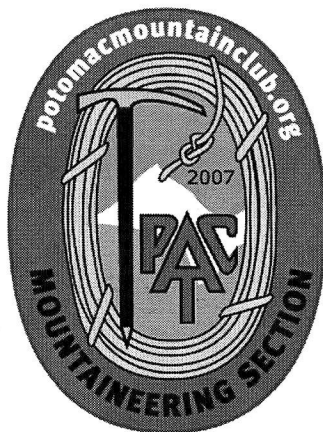
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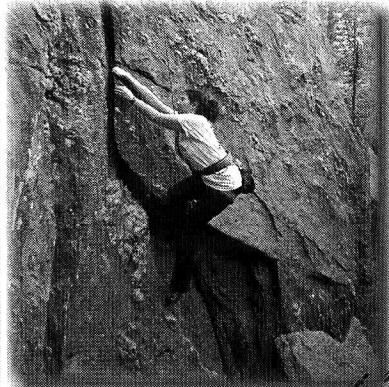
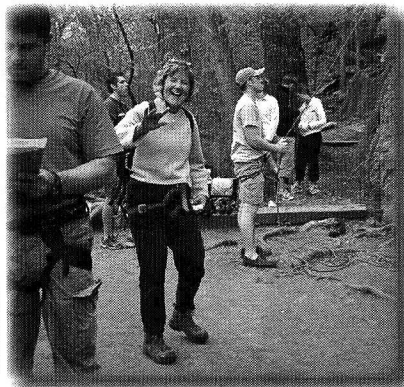
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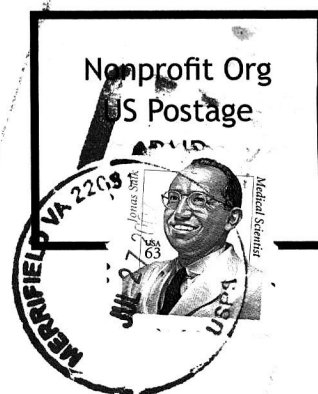


Sneak Peak: PMC's Annual Beginner's Day at Carderock  
See full story inside!



THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE POTOMAC APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB - MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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