



FOUNDED BY
JAN AND HERB CONN

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

Volume XVIII Number 6 1916 Sunderland Place N. W. Washington 6, D. C.

Page 1

June 1963

COMING EVENTS

- June 1-2 Seneca, West Virginia No beginners
- 9 Carderock, Md.
- 15-16 Seneca Rocks, W. Va. This trip is designed to get our beginners acquainted with Seneca. All climbers (beginners and otherwise) should sign up with chairman Ed Worrell to insure that all climbing parties can be sufficiently strong. E. Worrell, Phone RI 4-5112 (Baltimore, Md.)
- 20 Deadline for UP ROPE
- 23 Sugarloaf, Md.
- 30 Great Falls, Va. Juliet's Balcony Area
- July 6-7 Seneca Rocks, W. Va.
- 14 Carderock, Md.

THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR SEWER

This is the second of a series of articles which the P.A.T.C. Conservation Committee has been invited to contribute to UP ROPE. These articles deal with developments affecting outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources, particularly in the Potomac Valley.

When the huge Dulles International Airport was first planned for the vicinity of Chantilly, Va., athwart the Fairfax-Loudoun County line, provision was made for construction of a small sewage treatment plant to process waste from the installation. The effluent, or treated sewage, was to be discharged into a small creek which enters the Potomac upstream from Seneca, above the intake of the Washington water supply system and that of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. Because of this threat to water supplies, as well as the likelihood that real estate developments would occur in the vicinity of the airport causing additional sewage disposal problems, public pressure built up for a trunk sewer from Dulles to Washington or to a Fairfax County treatment plant near Alexandria.

Congress eventually authorized the District of Columbia Department of Sanitary Engineering to construct the Potomac Interceptor from the Dulles International Airport to Washington at a cost of about \$26,000,000. The route selected parallels Virginia

Highway 7 from the airport to a point near Dranesville, where it cuts northeast to Great Falls, crosses the river, and follows the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal down to the city where existing trunk sewers will transport the waste to the D.C. sewage treatment plant at Blue Plains.

Where it crosses the Potomac just below the water supply dam at Great Falls, the interceptor is laid in a trench in the riverbed. From the Maryland end of this crossing to Cropley (near the Anglers' Inn) a tunnel has been bored to preclude construction scars in the scenic Great Falls-Widewater area. From Cropley to a point near Cabin John the sewer follows the right-of-way of the George Washington Memorial Parkway near the C&O Canal, then actually enters the bed of the canal (close to the berm side) to continue down to Georgetown. The crushed rock piled along the towpath at the lower end of Widewater was removed from the tunnel and will reinforce the towpath embankment against washouts. Placing the interceptor in the canal below Cabin John is necessary to prevent marring the area between the canal and the river. At present the canal is drained below Widewater; below Cabin John its bed is being drastically disturbed by construction machinery but will be restored to approximately the original condition.

Pending completion of the interceptor, three lagoons have been built at Dulles to permit natural oxidation treatment of the relatively small amount of waste now emanating from the airport. Since construction of the sewer is well advanced, this temporary method will not have to be continued long.

While not part of the present construction project, it will be feasible for a spur sewer to be built from Seneca (or above) down along the canal to Great Falls and for a similar spur to be built close to the river on the Virginia side. Any riverside sewer line is bound to have an unfavorable impact on the scenic upper Potomac Valley. Yet sewer systems normally depend on gravity flow and natural drainage is of course down the tributary stream valleys, thence down the main river. As long as county authorities preserve rural-type zoning with large lots, waste disposal can be cared for by septic tanks. But as pressure from subdividers becomes greater, zoning will very likely be modified to permit denser population, and then public water lines and sewers will be necessary.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that the purpose of trunk sewers along the Potomac is to keep the river free from pollution, even the relatively small amount contained in highly-treated sewage plant effluent. We need a clean river for swimming, boating, and fishing, as well as for aesthetic reasons. The demands of water conservation of scenery and the natural environment, and compromises have to be made. The cooperation between the D.C. Department of Sanitary Engineering and the National Park Service in minimizing the impact of the Potomac Interceptor on our beautiful river valley illustrates the sort of solution which can be achieved.

Philip J. Stone
Chairman P.A.T.C. Conservation Committee

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

On Sunday May 19, Allnutt, Faulhaber, Nolte and Worrell attempted to recreate the conditions which resulted in the April 28 Annapolis Rocks accident. Conditions were not fully duplicated, but the rope showed some cutting after a swing similar to that which Faulhaber had. Al Klovdahl has outlined procedure for completing investigation.

Ed Worrell

Dr. Samson Goldin

Sam Goldin died suddenly in a car accident last month.

Sam climbed with us in 1959 and '60. He held a First Aid course for us and contributed frequently to UP ROPE. The impossibility of reducing to a few words the personality of a friend like Sam is obvious. Perhaps we can stir alive a few memories by reprinting an article he wrote for UP ROPE in December 1959.

6

THOUGHTS ON DESCENDING INTO SCHOOLHOUSE CAVE
FOR THE FIRST TIME

For weeks I had resisted. Crawling through tortuous spiky passates lubricated with icy water and clay did not appeal to my craving for the caviare life. Glissading down a mud slope; it sounded revolting and a trifle obscene. I am all for the salubrious bourgeois life and care not for the murky, miserable caves, and yet they kept on persuading me, coaxing me, wheedling me; proffering me helmets, lamps, carbide, sleeping bags, blankets, air mattresses. (No, not air mattresses - the cads.) Strangely, uncannily, I succumbed - bedevilled? My Thanksgiving Day weekend and I was petrified; so scared.

It was at the very witching time of night when the gnome* and the harpy* descended through the mouth and up the gullet of this monstrous, petrified whale, stranded in some ancient pleistocene age and silted over with the carnage and catabolism of the centuries. Enshrouded in a veil of their own congealed breath, they met the main body of their party already cocooned for the night in the antechamber.

Many sleepless hours later (no air mattress - curses), I stood on the lip of the jumping off place staring into the Stygian darkness. I do not intend to give a description of my journey to the very end of the Great Gallery - and back, but instead to drop a few choice thoughts of my impressions. (That b..... editor; what an assignment.)

As Alan and I decided, one has to be prepared to sacrifice comfort for the sake of adventure and I suppose the Tom Sawyer in us never grows old, only inform. Climbing in this cave is an adventure especially to my untutored eyes, but if I ever return I would like to be less intent on reaching the very end of the cave and would prefer to have more leisure to get off the beaten track, if that is possible. There are one or two suggestive shadows which aroused my curiosity. To explore unknown ground is very exciting for some of us. I suppose it is the urgings of an intense but disguised ambition that spurs us on. We wish to conquer - fear? giants? We desire the fame in posterity of giving our name to some spot - stature? immortality?

The cave to me has its own particular form of beauty and I was particularly impressed by the Thunderbolt Room and the Great Gallery. The immensity, the chaos, the curious and intriguing forms all so very awesome and one feels perhaps more than one does in climbing above ground that one is intimately in contact, at grips with anature that presents a challenge and a rich reward too.

Finally one cannot help but be impressed by the first explorers of the cave. Those climbers who went down the mud slope for the first time in the early forties and then up to the top of the Judgment Seat have all my respect and admiration.

Sam Goldin

* (Who else but Alan and Sam.) Ed. (Betty Johnson)

* (The word left out by Sam is undoubtedly blasted. Ed.)

"...the saner elements..."

This appears to be a good time of the year to review the results of an effort, last summer, to popularize Wednesday night climbing, and to comment briefly on the possibilities for the coming summer--in case anyone wishes to continue this Wednesday evening foolishness.

On all these official unofficial trips--as opposed to unofficial official trips --we went to Carderock, an area which seems to be very well suited to these summer jaunts. [It is close to Washington, a parking area is nearby (the illegal one), and Mother Touhey's milk stand is just up the road.]

Six of us enthusiastic, energetic climbers were present for the first trip, and although there was observed a marked tendency to dissipate this energy through our various months, we still managed to do a respectable amount of climbing in the ample time available. (See UP ROPE July '62.) The following week this vast number of dedicated climbers--climbers who, after a hard day at work would gladly forsake a soft easy chair for an anything-but-soft belay spot; climbers who could easily give up a relaxing meal for a hastily eaten chunk of moldy cheese; climbers who would readily abandon all comforts popularly attributed to civilization for one small chance to pit themselves against the uncompromising forces of pristine, but surely uncompromising walls tonight, or do I want to go home and watch TV like the saner elements of our society? It is not possible to know what the final decision was in each case, but since some of us had committed ourselves and/or car the previous night, we usually managed to arrive Wednesday evenings--at least most Wednesday evenings.

We continued thus through the summer with a fluctuating attendance averaging out to five or six climbers per trip. Attendance reached a peak one evening when ten or twelve participants mobbed the place. (Participant: one who arrives at parking lot and walks--100 years--to climbing area.) We finally gave up near the end of September when it began to get too dark, too fast, too early.

The coming summer offers the same possibilities as the one past, and in addition offers something else--the new Cabin John Bridge. This recently opened span brings several Virginia climbing areas within reach of the middle-of-the-weekers, and also makes Carderock more accessible to climbers living in Virginia. Cooking meals at the

(Concluded on Page 5)