



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

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YOSEMITE TALES

by Tom Evans

YOSEMITE, MAY 1972 -- Norris left in mid-April, but he drives 35 mph so I could leave a week later and be there three days before he arrived. Lyon called, so I waited. Miracle of miracles, Lyon shows up and we head west. We arrive late at night, under a full moon. Pat Milligan is already there. We start well enough, climbing every day, helping Lyon along, trying to teach him three years' climbing in a week! Norris shows up with a friend and the weather holds. Pat and I go up on the West face of the Leaning Tower (grade V 5.7 A-4). Ten pitches, the wall overhangs at 118° for 1,000 ft. I've heard all the stories - the hauling bag hangs 30' out from the wall on every pitch - etc. etc. Pat's first wall climb. Anxiety builds as we start the climb. Three pitches up the "Warren Harding Memorial Bolt Ladder," we bomb them. The angle is so steep our minds compensate for it and thus it seems just slightly overhanging. Lulled by three fun pitches I move off on #4. Peering into the sun I can see some rotten Bashie slings hanging down from a thin, rotten seam. The next two hours find me tapping knifeblade stacks in behind minute flakes that can't possibly hold but do. Two, three, four bad pins then a rotten Bashie, or perhaps a bolt, bent down and pulling out. I tie it off too! Nervous! Long pitch, rope drag, that last pin I just hit and hit, it will never come out. Guano Ledge. We will bivvy 30' left on a fine flat ledge. We decide to fix two pitches so we will only have four tomorrow. As the warm afternoon progresses Pat goes down, then back up right, on a long, spectacular aid traverse. Pat fights his way along, each pin a personal hell of anxiety and doubt. I follow the strenuous pitch in fading light. Attitudes have changed, we hate this climb, when will it ease?

I join Pat's sling belay and stare into the teeth of the next lead. Forty feet of unprotected 5.7 on bad rock up to a curving bolt ladder. I complain bitterly, death gripping every hold. Once on the bolts, confidence returned - "it's in the bag, man." We fix the rope and rappel to the bivvy ledge. We rest, eat. Mostly we sit, each trying to piece together a battered ego. Warm night.

Morning finds us sleeping late. We eat then go back up the fixed rope. Two pitches go well. I belay in slings under the notorious "Evil Tree" that clings to a huge, triangular ceiling. Pat climbs over the ceiling and up the (cont'd. on p. 3)

PATC MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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UP ROPE is the monthly newsletter of the Mountaineering Section of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) of Washington DC. Editorial contributions, trip reports, letters and comments are welcome and should be directed to Editor, UP ROPE, 4528 Win-
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From the Editor's Chimney

FOR A LITTLE bit over a year and a half we have had the pleasure and the pressure of bringing you UP ROPE with reports and comments from the Mountaineering Section. But frankly during the past year we have not seen much support from Section members except from a handful of interested and active trip leaders who reported on their activities and from a few contributors and the business staff. At times there was not even a climbing schedule ready and advance program announcements have been a rarity. (But what a turnout when we publicized the Matt Hale program well in advance!)

It is all well and good for the club to publish a bulletin but when the real need for it either diminishes or active membership support is waning steadily it's time to take another look at the need for a publication. Our April 1973 editorial was a loud warning that we were not pleased with this situation.

UP ROPE's role is to support the Mountaineering Section and its activities, to advance mountaineering and to provide a link between individual active and former members. Since we are not distributed freely to the general public we do not serve to publicize the Section except indirectly. Our number ONE nuts-and-bolts purpose is to inform members about future meetings and trips and to relay such warnings as we receive them about unsafe climbing techniques, equipment failures and other emergency notices. Secondly, we record Section activities (meetings, new members, climbs, trips) and lastly we serve as an outlet for members to air their experiences, opinions, comments and personal announcements.

We have also taken it upon ourselves to inform our readers about topics of interest to mountaineers, incl. news about publications, maps, equipment, expeditions, techniques and the like. And since we are the voice of the Section we provide space for comments by the Chairman, take a stand on certain matters editorially and indirectly through our distribution to certain government officials, fellow mountaineering organizations and interested individuals bring our influence to bear publicly.

But the first three items are the heart of this publication. And it is here that we feel help is needed. Following are some choices, listing our favorites first, which need discussing and settling now:

- 1 - Publish less often but giving more space to mountaineering articles and news.
- 2 - Distribute program and trip information, business reports etc. separately, either through an UP ROPE bulletin or by the Secretary and Program Chairman.
- 3 - Publish UP ROPE irregularly as material on hand warrants.
- 4 - Turn UP ROPE into a money-making enterprise with wider scope or contract out.
- 5 - Publish monthly or by consolidating issues, varying in size from one to several pages.
- 6 - Discontinue publication and seek other ways to inform members about activities.

YOSEMITE (cont'd. from p. 1)

overhanging wall above, to a ledge. Certainly one of the finest leads of the climb. Last pitch. A strenuous, classic, double overhanging 100' corner. As the warm afternoon draws on we finish the route. On top we realize how tired we really are and how slight is the margin of success. A fine tribute to the incredible Harding. One the descent a rock finds Pat in the Leaning Chimney - good for seven stitches. Pat pulls ahead and darkness finds me staggering down a huge boulder field. Soaked with sweat, near exhaustion, I silently resolve never to climb a wall again.

A week later, the golden California sun finds me leading the beautiful second pitch on the Dihedral Wall of El Capitan. Bob Norris and I have been thinking about the Dihedral Wall for months. It's one of the biggest, most demanding routes in the Park and we figure it will take everything we can put together to get up it. But at that moment we are really in there tight and we love every foot of it. We leave the haul bag and descend. Morning finds Bob ill and we decide to wait a few days before starting. Lyon and Milligan go off to do the South face of the Washington Column, a grade V.

Bob recovers and we start. The golden sun is gone, in its place the wind, and cold, and shadow. Bob's lead on the third pitch is as fine as I have ever seen him do. Many shaky pins there. My anxiety builds as I lead off on the next pitch. A bad pitch for me as I can't shake the feeling that all the pins are about to fall out. I finished the pitch but that was the end for me. To continue in my present state of mind would be not only folly but dangerous as well. We descended. Perhaps another day ...

The wind and cold were also problems for Tots and Pat. The first day on the Column was fairly warm and they were able to move along well and enjoy the climbing. The second day (we were on the Dihedral) they delayed their start due to threatening weather until mid-morning when the wind was thought to be dying down. They hurried along making up for lost time. Tots wheeled off the ninth pitch for a 20 footer and injured his ribs. They decided to continue anyway but they slowed considerably and darkness found them hanging from a bush on the last pitch. After an uncomfortable night they finished the climb and we met them at noon near Curry Village. Certainly a fine, determined effort under adverse conditions.

After several misadventures I decided it was time to leave. However, word soon spread throughout the valley that the notorious Chips Jangers' appearance was imminent. Women left the valley. The bears went back up into the high country. The bank was closed. Sure enough the next day we escorted Chips from Fresno to Yosemite and arrived at that time in the afternoon when Yosemite's walls look their most intimidating - even a quick glance sends shivers down hard men's backs. That evening we decided to do one more climb before Tots and I left. We decided to climb the Snake Dike on the southwest face of the great Half Dome. A classic Yosemite marathon: seven mile approach, 2,000' of climbing, eight mile descent, and all in one day. The four of us took five hours to get to the climb. The climb was certainly unique - up the single dike for nearly eight pitches of beautiful climbing, then a 1,000' death march up the slabs to the top of Half Dome.

As the afternoon shadows lengthened and the great stillness of evening approached we relaxed and talked quietly as we gazed down the great north west face of the Dome. For me it was particularly rewarding as I had been trying for years to get together with those three friends in Yosemite. And perhaps they shared that certain melancholic feeling I get as daylight fades from the valley and I know that the season is over for me. A hurried descent saw Chips and Pat speed ahead as Tots and I stood enjoying the wetness and beauty of the Mist Trail. Chips and Pat stayed two more weeks doing some

fine routes including the difficult East Buttress of Middle Cathedral Rock. The weather caved in as they were preparing for the Northwest face of Half Dome and that was the end.

STORM ON HALF DOME

by Mike Warburton

HAIL BOUNDED from the sky like a billion stinging marbles. Each dreaded lightning bolt illuminated the stormy darkness around us for an interminable instant and then withdrew for the crashing accompaniment.

Geert and I sat shivering in our belay seats, perched in the most undesirable place I have ever had the misfortune to be during a thunderstorm, a small stance in the zig-zag pitches just below the summit overhangs of Half Dome, Yosemite's lightning rod.

There had been that unbearably long and scary wait while the storm came toward us from the northeast. The seething mass of dark clouds lowered itself on the other side of the valley. Long, flashing streaks of lightning struck again and again over there, then closer and closer. Then it was us. Geert and I hid under the somewhat limited protection that my hammock provided against the pounding rain and hail and waited for whatever might come our way. What would happen? We were sitting ducks on this face for any lightning that might strike near us. Even if it didn't strike us directly, it could loosen rocks above us like it did yesterday when a huge block narrowly missed us and crashed down on the ledge where we had eaten lunch only a short while before.

The clouds closed around us. Above, two ropes disappeared in the mist. They stretched up to Greg and Brian, waiting it out somewhere above. How cold and wet were they? We could only guess and hope for the best. My thoughts travelled in circles for a while; it was a long wait.

Back in Palo Alto, the four of us had decided to climb the Northwest face as two groups of two. Greg Donaldson and Brian Cox formed one team, Geert Dijkhuis and I made up the other. The storms brought us together and we were now one team working together to get off this wall.

The sky was lighter; not so much rain was falling now. The torrent that poured down on us now came mainly from the overhangs above. We catch a little water and drink. It seemed to us that we were in the unfortunate position of being right in the middle of the face's drainage ditch. My thoughts wandered ...

Who was that idiot who babbled about never taking water for granted? Was that really me? That was an eternity ago on a far away south facing wall. But after all, what was "Yosemite climbing" besides crawling in a dizzy oven one moment, only to be doused with water and thrust into a freezer the next?

I started up once to clean the pitch but the weather decided I should not be so hasty. How was Greg doing? He had shouted down that he was going to start the next pitch at the same time that I was starting this one. I retreated to my place under the hammock and waited and worried about the guys above.

Once more the sky lightened and I was off again. My whole body shook with the cold. But after a few feet, I warmed up with happiness. I was enjoying myself for some obscure reason. It had been a fun climb for me. My life and death struggle with the manzanita at the base seemed so far away in the past.