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MAKING A WOMAN'S CLIMBING MUSCLE

by Paula Grant

If you are a woman climber who can't do a chin-up or a pushup but want to become strong, this story is for you. It describes five exercises you can do at home in about 30 minutes three times a week. The only equipment you need are a door-frame chin-up bar (which costs about \$15) and a set of dumbbells (which also costs about \$15). Both can be purchased at most sporting goods stores.

The exercises described below won't make you strong overnight; it takes time and work to make muscles grow. What these exercises will do is to get you started in learning how to develop upper body strength. If you start now, you may see results by the time the weather is warm enough for outdoor climbing. In fact, you may be convinced that it will be the weight training during next year's off season that will pay off on the rocks.

How to Begin? Before beginning the following routine, warm up your arms and shoulders for a couple of minutes by doing arm circles, backward and forward.

How Many Reps? How Many Sets? You'll do three sets of each exercise. Your first set will determine how many repetitions you'll do for the other two sets and what your goal will be for the exercise. For example, if you do five pushups in your first set, your goal is to do five pushups in your second and third sets also, although you probably won't be able to do five reps in all three sets the first time (or maybe the second or third time). Once you can do three sets of five pushups, increase the number of reps in the first set as much as you can. That number will be

your new goal for the next two sets. You may find that the chart accompanying this story will help you keep track of your progress.

How Often? You should do this routine three times a week, giving yourself a rest day between workouts.

How Much Weight? If dumbbells are new to you, don't go too heavy. It takes time to learn to control the movements while maintaining correct form. If the weights are too heavy, your form will suffer. In general, if you can do three sets of ten to twelve reps of an exercise, you are ready to move up to a heavier weight. More is said about determining how much weight to use in Exercise 3 described below.

How Long Between Sets? You'll have to be the judge of how long you need to recover between sets. One minute is good to shoot for. But remember: The less time you spend recovering, the more endurance you'll be building.

Exercise 1: Pullups. This is a good basic back exercise. To do it, you need a chin-up bar. Grip the bar with your palms facing away from you. They should be slightly more than shoulder width apart. Bend your knees behind you so that they are parallel to the floor. Now raise yourself until you can touch your chin to the bar (or else as high as you can). Then lower yourself slowly until your arms are almost (but not completely) straight. That's one rep. If you can't pull yourself up very high, you can have a friend help you. By cupping his or her hands under your feet, your friend should give you only enough support to help you through the exercise.

Exercise 2: Pushups. This exercise strengthens

chest muscles. Lie face down on the floor. Put your hands palms down on the floor below your shoulders about chest height. With your toes curled and your heels off the floor, push your body off the floor until your arms are almost fully extended (don't lock them). Now slowly lower yourself until your nose touches the floor. This is one rep. Be careful to maintain strict form while doing this exercise: Don't let your back arch so that your stomach rather than your nose touches the floor.

Exercise 3: Dumbbell Curls. This exercise works mostly the biceps, but also puts some stress on the forearms. To do it, you'll need one set of dumbbells. To determine the weight you should use, do one rep of this exercise with five-pound dumbbells. If you can do three sets of twelve reps on the first try, move up to eight-pound or ten-pound dumbbells. (If you don't own or have access to dumbbells and have to buy them, do this exercise in the store to determine which dumbbells to buy.)

To do the exercise, grasp the dumbbells with palms facing out, standing erect (preferably in front of a mirror so that you can watch your form) with your arms hanging down by your sides. Now, keeping your wrists straight, curl the dumbbells up to your shoulders by bending your arms at the elbows. Then slowly lower the dumbbell to the starting point. This is one rep. You can do this exercise by lifting and lowering both arms at the same time as described, or by alternately raising and lowering one arm and then doing the same with the other arm (you must do both arms to make one rep with this variation). Watch your form while doing this exercise: Your arms above the elbow should not move at all; they should remain fixed by your sides throughout the movement.

Exercise 4: Chair Dips. This exercise strengthens your triceps; you need two chairs to do it. Place the chairs a couple of feet apart, with seats facing each other. With your arms by your sides and your back to one of the chairs (as though you were going to sit down on it), lower yourself so that your hands can rest palms down over the edge of the chair seat. Now lift your feet so that they are resting on the seat of the opposite chair (you may have to adjust the distance between chairs). Lower yourself until your buttocks touch (but do not rest on) the floor. Now push yourself up to the starting position. This is one rep. If you can't do this exercise as described, put only one foot on the chair seat and leave the other foot on the floor.

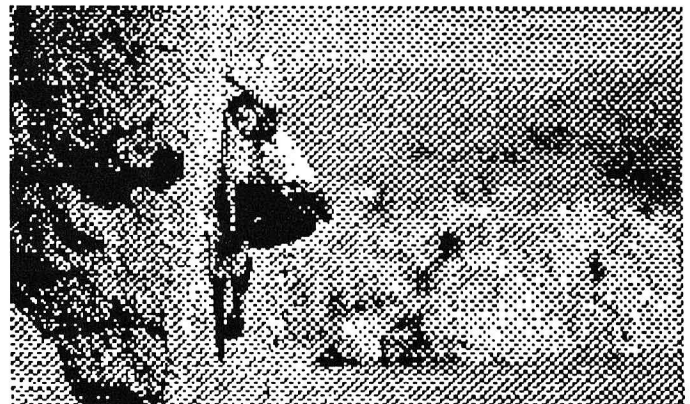
Exercise 5: L-Seat Leg Raises. This exercise strengthens abdominals; you need the chin-up bar to do it. Hang from the bar with your palms facing out. Keeping your legs pressed together with knees slightly bent, raise your legs until they are parallel to the floor. Then slowly lower them to the starting position. This is one rep. If you have difficulty doing this exercise as described, you can bend your legs and bring them up to your chest, then slowly unbend them as you return to the starting position. If your abs are strong, you can increase the difficulty of the exercise by holding your legs in the raised position for several seconds before slowly lowering them.

These exercises are just five of hundreds you can learn to make you strong. I chose them because they are fairly simple to describe and to learn to do without a coach. Also you don't need a gym; you can do them at home with fairly inexpensive equipment. But you'll soon become bored if these are the only strength exercises you do. If you like working out with weights—or just like the results you get from doing so—you'll probably want to look into joining a gym or a "Y" to get more information and coaching.

When it comes to climbing, women can do most of the routes that men can do. In fact, one kudo of this sport is that gender isn't a factor in determining how successfully you climb. What can make a difference, however, is how strong you are. Excellent technique, rock-solid balance, and elastic flexibility can get you up many climbs. But if you want to pull an overhand or work your way out an extended roof, you've got to have upper body strength. I hope this helps get you on your way to chugging over those roofs you may have been passing up.

Monthly Puzzler

Name that aspiring hardman, the location, and the climb. Hint: The climb is in Virginia and can be very hard on the "tips"!



WEIGHT TRAINING CHART

To log your strength training progress, keep a chart like this one for each day you exercise. Remember, when you can do three sets of your maximum effort (as determined by your initial set when you first did the exercise), it's time to increase the number of reps (until you can do ten to twelve reps in each of three sets). If you're using weights for the exercise, once you can do three sets of ten to twelve reps with, say, five pounds, it's time to increase the weight.

DATE _____

EXERCISE	REPS/SET 1	REPS/SET 2	REPS/SET 3
1. PULLUPS	_____	_____	_____
2. PUSHUPS	_____	_____	_____
3. DUMBBELL CURLS	_____	_____	_____
4. CHAIR DIPS	_____	_____	_____
5. L-SEAT LEG RAISES	_____	_____	_____

BOB AND DAVE'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

by Dave Coffey

Bob Fenichel and I made plans for joint vacations this past July. Bob went to Utah, met old friend from Phoenix Susan Hansen, and hiked the Great West Canyon Walk in the trailless backcountry of Zion National Park. The canyon walk was a three day effort with 50-pound packs, high temperatures, some class 3 terrain, and three committing (very difficult to reverse) rappels along the way. Dave went to California, met old friend Rik Aceves from Riverside, climbed at Mt. Rubidoux, then Yosemite for Unicorn Peak (Tuolomne) and Munginella (valley). Unicorn Peak is class 3 per the guidebook. Rik and I switched to our climbing shoes for the summit blocks. Good thing we had packed them "just in case". We both would have roped up and possibly protected the top of the climb had we brought the rope and rack. So much for guide book ratings.

After a week of these activities, Bob, wife Emily, Rik, and I rendezvoused at Mammoth Lake. Rik then went home to family and his real vacation while Bob, Emily, and I went backpacking and hiking in preparation for our attempt of the East Face Route on Mt. Whitney. These latter activities consisted of backpacking in the Mt. Ritter/Banner Peak region and getting vigorously rained out (subsequently

much time spent in the Mammoth Lake laundromat pushing quarters into dryers), hiking to Mono Pass (11,980 ft) with Bob and me continuing to climb Mt Starr (class 3, 12,800 ft), and an approach to Cathedral Peak (Tuolomne) Southeast Buttress which was met by rain and hail as we reached the base. We all retreated. Our preparations of hiking, climbing, and time for acclimatization completed and a good time had by all, Emily flew home while Bob and I headed for Whitney Portal and Mt. Whitney.

Mt. Whitney (14,495 ft) is the highest mountain in the 48 states and the East Face Route was the first big wall route in the US, first climbed in 1931. The (trail-less) approach starts at Whitney Portal (8,400 ft), goes up a steep, willow-choked canyon to Lower Boy Scout Lake, on to Upper Boy Scout Lake (11,300 ft) where we camped, then on to Iceberg Lake (12,200 ft) for "base" camp. Because of heavy packs and increasing altitude, we were both glad to use two days for the approach.

The next day was climbing day. We left camp at 7:40 AM with rope, rack, summit packs, two liters of water each, Goretex shells, headlamps, ice axes, maps, my tent fly, etc. The approach to the start and the climb itself were mostly as described in the route descriptions. We found features (First Tower, ledges, etc) difficult to identify from a

distance because they blended into the mountain so well. Still we went directly to the start at the first tower notch and the Tower Traverse at about 12,700 ft.

By 9:00 AM Bob was leading the first pitch. We generally alternated leads. All of the features associated with this route (Tower Traverse, Washboard, Fresh Air Traverse, Giant Staircase) were encountered and appreciated. For example, the Fresh Air Traverse is high, airy, secure, not hard, and there really is 1,500 feet of uninterrupted air beneath your feet!

The route is rated in most guidebooks as III, 5.4, although it is called III, 5.7 in the useful one-climb Shooting Star Guide by Allan Bard. Bob and I do not agree with 5.4, having found the easiest exit from the Grand Staircase to be hard 5.6 or even 5.7. This was the only pitch climbed while not wearing our packs, ice axes, etc.

The route has seven pitches of 5th class climbing, five to seven sections of 4th class, and extensive amounts of 3rd class. We climbed the 4th and 5th class portions in the normal manner. The 3rd class portions were climbed unroped and simultaneously with the lead climber trailing the rope and having some pieces in case either climber needed protecting. Climbing speed was limited by lungs hanging out of mouths. The summit was reached at 6:30 PM.

After an hour on the summit, it was clearly past time for rational people to descend. The normal descent is down the Mountaineer's Route. We found it almost immediately, but it was filled with steep snow to the slightly corniced top and showed no footprints at all. Unimaginable to be mid-July with that much snow and no visible signs of ascent or descent in the Mountaineer's Route. We went north and west until we found a diagonal route across 45-50 degree snow fields to the mid-portion of the Mountaineer's Route. Roped and with ice axes, we crossed vast amounts of snow, variously slogging, post-holing, walking on top, and kicking in as it froze during the evening. Ice axes, headlamps, additional clothing, and perseverance were all useful. Some kind souls had camped at Iceberg Lake since our departure and put out a light for us, a gracious gesture. We reached base camp at 11:30 PM, fixed dinner, and crashed into the tent.

The next morning we ate while viewing the mountain and our route, and reviewing our adventures of the previous day. We broke camp and hiked all the way out the same day. Descending almost 4,000 feet with a pack that inexplicably seemed not to have lost any weight beat me and my feet to

submission. Bob was fast, bouncy, always in front, and less beat out. Felony revenge came to mind.

We found the whole East Face Route adventure very rewarding. It was hard in all phases; approach, climb, descent, and the hike out. The remoteness, solitude, and commitment of the climb and descent gave us a definite feeling of seriousness. Interpersonal issues, always important and sometimes the most important, were just fine. Our collective pace, skills, and perspective or "risk equations" were similar or complementary. Preparation and acclimatization by hiking and climbing at intermediate altitudes earlier was just enough.

Climbing this route, one of the classics, was an outstanding adventure and personal achievement for each of us. Each has reflected on it and feels that it has great personal importance.

We both would do it again, just the same way. My thanks to Bob, Emily, and Rik.

Important *Up Rope* Message

In case you haven't noticed, we have been mailing *Up Rope* as third-class bulk mail since last year. This has cut the cost of mailing *Up Rope* significantly. However, the trade-off is reduced service: the post office will not deliver this mail as fast as first-class mail, will not return un-deliverable mail to us, and will not notify us if the address is wrong or if the addressee has moved.

To prevent delay in receiving *Up Rope*, please ensure that your address is correct and notify the Secretary of changes as soon as possible. In addition, we will strive to schedule club events and lectures with sufficient notice to our members.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Alex Tait

The Mountaineering Section has elected new officers for 1993 and, with a little arm-twisting, I sit as the new chairman. No State of the Section address here, but I would like to say a few things about what I and the other new officers have in mind for the coming year.

One item is to work on increasing participation of section members in club activities. The number of people showing up at meetings has dwindled lately and we have a dearth of leaders for weekend trips this spring. It's time to get some more activity going. Now we're not going to force people into cohesiveness that does not