



FOUNDED BY  
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## NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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### The Mountaineer's Tale

A vision dark upon my mind  
But slowly comes to life so clear,  
Reminding me of days unkind,  
Spent living as a mountaineer.

Of many climbs it could be shown  
I've held my ground as death rode near.  
But those events will go unknown  
By any other mountaineer.

Within these lines I'll briefly tell  
A single tale of pain and fear,  
One great ascent through wintry hell,  
The triumph of this mountaineer.

#### I. A Higher Calling

Exalted blood of climbers past,  
With spirits born to pioneer,  
Traditions strong and nobly cast  
Are pulsing through this mountaineer.

A vintage line of gentlemen —  
And not some horde of gadgeteers,  
Whose battles with that wretched Ken  
Annoy us peaceful mountaineers.

That fetid cur who plucks their bolts,  
As Gollum would his pimply rear,  
They pray Ken gets a million volts  
Or else becomes a mountaineer.

Their ethics feuds are grist for fools.  
I gladly pull and step on gear  
And love a climb which has no rules  
Confining any mountaineer.

The bars at which their bods are built  
Serve salad greens instead of beer.  
Along this climb they'd quickly wilt,  
Unlike a mighty mountaineer.

No lycra e'er these legs have clad.  
The boastful touch of bayadere  
And pomp of that obnoxious fad  
Ill suits a stoic mountaineer.

I contemplate the heights sublime  
Across another hemisphere.  
The Gunks, The New and Utah lime  
Are practice for this mountaineer.

The mountains boldly summon you  
Away from young rock engineers  
Whose chisels, glue and beta spew  
Are worthless to us mountaineers.

#### II. Getting Started

We organize a peerless team  
With only those whose sole career  
Devoted to the routes supreme  
And passions of a mountaineer.

A sponsor must support our goal;  
And you can be our financier.  
Ten grand will keep us off the dole  
And underwrite a mountaineer.

A virgin peak receives our nod,  
My patrons want a route premier.  
For money spent on climbs well trod  
Is wasted on a mountaineer.

As we arrive in Kathmandu  
Some tyrant guards detain our gear  
And claim another grand is due —  
A fortune to a mountaineer.

Persistence pays and off we go.  
But porter strikes revive our fears  
We'll never cross this glacial flow,  
A rubicon for mountaineers.

With wage increases we survive  
This latest threat to profiteer,  
On endless treks with yaks to drive;  
Whose stench affronts a mountaineer.

The poison of Nepal's cuisine  
Infests the Western junketeer.  
Unholy wars by pests unseen  
Declared upon this mountaineer.

A hearty retch upon the snow  
And constant runs that won't cohere.  
Such gastric chaos to and fro  
Will never stop this mountaineer.

We set up camp to acclimate  
And gaze upon our next frontiers  
Past icy fields that decimate  
The hopes of many mountaineers.

The bodies strewn around the base  
Remind us of the bombardiers  
That lurk about this hostile place  
And threaten naive mountaineers.

The dead do not foretell our course.  
The fallen never interfere  
With plans sent from the highest force,  
Who makes a safer mountaineer.

For luck is bought with spinning wheel  
And flags of prayer which commandeer  
Immortal men to wisely kneel  
In hopes they'll stay a mountaineer.

### III. The Climb

With alpine speed we cannot fail.  
Unburdened by a brigadier  
Of martial mind who could derail  
The talents of a mountaineer.

Our line avoids the snow cascades  
That daily sweep this face so sheer.  
An overhang above us shades  
The plodding of this mountaineer.

That shield against a snowy slide  
Presents a test still more severe,  
The ramparts standing there could hide  
The pitfalls to this mountaineer.

The verglass covers all the holds  
And crampons barely help adhere.  
A desperate battle soon unfolds —  
This roof against a mountaineer.

A struggle fought for higher stakes  
That precious few would volunteer  
To see themselves just what it takes  
To prosper as a mountaineer.

A storm confines us to our tent.  
For five long days we're forced to hear  
The God above us loudly vent  
His message to a mountaineer.

Who dares set foot on sacred ground,  
With eyes cast toward the stratosphere?  
(A pious climber's often found  
God's mercy toward a mountaineer.)

And suddenly the storm gives way  
Permitting us to scale this tier.  
And higher still to Him we pray  
He'll tolerate this mountaineer.

The stress of climbing takes its grip  
Upon this teammate once so dear;  
Who'll break the solemn partnership  
That bound him to this mountaineer.

A schemer full of tricks to spring  
On me, deserving summiteer;  
And grab himself the golden ring  
That's due this seasoned mountaineer.

Some pills will help me fall asleep,  
And others drain my body clear  
Of toxins that would sickly seep  
Into this healthy mountaineer.

Through biting winds our progress slacks.  
We starve on thinning atmosphere  
And stumble through the drifts that tax  
A quickly fading mountaineer.

Hallucinations start to rage.  
The greatest climbers persevere  
On half their wits and then engage  
The ego of a mountaineer.

A cry. A song. I know that voice.  
Young Mallory in red chimere  
Inviting me to soon rejoice  
With angels and a mountaineer.

A peaceful place for quiet rest  
To dream again of old Berkshire  
And soar above the snowy crest,  
Redeemer of this mountaineer.

Arise and climb, lest death await,  
The shadow cast by life's veneer,  
A victim of a mind sedate.  
Let nothing stop this mountaineer.

At last the top, or so I guess.  
The clouds deny my souvenir.  
No lens can pierce this swirling mess  
And illustrate a mountaineer.

A flag will mark our latest coup,  
That other climbers may revere.  
A banner bidding me adieu,  
The quickly parting mountaineer.

No time to dwell, descend with speed.  
For soon the light will disappear  
And punish us who failed to heed  
The warnings to a mountaineer.

As night arrives we grope ahead.  
The whispers from the yesteryear  
Are calling us to join the dead —  
The future of a mountaineer.

The Arctic air has almost froze  
The bravest soul, forever dear.  
Find shelter soon or lose your toes,  
The tariff on a mountaineer.

We'll spend another frigid night  
Upon an open bed austere.  
A bivy is a fearsome plight  
To every sleepy mountaineer.

With frozen feet upon my lap  
We share our mortal thoughts sincere.  
Exchanging heat with body wrap  
Resuscitates a mountaineer.

So far from summer's gentle breeze  
A glimpse of light affords some cheer.  
We struggle through an icy freeze  
Enduring like a mountaineer.

At dawn we fast resume descent.  
Another night is fatal here,  
Since all our food and fuel are spent,  
Imperiling a mountaineer.

A slip, and heaven quickly claims  
A life still shy of thirty years.  
A lad not skilled at deadly games  
That daily test us mountaineers.

A tainted climb must still suffice.  
Catastrophes could well besmear  
A lesser task, but they're the price  
Of making me a mountaineer.

#### IV. Heading Home

The climb is done, it's time to flee  
A distant bell again rings clear.  
Another challenge beckons me,  
The endless searching mountaineer.

And if upon your own set course,  
That blessed call you chance to hear;  
Just answer soon with no remorse,  
And so become a mountaineer.

Tom Isaacson

#### Christmas Party

Just a reminder, this year's Christmas Party will on Saturday December 11, starting at 6 PM at PATC headquarters. You don't have to be a member or even a climber join in the festivities, just bring a dish and bring yer (noncamming) friends

#### !Gym Membership for MS Members: Don't Hibernate This Winter

You don't need to trade in your stealth rubber for a pair of crampons this winter (unless, of course, you plan to climb some ice). The Clipper City Rock Gym in Baltimore and the

Rockville Climbing Gym will be open during the winter. In case you haven't been there recently, the Baltimore gym now has a 60 foot high lead climbing wall, in addition to the top-rope climbs. The Mountaineering Section has arranged a special deal with the owner that will allow members to climb at both gyms year round for less than \$10 per month. Call Dave Godwin (703/276-2291) for more details.

### Swiss-French Alps by Don McIntyre

In late July and early August, my wife Linda and I spent a terrific three weeks hiking and climbing in the Swiss and French Alps. The Alps are one of the finest climbing areas in the world. The Alps offer glacier travel, snow, rock and ice, and good mountaineering experiences. This was my wife's first trip and my fourth visit.

We began our adventure in Geneva where we rented a car and drove to the small town of Täsch, where you must park your car and ride a cog railway the final five miles to Zermatt and the Matterhorn. We stayed in the Bahnhof Hotel, which is run by a wonderful woman in her 70s — Frau Biner. Her family have all been professional mountain guides in the Zermatt region for generations and she is the absolute authority on routes and weather! Our first outing was to hike the Hohen Blummen which is an 18 km hike up to the base of the Zinalrothorn, over a pass, down to Zmutt, under the North Face of the Matterhorn, and return to Zermatt. This was a great hike and did a lot to get us ready for climbing!

The next morning we got up, ate a number of wonderful Swiss pastries, and hiked up to the Theodul Hut on the Swiss- Italian border. The hut system in Europe offers a number of advantages in that you don't need to take camping gear, tents or other heavy stuff. Plus, food is available at the huts along with a nice warm bed. Most climbs begin well before first light and require you to get up and leave usually by 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. We climbed the Breithorn (4164 meters) and returned to Zermatt to wait for better conditions on the Matterhorn. We had wanted to climb the Italian ridge, but the conditions were not good due to warm weather, wet snow (three feet new) and loose rock.

After two days, we decided to go over to the next valley and climb the Obergabelhorn and the Weisshorn. These climbs are done from the small town of Zinal where there is a very nice camping area with hot showers.

From Zinal you hike up 5,000 feet to the hut and climb from there. I climbed the North Face of the Obergabelhorn, which is a steep ice face, 1500 feet high and rated TD- by European standards. My wife and I also climbed the Bishorn, but backed off the Weisshorn because of dangerous snow conditions on the connecting knife ridge.

The next stop was on the French, Italian and Swiss border area, near the Grand St. Bernard Pass — yes, like the dog. The hike to the hut to climb the Grand Combin is one of the more beautiful walks in the Alps. It is also one of the major sections of the famous Haute Route Ski Traverse from Chamonix to Zermatt. The climb of the Grand Combin was very interesting and fun as it combined rock, snow and ice with a falling serac finish. Ö Now it was time for climbing in Chamonix and the French Alps. Our goals included the Brenva Spur on Mt. Blanc, Grandes Jorasses, Aiguille Verte, Tour Ronde and several rock routes. These were to be interrupted with the proper amount of time spent in the wonderful bars of Chamonix — the Black Crow and Bar National, for sure.

As it turned out, I soloed the Aig. Verte by the Whymper route and also climbed the Grande Rocheuse. Several rock routes were also accomplished in the Aiguille du Plan area. We then went to Grindewald and the Eiger area. The weather had been quite warm so the snow and ice conditions were not good on the big faces. We did several good hikes in the area and eventually attempted a climb on the Schreckhorn, but picked a wrong ice ramp which left us looking at the main peak from the wrong side of a dropoff. Oh well. . . .

The trip ended with a boat ride on the Interlaken lakes, tours of local castles and two wine festivals. A great place to go for a summer trip.

## A Short Romp Through The Red

by Tom Isaacson

Doug Cosby and I visited the Red River Gorge for three days in mid-September. Doug was anxious to return there — the scene of some of his best climbing efforts from two previous trips. I was enticed by rumors that it possessed the definitive 5.12a jug-haul. I found it but, alas, failed to flash.

The Red is definitely not everyone's cup of tea. The drive takes about nine hours (it's located about 50 miles east of Lexington, Kentucky, although the actual directions are considerably more circuitous [if not downright devious]). Fortunately, the New River Gorge is roughly mid-way to the Red, so there's a convenient stopping point just in case you need to do some more climbing.

The Red is also very rural. You might expect to find Jed Clampett there — before he struck black gold, Texas tea. Bring plenty of food, tapes for the car and something to read. Also, you better get along with your climbing partner. You won't be meeting a whole lot of other folks. Some climbers are rumored to carry guns in their packs, ostensibly as protection against locals. This, of course, amplifies the importance of maintaining good partner relations.

Enjoying the rock at the Red is also something of an acquired taste. It is, without question, steep. Not every route overhangs, but the vast majority do. Slab climbers will not like this place. The sandstone is also rather crumbly. As a result, many of the routes continue up until the rock deteriorates below minimal standards. The cold shuts are often located in the first band of poor rock. Fortunately, many routes have three or four cold shuts.

The holds predominately consist of pockets. In most cases the pockets are larger than finger size and can be gripped like ordinary in-cut edges. The larger pockets also present a variety of options, including side-pulls, underclings, etc. Some routes have widely-spaced pockets where the difficulty, like most routes at the New, is making the reach from one to the next. Other routes are entirely covered in pockets. There, the trick is to find the best one as quickly as possible. (Remember, it's steep). You'd think that the chalked holds are best,

but many of your predecessors on the route are just as clueless as you. Also, one climber is said to intentionally chalk up bad holds just to foil on-sight attempts. Oh joy!

The Red consists of an immense amount of rock. While I doubt it actually has 7000 miles of cliff, as some have said, it clearly is a lot bigger than the New. The cliffs are not continuous and, of course, only a tiny portion have been developed. Those are often very far (miles) apart, so that the Red really consists of some 7-10 smaller, well-spaced crags. We went to two crags each day, always driving from one to the other.

The Red has some truly spectacular routes. King Me (5.11b) gently overhangs for 30 meters of continuous climbing on excellent orange rock. It may be the best 5.11 I've ever done. I think it has 12 bolts. Twinkie (5.12a) and Phantasia (5.12d) go side-by-side up a huge wall that overhangs about 45 degrees. The most impressive walls are at Torrent Falls, which currently is closed to climbing. Some of those routes overhang by 100 feet. I'm not kidding.

The Red primarily consists of sport routes 5.10 and up. There are some very nice looking trad routes at moderate grades, so bring a rack if that's your bag. If you can lead 5.10 (or your partner can), you'll have enough routes to keep you happy for several days. If you can gather your gumption for a stab at 5.11, you're in for a real treat. Top roping at the Red looks to be a horrendous endeavor.

Bring a 60 meter rope to the Red. Some of the classic routes are very long. Also, be sure to bring a rope bag or a tarp. The Red will help you understand why they call it sandstone. I did a route called Sand (5.11d) that could also have been named The Beach. [Seinfeld fans might appreciate that.]

I'd recommend that you camp at the government campground near the Red. You can camp at Miguel's Pizza for a few bucks, but you don't get much more than a parcel of lawn for facilities. I highly recommend dinner at Miguel's. He's a real character and his sandwiches and pizza are surprisingly excellent. Besides, where else are you going to eat?

There is a small guidebook to the Red and a useful supplement appeared in *Rock & Ice* this Spring. Having at least one of them is