

Up Rope

FOUNDED BY
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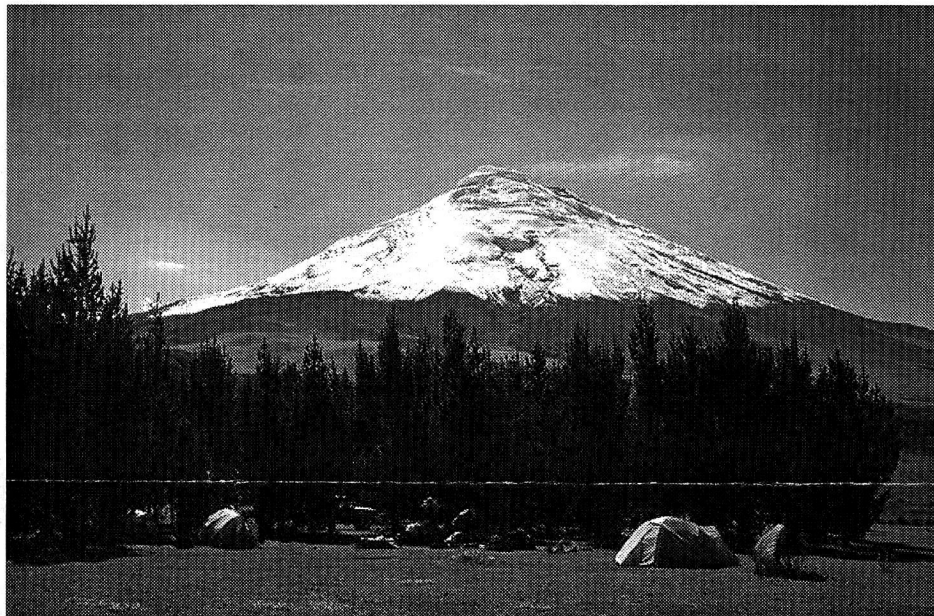
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Cotopaxi from Limpiopungo campsite

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ROCKFALL

- Annual Photo Contest - June 12th meeting; Entries due June 1, POC: Andy Briton
- After-Work Carderock Climbing (Wednesdays): April 17th
- Send Up Rope articles to new email address.

Just the One Life

by Simon Carr

...mix a sport climber with a sometime adrenaline junkie, add a classic big wall...

We went up on Half Dome, the NW face, the route climbed by Robbins in 1957. Twenty five pitches, 5.9 A3, the original Yosemite big wall, often done in a day now by the bold and efficient. A four hour approach march in the afternoon, around the back through the valley known as Little Yosemite, up the tourist path to the shoulder below the cables. From there we descended 300m to the foot of the route. Ten years since I'd been there, unsuccessfully, and the face was just as monstrous. We fixed the first two pitches to get a fast start next day. Tony was rapping down in the fading light when there was this horrible whistling sound...the bivy site was only 30m from the wall, sure to be hit, and then *craack!* as the parachute opened...his partner jumped a couple of minutes later, but I had the camera ready this time and the Rangers down in the valley were ready as well, sirens screaming enroute to the -

(continued on page 3)

Mountaineering in Ecuador

By Jennifer Penoso

Ecador is a country with everything – beautiful beaches on the Atlantic Ocean, the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon jungle and, of course, the northern Andes. I went to climb as many big mountains as possible during the first three weeks of November. I climbed with guides from the International Mountain Climbing School, based in North Conway, NH.

We used Quito as our jumping off point, and if you do, beware. The air in Quito is extremely polluted. A couple of my fellow climbers had respiratory problems before they ever climbed a single mountain. We dubbed one rope team as “team pulmonary edema,” due to their hacking coughs at and below high altitudes.

We climbed GuaGua Pinchincha (15,780) as a warm-up the day after we arrived. GuaGua is an active volcano that erupted as recently as 1999 when it covered Quito with ash and closed the city for a month. GuaGua was tough, since we virtually walked off the plane and up the mountain. Many of my fellow climbers were sick from the altitude. There are nice views of the big mountains in the distance – those that we were longing to climb.

(continued on page 5)

'Your Bag of Tricks'

by
Marty Cumiskey

Since I got back into climbing about five years ago, I've accumulated a fairly extensive library of books on climbing, mountaineering and such. I picked up my latest book from the Canadian Alpine Club. Technical Handbook for Professional Mountain Guides is a joint effort by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides and the American Mountain Guides Association and is primarily a text for guides wishing to be certified and recognized by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Association.

It does not go into a whole lot of detail on any specific subject. It is mostly a summary of concepts and issues that a climber and especially a prospective guide should know for alpine, rock and ski guiding. It includes protection, gear, rappelling, route finding, GPS, snow/ice and crevasse rescue and more.

(Freedom of the Hills and any of the How to Climb series books go into more detail than this book).

The one aspect of the book that is different than most climbing books is that it

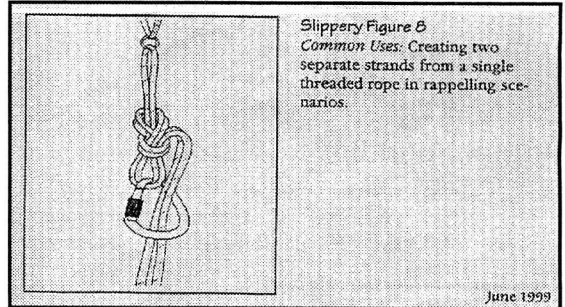
enced than yourself (friend, co-worker or other new climber) and this kind of proactive, defensive climbing attitude could be useful.

Two new items or concepts that I did get out of the book dealt with knots. These two knots are very esoteric in nature and you may never use them, but I think they have a place in

your "bag of tricks." Under certain conditions, I'm sure you will find them very useful.

The first knot is a "double Munter." Everyone should know how to tie a Munter knot. It can be used to belay, rappel, lower, etc. A "double Munter" is used for lowering moderate to heavy loads. In the book, they talk about lowering a client (or two clients at the same time) or lowering a rescue litter. The double Munter gives an extreme amount of friction and allows for very smooth and controlled lowering.

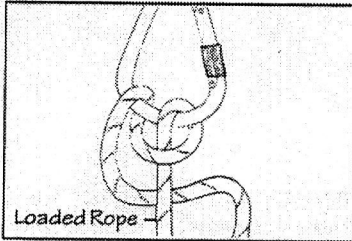
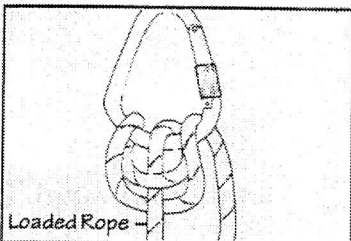
I've experimented with it lowering only one climber (on a top rope) and there is so much friction in the knot that it is almost self-locking (not that I would suggest you let go of the rope). I've included an illustration of the knot. It's simple to tie -tie a regular Munter knot and then run the rope over the top of the knot so that it comes out the other side of your



rope through the rappel ring/slings, tie a "slip knot" using a figure of 8 below the rappel ring and set a locking biner in the knot.

Tying this knot would allow a group to speed up their rappelling by allowing two people to rappel (each on a separate line) at the same time. Using this knot makes each line independent of the other, unlike a simul-rappel. After the first two climbers rappel, the last climber pulls the biner from the knot, releases the knot and does a double rope rappel. On an alpine outing with many rappels or when bad weather or darkness sets in and time is of the essence, this time saving practice could be very handy. Of course, using such a set up, two climbers would put two times the load on your anchor. If in doubt, a redundant backup anchor could be used for the double rappels and the last one down could pull it leaving behind the "expendable" anchor sling(s).

Double Italian Hitch (Double Munter Hitch)
Common Uses: Lowering moderate to heavy loads. (One person, free hanging. Two people at once on steep terrain, etc.)

Another application for this knot would allow a novice climber to rappel on one line while the more experienced climber could belay him/her with the second line.

takes a position on how the guide should think and act when dealing with clients, i.e. the safety of the client. Where most of this kind of advise is not directly useable for most of us climbing, I'm sure there will be times when you will climb with someone much less experi-

HMS biner. The other knot that was new to me was a "Slippery 8." This knot has practical uses when rappelling with a large group (3 or more people) or when rappelling with a very - inexperienced (or nervous) climber. Again, I have included an illustration. After setting up your

Two little tricks for you to file away for that one time when nothing else works.

Good Luck and have fun.



Just the One Life

(continued from front page)

-the landing zone at Mirror Lake. BASE jumping was illegal, a big fine and automatic confiscation of gear...

...couldn't jumar with the bag on my back next morning, too awkward and heavy so we would need to haul, I had sworn back in '83 not to haul on this route again, it was not steep enough. The even pitches had the aid moves so I led those as Tony's aiding experience was largely via hang dogging. Pitch four was easier than I remembered, but this time I wasn't totally gripped, and the rusty Robbins bolts had been replaced in the interim; I could remember many of the details of the pitches, an indication of the emotional intensity of that earlier attempt...an intensity now replaced by the competence of another decade's climbing. I was nervous with Tony's faith in bolts, even big ones, he'd spent too much time on sport routes with bolted lower-offs. Paranoid maybe, but I've avoided accidents by being careful... he hadn't taken seriously enough the wall climbing primer I'd photocopied from *Climbing* for him...

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...told the Italians who turned up next morning about the water, except that they couldn't speak English, and they had one leader and three followers and gigantic sacks and one jumar each in some peculiar caving rig. I talked Tony into going down the slabs below the face, but first we walked up the 300m to the shoulder, to join the 'I made it to the top' T-shirts on the tourist path cables...a stunning view from the summit, looking right down the NW face to the foot of the route so far below...back to the gear, and down the first stream towards Mirror Lake, didn't think of looking for any cairns, got horribly lost in impenetrable scrub. We gave it away and headed back up to the shoulder for the second time that day...12 km of foot numbing pain down to Little Yosemite and Happy Isles, to a shower and food. That evening it absolutely pissed down for hours and we would have been on Big Sandy with no food and no sleeping bags and so failure #2 was maybe a fortuitous result...

... tried to get Tony to go to Tuolumne for some multi-pitch famous tick-able routes, but this would involve crack climbing with a rack of gear, not to his taste, so we went to Knobby Wall instead, in my view a ludicrous choice of 10m wonders (but way hard, and bolted). A different level of ambition: he wanted a holiday and I was on a mission, just the one life. A little driven no doubt, but I'd had to pay for my trip and he'd been there for work...so we ate in the Loft restaurant and talked about another attempt on Half Dome, we both wanted to do that...a new game plan - climb in the afternoon to pitch six, next day to Big Sandy, and then off. Tony agreed to rig the jumaring anchors to keep me

happy and I thought that maybe I could face the walk once more...

...we'd a map this time to the route up the slabs, but I still lost the way and we arrived early afternoon back under the face, short of time to reach pitch six, damned if I was going to fail again, so we jugged up the rope that was fixed down the first pitch. We were a bit faster on this attempt apart from forgetting the haul line on one pitch, and made it to the bivy just on dusk...on the ledge I grabbed the best spot before Tony could, still horribly sloping. I curled up in my spare clothes and a bivy sac, no sleeping bag to save weight and keep the haul bag small, bloody cold and next morning I had an attack of nerves and thought about rainstorms like the one I'd been caught in 10 years ago. We had sleeping bags and more food then, so I tried to talk Tony into bailing but he was totally fixated and we went on...

...in the morning pitches 8-10 led across easy traverses to the Robbins bolt ladder, and somewhere in there I'd bivied in '83 but I couldn't find anything big enough to sit on, so maybe it was another Half Dome in a parallel universe. I led the bolt ladder and the pendulum and we were almost committed, the next pitch was awkward and hard, a rising traverse, it had to be free climbed, with cold hands more like 5.10+ than 5.9, a great lead from Tony. We took a break on the pitch 11 ledge, ate more breakfast - carefully ensuring each got just 50% - and sorted the gear for the chimneys above. The next pitch was mine, an aid corner dripping with water, full of stuck Friends and broken angles. At the top I had to tension traverse into the main chimney, only 5.8 to the belay but no gear and scary fall potential back into the corner...

...hanging on the belay, shivering, the sun inching too slowly across the granite wall towards me...real exposure now, I could see another midget-sized party starting up...Tony didn't like the chimney, he was placing a lot of gear, his foot slipped so I braced for the fall, he was only just above the belay but he hung in and the chimney got a bit wider, so he struggled up, a long way from Knobby Wall bolts now. It looked really unpleasant, strenuous climbing, and I was glad I didn't get that pitch...Halfway up he said 'Can I belay here?' so I looked at the topo and told him it wasn't over till he'd underclung the 5.9 horn (I'd read about Robbins doing that on the first ascent).

...the pitch was a bitch to jumar, especially as the haul bag was jammed up above pinning my rope and I couldn't reach into the back of the chimney to get the gear, I had to lift the bag above my head to move, my rope sawing over the sharp flakes above. I couldn't even get on to the ledge because the bag was still in the way, so not even the relief of clipping into the belay, I had to re-rack the gear while hanging on the jumars. Fortunately the next pitch was easier and almost enjoyable, classic back and foot chimneying with a hand crack for protection. At the belay it seemed from the topo we'd run two pitches together, so we might get to the bivy before dark...

...the last pitch below Big Sandy, the famous double crack pitch, awesome exposure starting off with a 20m descending traverse, so Tony got some great shots of me in the afternoon sun, tilting the camera to make it appear really steep...we'd caught the party ahead, and their haul bag was in the top of the photo, we'd have to crop that out. A wide crack, strenuous, I was tired and put in too much off-route gear so the rope drag was hideous as I pulled on to the ledge.

...Big Sandbag, not at all large, not flat, a broken series of multilevel blocks, already occupied with a father (Rex) and son (Eric) from Oregon, and we were soon joined by another party on the NW Direct which finishes up the final pitches of our route. A shame of-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)