

No. 534 -- June 15, 1977

A newsheet published by and for the Ski Mountaineers & Rock Climbing sections of the S.C.'s Angeles Chap. Send address changes to Phil Bruce, 8544 Eucalyptus, Downey

COME TO JULY MUGELNOOS, ALL YOU OLDEN-DAYS TYPES! COME !!!

Wed., July 20, will be a special Mugelnoos night with a reunion of skiers and climbers of the Goode Olde Days. It will also be a time for these historical figures and those currently carrying on (with Keltys instead of Trapper Nelsons) to meet.

The RCS will award honorary membership to Glen Dawson (in person), a charter member of both the Rock Climbing and Ski Mountaineers Sec. Nate Clark, a former Ski Mt. Sec. chairman, will show movies taken of Sierra Club climbing & skiing etc. in the 1930's. See p.2 for directions to get to the 7:30 Mugelnoos meeting.

CAUSE FOR JUBILATION -- A NEW MUGELMAILER

Rejoice! Leap on your rappels and dance on your skis! Phil Bruce of the RCS has volunteered to take over the Mugelmailing job, starting in August. Thus he is being elevated to the pinnacle of hero-hood in Mugelnoos annals. During an interview, the hero stated that he hopes this will offset his image as a Bad Guy as master of the bucket-drop. Address changes, subscription money, complaints and kudos should be sent hereafter to Phil Bruce, 8544 Eucalyptus St., Downey CA 90242.

And Thanksgiving to the Old

And a million thanks to retiring Mugelmailer Tim Ryan, who took over the job in December 1974, computerized it, got everybody's troubles straightened out, and has mailed every issue on the dot for the last two-and-one-half years!!!

DIE-HARD SKI MOUNTAINEERS HAUNT ROCK CREEK

May 21-22 found five Ski Mountaineer Section members and one guest packing skis into the usual campsite below Treasure Lakes, to find considerably more snow than 2 weeks before. In fact, with a little willow-bashing, it was possible to ski down to camp. Unfortunately, since the last storm's 18" of new snow, the weather had been so cool and cloudy that snow in Dade Couloir was not consolidated, hence heavy and difficult to ski. Sunday morning they headed for E.-facing slopes, which were consolidated well enough for early-morning skiing. But the cold wind bringing in a new storm froze the surface almost as soon as it began to thaw; so after one run, all headed for the cars, which they reached just as the first snowflakes were falling.

Gluttons for....Pleasure

On June 4, two optimists carried skis in for one day only. An adequate amount of snow remained in Dade Couloir and in the bowls below Bear Creek Spire, but it was not consolidated enough to walk on (seemingly bottomless in places), and with only intermittent snow cover and unfrozen lakes, access to the continuous snow line was exceedingly tedious. However, the pair were rewarded by some good spring skiing in the bowls even late in the day. R.J. Secor on his "sawdenhoffs" said it was the best skiing he'd had all year. It was certainly the best weather of the "ski touring" season, which turned out not too bad in this year of the drought. Computers project 1977-1978 to be 160% of normal precipitation -- let's hope they are right (or as right as the tortoises used to be. Ed.) B.L.

BANQUET MAKES A SITZMARK - The SMS Annual Banquet, set for May 24, was cancelled due to lack of interest, according to Mark Goebel.

SMS DIRECTORY NOT YET - A SMS membership list will not appear this month, despite previous announcement; but may later this summer. New addresses or phones should be relayed to B.Lilley, 841 Lindley Ave., Northridge 91324.

LOCAL PHONE NUMBER FOR SIERRA WEATHER

The National Park Service has a local phone number for a taped report giving Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia weather forecasts. The forecast is updated between 10 a.m. and noon each weekday.

Even if you are not planning to travel in one of these Park regions, the general trends of the weather can be approximated for many regions of the Sierra, taking into account altitude and other factors.

The number is (213) 688-2902. (Let your fingers do your backpacking? Ed.)

Don Pies

MUGELNOOS STAFF

EDITOR (June)..... Ruth D. Mendenhall
MUGELMAILER.....Phil Bruce
MUGELGRAPHERS..Mary Ferguson, Geo. Shinno
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Judith Fairchild, Mark Goebel, Frank Hoover, Barbara Lilley, Lois Malone, John Mendenhall, Don Pies, John Ripley, LeRoy Russ, Fred Wing.

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NEXT EDITOR: John Ripley
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NEXT ISSUE: July 20, 1977
DEADLINE: Fri., July 15 (or sooner)

MUGELNOOS MEETINGS: 3rd Weds. of ea. month
7:30 p.m., Lemon Grove Rec. Ctr., 4959 Lemon Grove Av., L.A., just off Hwd. Fwy near Melrose exit. Program, trip news, food, etc. Climbers, skiers, guests -- all welcome!!

CALENDAR

- June 18-19: RCS, Tahquitz (T). Leader, Maynard Brandsma, 285-9613.
- July 2-4: RCS, N. Palisades area (T). Leader, John Mendenhall. Phone for meeting time & car shuttle to park: 793-0806.
- July 9-10: CPR course. Dick DeRusha, Phone 661-9924.
- July 16-17: RCS, Tahquitz (T). Leader, LeRoy Russ, 295-9703.
- July 20: Mugelnoos: oldtime film of skiing & climbing by Nate Clark -- see p. 1.
- July 30-Aug. 1: Whitney E. Face, DeRusha.

ANNUAL WARNING: Say "Moo-gul-noos", not Mug

RCS MISCELLANY

TEMPUS FUGIT: Time is running out on the current RCS season. Members have about 4 mo. left to attend their 4 climbs. The "season" may end Oct. 1 this year, depending on the outcome of the Bylaw revision vote (ballots due soon). A record number were dropped last year - don't join them. JR

EX-MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE: Former RCS members Carleton Shay & Neale Creamer answered the request for old RCS rosters. The collection now seems complete from '40 on. If anyone has lists (except '38) before 1940, contact J. Ripley, Box 1034, Downey 90240. Many thanks to Carleton & Neale; also to the first RCS Chairman, Art Johnson, who hosted Historian Ripley for 7 (!) hours at his W. Covina home recently. JR

RCS CHARGED WITH SOLICITING

Conforming with the duties imposed by the Bylaws, the RCS is soliciting confidential comments from members re the safety practices of John Holcomb, who recently passed his Safety Test & applied for membership. Also, applications are still pending for John Kropf, Brian Parker, & Ray Beal. Send comments on any of these to the Safety Com., c/o J. Ripley, by July 1. JR:

RCS ROSTER BUTCHES FIXED

Corrections for the recent RCS roster:-
Butler, Pat: 1030 Poplar Av, Boulder CO 80302
DeRusha, Dick: 1421 Edgecliffe Dr., etc.
Hinegartner, Dean: Phone, 213-894-7928.
Kabler, W.: 8762 Etiwanda Av. #26, Northridge 91609. 213-886-5058.
Wilts, Janet: Wandering. Use C. Wilts addr.

BARGAIN GUIDE: The Joshua Tree Climbers Guide is available for \$10 at the Joshua Tree Ranger Station.

ONE GRAND: Frank Hoover, former RCS member, has organized a Colorado Rv. Trip through the Grand Canyon for July 21-29, & needs 7 more people. Some SM & RCS'ers already are signed up. \$400 (2/3 usual cost). Contact Hooverlet at 90024 Veteran Av. L.A. 90024, 825-8701 days; or at 805-251-2647 evenings.

DID IT REGISTER? Interested in old Sierra summit registers that have been removed from the peaks? They are stored at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley.

AAC DIRECTORS TRY TAHQUITZ

Four Amer. Alpine Club Directors climbed at Tahq. after their May 14 meeting in Idyllwild, despite May snowfalls. Those enjoying local facilities were Joan Firey (Seattle), Geo. Lowe (Sunnyvale CA), Henry Barber (Sherborn MA) & John Christian (Wash. DC). Pete White, Ch. of the local AAC Sec., scheduled a meeting Sat. night at the Town Hall, and Chuck Wilts entertained directors & others with slides & a dissertation on the old days at Tahquitz.

TRASHY SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A van was recently spied with the License Plate "W TRASH", augmented with a sign saying "Sierra Club Hike to Hell." Litter International: A sign in 3 languages beside a trail in the Alps directs in English, "Please, don't depose your rubbish here, take it with you and put it in your own dust-pan!"

IMPROVE YOUR VOCABULARY

If you are one who has apprehensions about outdoor sports, the least you can do is apply the right terms to your fears. Mugelnoos herewith lists some of the more useful, and explains their function:

- Acrophobia: Fear of high places (for rock climbing).
- Claustrophobia: Fear of enclosed spaces (for those using mummy-case sleeping bags)
- Zoophobia: Fear of animals (useful when bears or ground squirrels eat your commissary, or you meet hummingbirds on climbs.)
- Acarophobia: Fear of insects (applicable when attacked by mosquitoes or wasps.)
- Nyctophobia: Fear of darkness (appropriate on bivouacs; or when returning to camp after a long climb).

IN THIS SPACE, the May Mug. Ed. ran a slam against the Nat'l Park Serv., quoting its purpose as being "For the enjoyment of the USA" and predicting by 1984 "No swimming, No fishing, No camping, No hiking" etc. The current Ed. must point out that the national parks were set aside "For the benefit & enjoyment of the people" and also that they were to "be preserved in their natural condition."

The American Alpine Club stated in 1975 --& this Ed. reiterates-- "If the second injunction is to be honored, clearly 'enjoyment of the people' cannot connote any and all uses, but rather such uses as are consistent with the preservation of the natural condition." Otherwise, what will be left to enjoy? Take a good look at the more exploited parks we visit (such as Yosemite + MCA).

ROCK CLIMBING SECTION TRIPS GOMemorial Day Memories

Thirty RCS members & guests enjoyed perfect weather & good climbing May 28-30 at King's Canyon Nat'l Park. Route-finding problems began late Fri. night when RCS Chairman Fred Wing & Climb Leader Andy Fried became hopelessly lost in Cedar Grove while searching for the group's elusive tent cabins. Tim Ryan was dispatched, and groping fearlessly in the blackness finally found the lost cabins.

Saturday, Batter Day

Newcomers to the Canyon spent much time Sat. on reconnaissance -- endless possible climbs stretch in every direction. Emory Yount & Dick Mundweiler did an ascent of the apron of N.Dome -- unforgettable because rockfall cracked Dick's helmet (fortunately not while it was on his head) and damaged his Edelreid rope on its maiden climb. LeRoy Russ & Harry Baker returned that afternoon breathless & exhausted, muttering of several solid 5.8 pitches. Asst. Leader Tom Jeter & Bob Somoany found a rt. with great possibilities beyond Zumwalt Mdws -- in fact, they enjoyed it so much they won the prize for last-to-sign-in (9:30 p.m.)

Sunday, Clumb Day

Everyone over 5 yrs. old went off climbing on Sun. (except 2 who chose to keep the home campfires smoldering). Al Carlson & Leslie Masters did an elegant ascent of the broken face a side Roaring River Falls, followed by Yount/Mundweiler/Kirkpatrick. Rumor has it that the redoubtable Emory placed 2 (count 'em) pitons on the route! Wing was overheard to say later that "giving pitons to Emory is like putting a drink in the hands of an alcoholic." Fearless Fred & Ray Beal, and also "hard men" climbers Dick DeRusha & Dave Katz, set off to climb around Boyden Cave, but were turned back by the abundant poison oak, and by rangers fearing rockfall over the parking lot (climbing is allowed there outside of tourist season).

Monday, Fun Day

Monday was fishing, swimming, and (thanks to Katz) snake-catching day, for all but Wing & Jeter who ran up the Mundweiler/Carlson rt. on Broken Face. The big hit of the trip was Tim Ryan's cheesecake (edible, not photographic), & failing Flash McPherson's natty knickers, the glamorous LeRoy Russ in pastel camouflage pants by Pam.

The actual climbing was greeted with mixed emotion. Broken Face was a good route, about 5.4 & fairly sound; but ubiquitous lichens & loose rock & dirt present obstacles everywhere. The rock underneath is good granite, and the climbs are long and of about every level of difficulty. There also appears to be good climbing above and across the river from Boyden Cave, on limestone. Andy suggested importing smog to kill the lichen; Al proposed bringing scrub brushes. But it remains an area with much possibility, & the low population density of climbers is an attraction. JF

AFTERTHOUGHTS: N. Face stuff sack & blue windbreaker found in Fred Wing's van. For Sale: 1 slightly used German rock climbing helmet; two 80' lengths of new Edelreid. See Dick Mundweiler.

RCS SAFETY TESTS

Dick DeRusha, Safety Com. Chairman, thanks all members of the Safety Com. and some dedicated RCS members (Bill Bragg, Phil Bruce, Al Carlson & Jeff Last), due to whom the May 22 Safety Test was an overwhelming success. There was a tester/testee ratio of 1.5 to 1. Due to the new testing area of placing leader protection while climbing, and setting upper and leader belays in a more realistic situation, the test took all day. Evaluation of this, and perhaps better logistics will be discussed at the next Safety Com. meeting. DeRusha urges RCS members to get acquainted with the following people, many of whom will soon be applying for membership: John Holcomb, Chris Anderson, Glen Kaplan, Leslie Masters, Stan Klein, Paul Harris, Steve Bauer, Diane Corte, Helen Moore. Many of these people came through the RCS training program, and there seems little question that it's the best such program around! Congratulations to Al Carlson and Jim Endo for a job well done!

RCS AT YOSEMITE May 14-15

A hastily-planned trip, Yosemite Valley replacing snowed-out Candlelight May 14-15 attracted only five RCS members (Wing, Mundweiler, McPherson, Cole, Sharpsteen) to two days of perfect weather and uncluttered rock routes. On Sat., Mundweiler and McPherson boldly assaulted the Harding Route on Glacier Point Apron, only to be repulsed by a stream of mud; they ended doing the right-side route on Monday Morning Slab. Meanwhile, Wing, Cole & Sharpsteen enjoyed Harry Daley on the slab, and watched fantastic climbing by five young Swedes and three even younger Americans, the latter 3rd-classing the 5.8 Harry Daley and then doing an adjacent 5.10. Oh, to be 50 again! After joyous Sat. eve reveling, the group Sun. made various abortive starts on Ranger Rock. Cole led the first pitch of After Six. Mundweiler, top-roped, subdued an adjacent 5.8-9 water trough. FW

McKinley Rescués Begin

The first 1977 Mt. McKinley rescue to come to Mugel-ears occurred on May 28, according to the Seattle Times for June 2. A Tacoma dentist was picked up by helicopter at the 14,300-foot level. The climber, Fleet Ratliff of the Sourdough Seattle expedition, had injured his knee. He was quoted as saying he'd just have to fix a few more teeth to pay the rescue cost of \$650. The National Park Service has paid for most recent helicopter rescues; the average cost is \$3000, beyond the means of most climbers.

"THE ENDLESS CLIMB"

A cliff-hanger in Four Acts, which relates the dramatic evolution of the notorious
Go For Broke Productions

===

Cast of Characters

Frances Cholewa, Sespe Reject
Jimmy Jet Endo, Ex-Lazy Layback, Ex-RCS-Co-Chairman of Training Committee
Randy McDonald, RCS Member Extraordinaire
Ron Overholtz, RCS Groupie
Maggie Weesner, Ex-Joshua Tree Ranger (as of June 11)
Don Wilson, Friend of RCS Member

ACT I

Oleander Motel, Joshua Tree, Room 2.

Scene One: Second weekend in April, Saturday night dinner. Jim and Randy have decided to leave town to climb. BUT they don't know what they have started. For now Ron and Frances also decide to join the Endless Climb. While devouring a stupendous dinner created by Frances, Ron and Frances make their ultimate decision.

Scene Two: Same room. Time: the following weekend. Maggie begins contemplating her escape to Yosemite with this motley crew.

ACT II

Black Tie Route, 5.7. Endo and Cholewa have done 90% of the climb. Frances shows good sense and decides rather than chance a forty-foot fall, to take a top rope. Endo, who has attended RCS Rescue Seminar, saunters to top and lowers rope. Unfortunately, the rescue rope lacks a Figure-Eight loop. Frances saves face for fearless Ex-Co-Chairman. With one hand, displaying remarkable agility for an RCS student, she ties in with a Figure-Eight-Follow-Through.

ACT III

Go For Broke Route, 5.7-5.8 (?). After the consolidation of Go For Broke Productions into a team of six, Randy and Ron go out into the Joshua Tree outback to celebrate. They chance upon an unclimbed face to the right of Top Forty and the Candy Bar area. Sensing the challenge and the chance for immortality, they push the route past Shaky Flakes to the top.

ACT IV

La Cantina, a small bar and cafe in Pioneertown. And they climb and they climb. Then one day in May, the group of six, having climbed at Quail Springs, transport their blood-encrusted, rock-ravaged, sun-parched bodies to La Cantina. There the impeccable warriors (and warriorress?) tarnish their spartan spirits with devil water. Jimmy Jet, concerned with furthering Fair Fran's rock career, proposes a liaison between Fran and future GFBP member Homer, age 80, to dance away the night. Exit the climbers, heading back to the Oleander Motel singing "You Aren't the Only Turtle in the Pond."

Curtain

CREDITS FROM PLAYWRIGHT ENDO

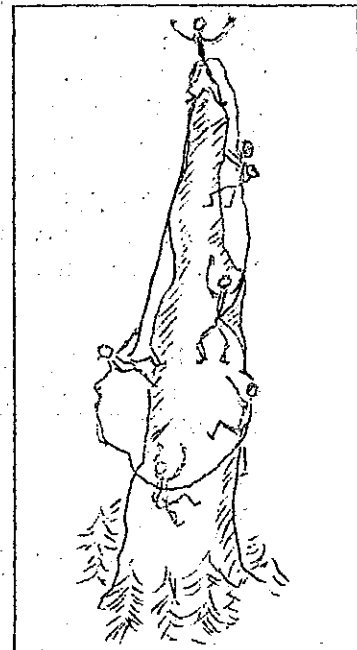
Go For Broke Productions owes its existence to the RCS, and thanks all RCS members who taught and encouraged them in their climbing madness. "There is magic in the world." (Stay tuned in for future cheap thrills of GFBP).

S E Q U E L S

LeRoy Russ, as of June 4, reports: The Vagabond Climbers, Endo/McDonald/Overholtz/Wilson/Cholewa, have begun their climbing Odyssey with Yosemite Valley. They are maintaining spacious living quarters at Site 19, Camp Four. Mail should be sent c/o General Delivery, Yosemite Nat'l Park CA 95389. They promise bulletins of their exploits. Group conduct will be supervised by Ranger Maggie.

RCS Checkup

Don Pies writes that he and Dave Erskine ran across Endo et al in Yosemite over Memorial Day, and made a quick climb up the Harry Daley route with Endo on Monday Morning (on Monday Morning Slab, of course). Judith Fairchild, ace RCS student, will move to Yosemite June 17, to become part of the Park's medical staff. She hopes also to join GFBP members for some climbing. She may be visited (socially or professionally) at the hospital at the Visitor's Center till July 30.

HALF A DOME BETTER THAN NONE AT ALL

On May 22, Tom Higgins, Nancy Dyar (Ruth Mendenhall's niece), and John Mendenhall climbed the Snake Dike route on the West face of Half Dome. Threatening skies and an intermittent cold wind inspired everyone to hurry, and beat the rain to the summit. JDM

(Due to the following output of a prolific reporter, this page is dedicated to Pies in our Time & Pies at Any Price. Don't go to Pieses laughing, P'ies. Ed.)

WALLS FOR THE WEARY

Despite common sense telling one to join the RCS at Kings Can. over Memorial Day, Dave Erskine and Don Pies packed up the haul bag and headed for the S. face of Washington Column in Yosemite. After all, the guidebook calls this route an "enjoyable and not too hard" climb, so what better way could we enjoy the holiday weekend?

We dragged our equipment, water & bodies high above the thickest layers of choking campfire smoke until we reached the base of the climb late Sat. a.m. Easy crack & face climbing led to our first option: a straight-forward aid crack or a 5.9 free climb which lay around the next corner. Erskine headed off with the rack for an attempt at the free section but soon felt a bit uneasy as a long stretch of sustained 5.9 finger jamming looked down at him. Why not aid the crack? With winds that blew unweighted etriers high above Dave's ears, progress went well but slowly on small wired stoppers. One of these trustworthy pieces of miraculous aluminum pulled out & was followed by a second. Dave was tossed for 15' with no harm except for a battle scar on his helmet.

Room and Board

More easy face & crack work brought us to Dinner Ledge with first class accommodations (flat & big) for a comfortable bivouac. The cocktail hour was spent with me fixing a rope up the next pitch to give us a head start next day. This turned out to be less enjoyable than Scotch-on-the-rocks, due to the bolts under the roof of Kor's overhang having been originally placed by 6'6" Layton Kor. Many strenuous lunge aid moves to reach the bolts, and a lot of tension from the belayer, and I was over the roof.

The main excitement of the evening occurred while guarding the food from cliff-critters. When awakened by that "crinkle-crinkle" sound nearby, I instinctively swatted at the varmint, but soon realized I had only attacked Dave's foot as he was tiptoeing by.

How Are they Lichen It?

Those Sunday morning drowsies were quickly shaken off by a 100' dangling jumars ascent* back over Kor's overhang, 1000' above the Valley floor. Noting that our progress was about half the speed the lichen was growing up the rock, and that our strength was quickly diminishing, the remaining two-thirds of the unclimbed portion of the route began to appear quite overwhelming. A short consultation, and the rapel ropes were lowered.

All was not lost, because we ran across RCS friends Endo etc.; also RCS's Steve Kinney and partner, who were forced off a Grade V on the Cathedral Rocks with a shredded haul bag.

* It was learned later that 2 days earlier a Danish climber in this same place had not clipped his body to his jumars, but had only tied into the end of the rope. He fell out of his jumars 70' up, and free-fell to Dinner Ledge. He luckily received no critical injuries, though he badly damaged his face & hands. Remember -- always clip both jumars to your body, and either re-tie into the rope or move a prusik knot up (set the prusik well) every 15-20 feet. (Don Pies)

BUYING EQUIPMENT? YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

By Don Pies

With the inflated cost of climbing equipment nowadays, we are looking for ways to get a little more out of our climbing dollars. When you find that super-deal on some climbing "Goozie Gismo," make sure you know what you are sacrificing in quality.

The two items of interest in this article are 1) The MSR Red Stripe climbing rope and 2) The MSR climbing harness. In short, MSR does not endorse these pieces of equipment for 5th Class leading on high angle rock. MSR does not stress this point emphatically; but does make this deduction on pages 12-5 and 12-28 in the March 1977 MSR Newsletter in a keyed-down fashion.

The entire article in the Newsletter is too lengthy to quote here, but in essence, the Red Stripe rope has been declared a "general recreation climbing rope," whatever that means, because it failed to meet a UIAA rope test recently performed in Vienna. This does not mean the MSR rope is useless in mountaineering; it just implies you are climbing with much less of a safety factor than some of the more established (and more costly) brands of rope provide.

For half the cost of a proven safe climbing harness, you can buy a MSR climbing harness. Here again, vague words like "Intended for average climbing" and "An adequate 5-body-point harness" are used to sell this product but do not clearly define the limits of its use. Many RCS members still remember the story of Dave Perkins' being pulled through the air like Peter Pan when his MSR harness broke at the bucket drop station at a 1976 Safety Test (the stitching on Pat Butler's MSR harness separated at the same test).

Some of MSR's equipment has proven quite adequate for 5th Class lead climbing, but every time I see a new "Jewey-Dewey" put out by MSR, I fear that the life of an unsuspecting guinea pig will be threatened. Most of all, read the MSR Newsletter carefully, and use a lot of discretion in selecting your gear.

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AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB MEMBERSHIP: Climbers dedicated to the sport of mountaineering, who have 3 or more years varied experience, may well be eligible to join the AAC. Anyone interested in the details should contact Ruth Mendenhall or Pete White. Pete can be reached at 399-1234 -- 1617 Wellesley Dr., Santa Monica 90405.

WHO'S WHO IN THE NOOS

-- Andy Fried --

Andrew S. Fried developed into a climber by spending years in the Valley -- not Yosemite, but San Fernando, where he grew up. He went into accounting & is now, at 30, controller for a tool manufacturing company. He is presently single and lives with his eight-year-old son.

Andy learned to backpack with the Boy Scouts. In 1969 he & a friend climbed Unicorn Peak near Tuolumne Mtns, and by 1971 he had done enough climbing to realize what is meant by the "Fried-dumb of the hills." To rectify this, he enrolled in BMTC where he took a liking to rock climbing. He attended the Yosemite climbing school and went on to complete RCS training in 1972, LTC in 1973, and the Rainier snow and ice seminar in 1974, and Yosemite's winter survival school also in 1974.

Rescue techniques interest him & he has led rescue practice sessions for the RCS & SPS. He enjoys Nordic skiing & leads trips for the Snow Touring Com. Andy joined the RCS in 1974, and the Amer. Alpine Club in 1975. He was elected RCS vice-chairman last Nov., and serves on the Section Safety Com. Andy feels that climbing rounds out his life & provides relaxation & satisfaction. He's gone as far afield as Mexico, Wash., Arizona, and Wyoming, where he once spent a night atop the Grand Teton in a snowstorm. He might be found helping beginners one weekend & trying a new route the next. Andy's a modest & unassuming fellow: a more-than-modest asset to our group. JR

CLASS SIX IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

By John D. Mendenhall

Early Direct Aid Piton, full size (The Mendenhall Collection)

These were used circa 1930 by the writer. When properly driven, with the lug uppermost as shown, one's foot was not apt to slip off. There were no provisions for attaching a carabiner thereto; however, since biners were unknown to our group, this did not matter. When chrome-moly pitons were invented many years later, they received great acclaim because of their durability. Well, the above pitons were indestructible. They were also known as spikes for railroad ties.

During this era, a friend & I tackled a crack on the W. face of Stoney Point, because it was there (it still is). Being very safety-conscious, we used a new half-inch 60-foot manila rope. The second man had a good braced belay from the leader -- and the leader knew he must not fall. Since the pitons required sturdy blows, I was using a heavy hatchet. It ultimately slipped from my sweaty grasp, and soon my second shouted shakily that the handle had hit his shoulder as it sped past. I advised him to stop complaining--what if the hatchet had made another half-turn?

In retrospect, a sling on the hatchet would have been advisable -- but we learn only by trial-and-error as we develop equipment.

RETURN OF FATHER WILLIAM

"You are old, Father William," the young climber cried.
"Do you think, at your age, it is proper
To lead the most difficult climbs in the guide
With only a nut and a stopper?"

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook out his rope,
"I thought it exceedingly canny
To climb with a ton of iron on my bum,
A piton to fit any cranny."

"Nor would I have ventured out climbing/
With no hardhat to shelter my brain;
But now I am perfectly sure I have none,
Why I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,
And have grown just a teeny bit fragile;
Yet you managed the Diving Board (5.8,
A4, IV);
What made you so terribly agile?"

"In my youth," Father William replied with a frown,
"I determined to keep my limbs supple
By climbing the stairs to my office in town,
Not one time a day, but a couple."

"You are old," the youth ventured, "and your arms are too weak
For anything worse than Scungilli,
Yet great first ascents you persistently seek.
What makes you so frightfully silly?"

"In my youth," said the climber, "I took to the gym,
And climbed every weekend as well,
And the muscular strength which this gave to each limb
Has kept me as sound as a bell."

"You are old," said the youth. "I hardly suppose
That your legs were as steady as ever:
Yet you climbed the Innominate using only your toes.
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said the climber. "Stop bending my ear.
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Let's go split a pitcher of beer."

By Lois Malone, dedicated to John Mendenhall, 5/24/77. (An up-date of Dave Rearick's version of Jan. 1959? Ed.)