THE GOOSE DOWN GAZETTE

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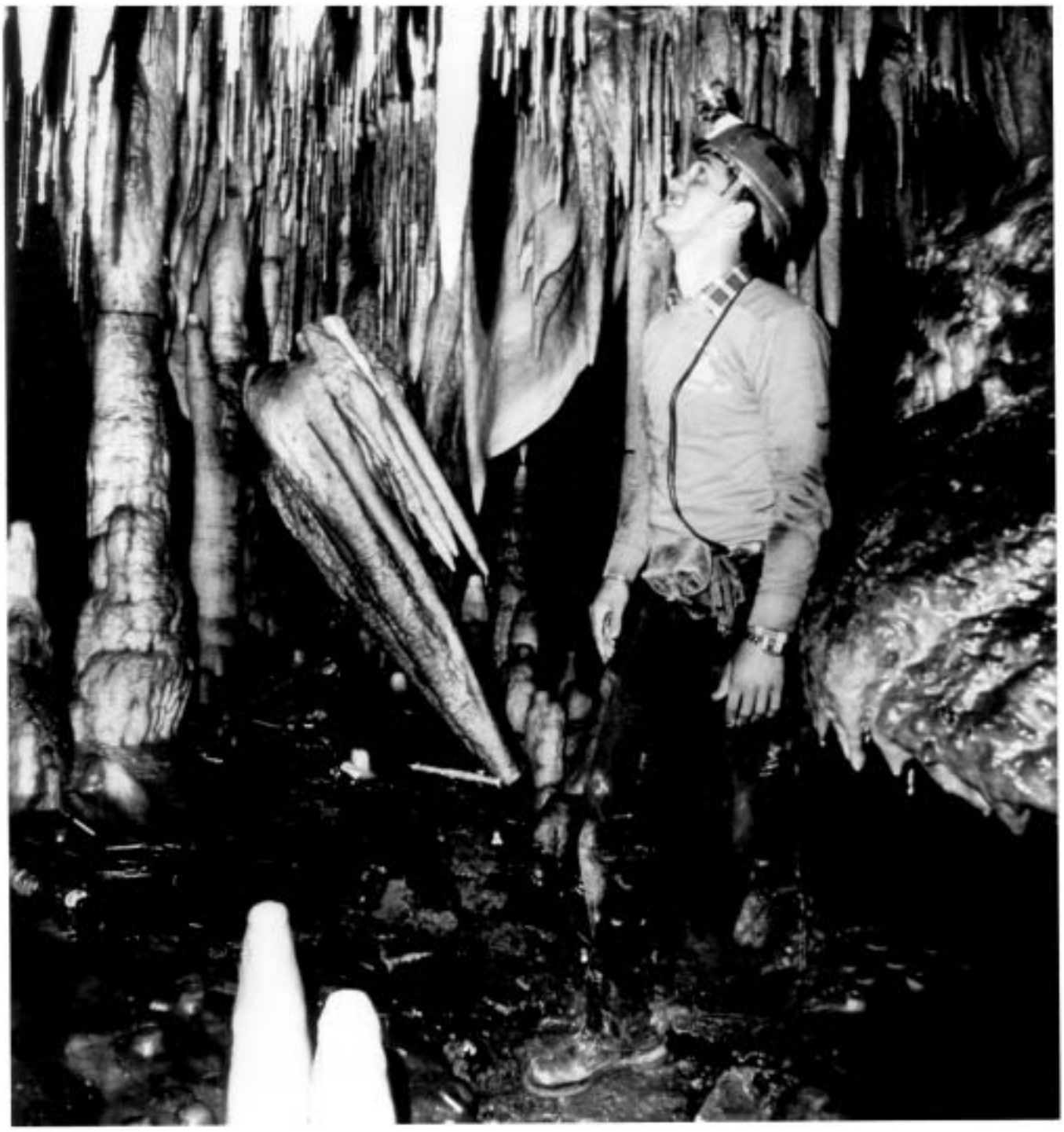

The GOOSE DOWN GAZETTE is published by the University of Cincinnati Mountaineering Club, a non-profit organization devoted to having a good time outdoors and in deep, dark holes. Comments, criticisms, ideas, love letters, or contributions (money, articles, black-and-white photographs, artwork, cartoons, stories, poems, rumors) to this publication (or myself) should be sent in a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you expect to see it again to one of the following addresses:

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Photo credits (I'm sorry I haven't quite gotten around to putting the captions beneath the pictures. One step at a time...!) .....

Cover: Don Lynch: Here is Kai Sorge forgetting his backpack in the Enchanted Forest In Wolf River Cave in Tennessee.

p.15, the Pattersons: The Honeymooners' candid camera caught these tourists riding the famous striped burros of Tijuana.

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U.C. MOUNTAINEERING CLUB PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear folks, I would like to welcome all of you, old and new members alike, to the Mountaineering Club. I feel that the club has a lot of potential and with your help this year will be a successful one. It is essential , however, that club members participate to the fullest in order for the club to function at all.

I encourage every one of you to express your ideas at meetings. Any suggestions for trips, publicity, lectures, or other things which might be of interest to the club are welcome.

The club really has much to offer to the experienced as well as the inexperienced backpacker, skiier, canoeist, rock climber, caver, or bicycler, as well as those of you who are looking for new, friendly companions. You need not have experience to join a club trip! So don't be shy. Open yourself up to experiencing new things, people, and places. It's all ready and waiting for you to discover.

Marci

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Here we go with a new school year, new officers, new experiences, a new Goose Down Gazette, and a new column. I'm calling it Trailheads because a trailhead can signify a beginning or an end or it can just be a marker to let you know where you are. Since most of us are too busy or too afraid or lack sufficient motivation to contribute a story or a trip report, I figured I should provide a forum for bits and pieces of news concerning past trips, upcoming trips, members, ex-members, concerns about the environment-- anything that we should know about but don't think it's worth writing a whole article about. Perhaps this concept is a concession to the original purpose of this publication; that is, being a newsletter instead of some glossy magazine (Glossy? Hmmm.). But I think it's a good idea. So bits and tidbits are welcome here.

What's happened since the last Goose Down Gazette was printed? What's going to happen? Will Belinda Lucinda Tracy Mae Gargoyle ever find True Happiness in The Big City?

* Elections were held last spring quarter. Marci Napoli was chosen as the president, Jeff Cousins the VP, and Karen Riggs the Treasurer. Congratulations or condolences as the case may be. This year should be one of the most exciting in club history.

* The caving class, as always, was a success, with an unprecedented exit from Pine Hill into bright daylight and sixty-degree temperatures at the end of February.

* The 4th Annual Red River Gorge Clean-up Trip in May came off with many bags of trash collected from the trails. A candlelight om (aum? ohm?) beneath the full moon on the Island in the Sky and a wilderness shower were high points of the trip.

* Steve K., Roland E., and myself assisted Bob K. in introducing caving to a Miami U. nerd herd at Pine Hill in July. Since Bob had other matters to attend to, I led the 17 students into the cave through the subway entrance-- and promptly got lost. This did not engender trust in the guides. Despite this, things came off rather well, with Steve and Roland rapelling 150 feet down the Pit when we brought groups in. After safely getting the whole group out, the four of us continued down to the Fieldhouse at Sloan's Valley to spend the night after going into Somerset to see some dynamite drive-in movies. The next day we helped Doc Dougherty map a section of Logan's Cave.

* Death rears its ugly head. For those of you who don't know already, Eric Hutchinson died in a climbing-related incident out in Yosemite this summer. He and his partner had bivouaced part way up a wall. Some other climbers were bouldering above and knocked a huge boulder loose. He died quickly, in his sleep.

Eric was a club member before he was in college. He was an avid and superb climber

and after graduating from high school went out to Yosemite and became a 'Valley Boy'-- a climbing bum, living to climb, climbing to live, selling all of his equipment to survive and cleaning up climbs for the pieces left behind. After that summer, he made his way up to Seattle last fall and entered college there in a climber's and mountaineer's and skier's paradise.

Perhaps what is so troubling about Eric's death is that it reminds us of our own mortality and that some of the things that we do in the club may be a bit more dangerous than sitting in the living room watching TV. But it doesn't stop us. We'll be more careful, but we'll still go climbing and rafting and caving. To my knowledge, this is the first death of anyone closely associated with the club. Note: this was not a club trip.

There is talk of some kind of memorial for Eric, like planting a tree or naming part of the Eden Park Wall after him. Nothing definite has materialized.

* The Mountaineering Club is offering a beginning rock climbing class on October 11 and the weekend of October 13th. Basic rope handling and climbing techniques will be demonstrated and practiced first at Eden Park then at Clifton Gorge outside of Yellow Springs.

* An advanced ropework seminar is planned for two weeks after that. Lead climbing will be taught in Tennessee and rope ascension at Pine Hill in Kentucky.

* A weekend caving trip to Wolf River, Tennessee is planned for November 9-11. This cave is a 'dry' cave and has some incredible formations, as well as some 10,000 year-old footprints.

* Dave Christenson and April McFall will be getting married in Clifton on December 23.

* The pace of UCMC peak-bagging has taken a quantum leap since former club president Jane Reilly climbed 19,565' Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the highest peak in Africa, after graduating from UC a year ago last spring. This is the highest elevation ever attained by a UCMC member under her/his own power. Since that trip, Jane has been working as an Outward Bound instructor in the Everglades with their 'Youth at Risk' program.

* It doesn't have to be a major production to climb a high peak with the UCMC. Last fall Don Speller lead a backpacking trip up scenic and relatively close Mt. Rogers (5,719'), the highest point in Virginia.

* Also in the fall, former club vice-president Suzanne Workman completed an epic climb up 14,161' Mount Shasta, an extinct volcanoe in northern California. Her work since then has been as a naturalist and a fire ranger in both Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Dinosaur National Monument.

* This started off a new wave fad of volcanoe climbing. In May, veteran UCMC mountaineer Bill Strachan sharpened up his ice climbing skills on an Outward Bound Alumni Seminar with a two-day ascent of 11,225' Mount Hood, the highest peak in Oregon (See the article elsewhere in this issue.).

* After warming up in the Wind River Range with a club trip, then testing their stamina on the highest mountain in Idaho, 12,655' Mt. Borah, Craig and Cheri Patterson went on to climb Mt. Jefferson (10,493') in Oregon, Fujiyama (12,388') in Japan, and Mauna Loa (13,680') in Hawaii, all large volcanoes.

* This summer ended on a high note with Bob and Cindy Kessler's club trip to Utah. Here an old administration of ex-president Mark Hartinger and ex-treasurer Bob teamed up with new officers Jeff Cousins (VP) and Karen Riggs (treasurer) to lead other club members up 13,498' Kings Peak, the Highest point in Utah. This was part of a backpacking trip to the High Uintas Primitive Area (see stories elsewhere).

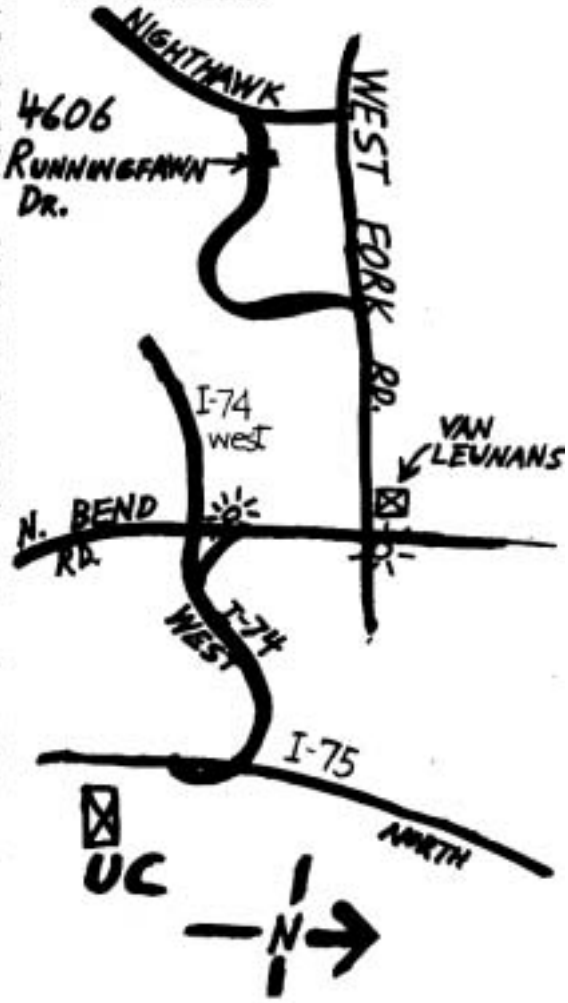
* Thus Mount Hood, Mount Borah, and Kings Peak are added to the list of highest U.S. peaks climbed by UCMC members. Others include 14,410' Mount Ranier (Washington), 6288' Mount Washington (Ranier-- er, no, New Hampshire, Mt. Katadin (Maine), Spruce Knob (West Viginia), and the towering spires of Hogue's Hill (Ohio).

* Ex-president Marty Huesman just completed her second year as a Ranger in Big South Fork National Recreation Area.

Halloween Party

Friday, October 26. 8:00 PM
4606 Runningfawn Drive

If you creak or go bump in the night, or have some friends who do, there's going to be a party that will interest you! Yes, it's Halloween time again and once more Bob & Cindy Kessler will be have a COSTUME party in his parent's basement arcade. Normal attire will keep you out in the cold with this one; craziness will admit you. Dress to kill-or-shock and bring your own drinks (Hey, I'm cheap). Dart throwing at past and present officers will be featured as well as a midnight screaming frenzy around the neighborhood. Lots of clean fun (Humph!) guaranteed. Some food will be provided, but expect to be asked to chip in on some pizzas of something. Bring a friend. New members especially encouraged! If lost, call 574-8080. See map for directions.



Conquering Kings

Bob Kessler

Mark was falling. At first I didn't know how to feel, much less react. Should I laugh or scream? It was June of 1976, and myself and three inexperienced friends were attempting our first western mountain ascent: Kings Peak in the High Uinta Mountains, the highest point in Utah.

We were at about 11,000 feet, crossing a 60 degree scree field when we reached a large snow field, equally as steep but more treacherous as it melted in the noon-day sun. We moved carefully across the snow without ropes, hoping that luck would get us through unscathed.

But luck was not with us as Mark slipped and was sliding out of control down the snow slope. He had no ice axe to self-arrest with but the frame pack on his back worked with the same result: he slowed down sufficiently to come to a horaless rest one-hundred feet below us.

We all laughed in relief, but we quickly realized that the incident had scared us beyond hope of going onward. We turned back with a mixture of relief and sadness. We had worked so hard to get there and now were returning without having reached the summit. We all reassured ourselves that one day we would return to conquer Kings Peak.

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My opportunity to fulfill that dream came this last September, when I organized and led a return trip to the High Unitas (As well as a hiking trip to the desert canyons of southern Utah reported separately in this issue). Six members of the UCMC-- myself, Cindy Kessler, Jeff Cousins, Karen Riggs, Paul Borna, and Brian Hoop-- traveled westward in one van on September 3, Driving non-stop through Denver and Steamboat Springs, Colorado, we staggered into Dinosaur National Mounument, just to the East of the Uintas, 30 hours later.

After a day of resting and day-hiking in Dinosaur, we hit the road again for the mountains. We pulled into the Swift Creek Campground in the middle of the night after driving for hours on a dirt road. Waiting for us there was Mark Hartinger, former President of the UCMC (Not the Mark who fell, though he was also on that earlier attempt), and his wife, Kathy. We all sat around late into the night listening to Mark's tales of mountaineering in Seattle, then went to a much-needed sleep.

The next day was not encouraging! It was drizzling and heavily overcast. We had a 17 mile hike to the base of the Kings Peak and none of us relished the thought of hiking all that way only to be turned back by bad weather. But Brian assured us that the weather man's prediction of clearing skies in two days should be trusted, and we hitched our packs and started out.

The trail we were on follows the Yellowstone River all the way up the valley to its origin-- Kings Peak. The terrain of the Uintas is 50% rock, so the trail at times seemed more like rock-scrambling than backpacking. The river has cut a 60 foot canyon into the rock, and the trail often crests those walls, offering spectacular vistas of the valley and mountains ahead. The lower valley was dotted with Aspen groves, their rapidly changing leaves a golden contrast to the blue-green of the Ponderosa Pine.

After a full day of hiking, we found a nice campsite high above the Yellowstone, and brooded about the still nasty climate. We had come about seven miles and still had another ten to Base Camp. Cindy and I were still coughing from a recent bout with the flu, and the others often wondered if we could continue on.

The next morning was still overcast, though not as severely, and we took a vote: Go on or go back. The vote was 4-2 to continue and we broke camp and hiked on. Mark and Kathy Hartinger had to get back to Seattle and headed out, wishing us luck.

It was a long day, but the miles slowly passed by, and soon we reached tree-line. Up until that point we had been unable to see Kings Peak, as it is hidden by other nearby mountains, but finally our destination was visible. It lay about three miles to the east, across a wide valley and some mountain meadows.

Kings Peak is a deceptive mountain. It actually looks smaller than its mate, South Kings Peak, but 16 feet is not much of a difference. Kings Peak weighs in at a respectable 13,528 feet, mostly a huge pile of rubble. No clean, towering rock faces here. A trail leads up to Anderson Pass, 12,700 feet, next to kings, but from then on it's a non-techincal rock scramble.

Surrounding kings Peak is a string of similarly shaped mountains which form a series of huge bowls throughout the Uinta range. Most contain many small lakes, the primary draw for the area.

We backtracked slightly into the trees and found a campsite nestled amongst some pine trees, built a small campfire, and watched the now partly-cloudy skies with apprehension. Jeff, Paul, Brian, and I decided to try an ascent the next morning, weather permitting.

Morning brought quite a surprise! crystal-blue skies, deep with color and promise of a wonderful day. We knew now that weather would not be a problem and got our day packs ready for the climb.

Our plan was to bushwack our way accross the valley, emerging at tree line on the other side. From there we would angle toward the location of the trail somewhere in the meadow beyond. Once we found the trail it would become a simple endurance test the rest of the way up.

It went just that smoothly too. We crossed the valley with ease, enjoying the sense of being where others had not been before, arriving at tree line a half-hour later. We could now see our destination again and scaned the adjacent mountain for the switchbacks that lead to Anderson Pass.

A mountain meadow is a wonderous place indeed, and I was impressed with its beauty as we hiked across it. Even in

mid-September there were wildflowers everywhere, with tiny streams of water weaving through them.

We finally found the trail and soon were at the base of Mount Powell, where the trail followed a huge scree field up a number of switchbacks. After those, the trail angled up to Anderson Pass. It was late morning now and it was sunny and warm-- perfect climbing conditions. We started up, setting a slow but steady pace.

I could tell having the flu the week before was not helping matters any as we moved up the switchbacks, at about 11,000 feet. But soon I forgot my weariness as we left the switchbacks and approached a steep section of trail I vividly remembered. In front of me was the spot a friend fell eight years ago. Then it was covered with snow and quite intimidating, now it was simply more barren rock without a trace of moisture on it. I smiled to myself with the memories, wondering about our combination of foolishness and enthusiasm back then and how much better prepared I was now-- both mentally and technically. Better prepared now when I didn't need it. Oh, well.

Anderson Pass, 12,700 feet, was reached about 11:30 a.m. and we rested briefly. The climb to the top would be all rock scrambling with no real trail to follow. Since we were to follow a ridge to the top, we presumed that the summit would be quite recognizable, though we could not see it now, when there was no more 'up' left. Still, we had about 3/4 of a mile of scrambling to do, and the top seemed to elude us with numerous false summits.

Finally, I heard Jeff give out a whoop up ahead and I cleared the last pile of rocks to reach the top. After eight years of waiting, it was a great feeling to finally make the peak. Kings Peak was added to the other numerous successful climbs made by UCMC members this summer, and we all enjoyed the vistas.

What make this climb particularly nice was the extraordinarily wonderful weather. After days of drizzle, the conditions on top were calm winds and clear skies to all horizons. Many pictures were taken and we recorded some thoughts on a register we found on top. Mainly, we just enjoyed the sunshine and views of lakes and peaks near and far. Quite a place.

After an hour we headed back down, spending the rest of the day exploring the lakes and streams of the area. The next two days were spent retracing our steps down the Yellowstone River valley, this time under the most pleasant canopy of clear skies.

As we left the area, I was very glad to have finally made the summit of Kings. I knew there were too many other mountains to climb that I would not want to try a third time. I'm glad the second time went successfully, because I also don't like to leave something unfinished.

Caving in Kentucky

Tim Cahill
reprinted from OUTSIDE

Anyone who has ever tried to crowbar a little subterranean information out of people who habitually stumble around in caves-- cavers-- knows that these people are, by and large, a closed mouthed, introverted, even slightly hostile group. I was thinking about this late one Sunday evening recently while I was standing waist-deep in a slate green body of water called Dread Pool, which is two hours deep into a 23-mile-long cave network in central Kentucky. The waters were thick, glassy, ghostly, and cold. To get to some interesting caverns deeper down, one must wade through Dread Pool, and, in certain seasons, the water may reach up to one's chest. About an hour into the cave you start thinking about how cold the water is going to be and you spend the following 60 minutes dreading the pool. Hence the name.

Bad enough to wade through the pool. Worse to stand there, motionless. Posing for a photograph.

Some months previous, a set of remarkable photographs had come into the office. Taken in the same Kentucky cave by a young Ohio businessman and commercial photographer named Jeff Thompson, they were unlike anything I had ever seen. The images were weirdly striking, contorted, vast. They looked the way the Vikings' photos of Mars should have looked.

I called Jeff, and we made arrangements to see the cave. Thompson described himself as a 'soft-core, weekend caver,' then launched into a series of relatively hard-core conditions. According to Jeff's instructions, I spent three days at Yosemite sharpening my rock-climbing skills, and a day practicing rappels-- a method of descent using a rope with mechanical aids.

I read the books he recommended. I figured I knew every esoteric cave danger encountered by man from time immemorial. Lightning, for instance, can strike deep into a cave, and when such a bolt hits an accumulation of bat excrement-- guano-- an enormous explosion can result.

Exploding bat shit I was prepared for. Cave photography was another thing altogether. It is, of course, totally dark inside a cave. This means you can leave the shutter open on a camera, then strobe-light dozens of different specific areas around your central subject. It takes time to effect such stygian chiaroscuro. The human subject in such a photo must stand stock still. When the human subject is waist deep in the frigid waters of Dread Pool, he tends to become cranky. He wonders why cavers, as a whole, treasure these experiences, and why they are so secretive. Jeff, for instance, didn't want me to mention the name of the cave in my article. Did he really expect one day to crawl, creepy-damp, through this cave, and find 70 of 80 people lolling around in Dread Pool? (Editor's note: Yes. Sloan's-- er, this particular cave-- has become quite popular; the Miami Valley Grotto has a barn and a cabin there. On a recent Club trip here, 23 people came along-- and we met a whole fricking Boy Scout troop in the middle of the system.)

They breathe, caves do, and, depending on the barometric pressure, they inhale or exhale. When we approached Minton Hollow--one of 16 entrances to this cave, which is one of the 20 longest in the world--I could feel that cold, dark breath on me at 50 yards. The entrance, positioned on the side of a knoll, was surrounded by ferns and looked like a huge, baronial limestone hearth.

We walked, for the first few minutes, through spacious passages, well lit by the miners' lamps we wore. There were five of us: Jeff; Jeff's business associate, Chip Northrup; Mike Davis, a media specialist; and Jon Luzio, a dog warden. Jon, with distressing regularity, kept pointing out wet green leaves stuck in the overhangs at the top of the cave. The cave had been completely flooded, recently, and Jon had read that this low section near Minton Hollow could fill within 45 minutes.

Twenty yards into the cave, there was no way to know what was going on outside, whether, in fact, a freak rainstorm had burst out of a clear blue sky. If the water began to rise around our feet, we would have to go back the way we came, likely bucking a stream growing geometrically in power. If the water began to rise when we were several hours in, we'd have to look for a high, dry dome--some rise 100 feet, and more--and climb to a safe spot. If the walls could not be scaled, we'd have to wait in a high room and tread water until it rose to a climbable section of wall.

Experienced cavers have died during unexpected floods. They retreated to the highest rooms, and the water simply continued to rise: to their waists, to their chests, to their necks. In the end-- the idea is horrifying-- they must have lain back in the water, lips against the cold rock ceiling, and taken one last breath before the room filled completely.

Because of the danger of flooding, Jeff marked the location of the highest dry domes on his map.

Twenty minutes or so in from the entrance, the ceilings began to drop and we adapted a variety of stoop walks. In a passage 5 feet, 7inches high, a six-footer like myself can walk with slightly bended knees. But this is very tiring. Better to tilt the head so that the ear rests very nearly on one's shoulder. A person walking rapidly in this postion tends to look slightly psychotic, like Terrance Stamp in The Collector.

In shallower passages, cavers are obliged to double over, bowing from the waist. One cannot, however, stare only at the passing floor because a slight irregularity in the ceiling can cause a concussion. So one tilts the head up in a comical, neck straining posture. Technically, such passages are referred to as 'Groucho walks.'

Passages can get considerably tighter, but only once in 20 hours of heavy caving did I get seriously stuck. There was a narrow hole in the ceiling of

room. A slick pile of mud with a single foothold led to the hole. My arms went through first, like a diver's, but just as I pushed my triceps through, I lost the foothold and hung there, absurdly, with my feet dangling below and my arms pinned over my head.

I tried to deal with the panic in a rational manner. I am not, ordinarily, a claustrophobic person, but it seemed to me that I would remain stuck for, Oh, ten days at the most, by which time I'd have lost enough weight to slide out of the hole. Of course, there was always the danger of flood during those ten days. The idea of an earthquake-- shit, even a minor settling of the stone-- was terrifying. I'd end up all bulgy-eyed with my swollen tongue sticking out of my mouth, looking like a gruesome photo in some sleazy tabloid captioned: 'Garbage Man Crushed to Death in Own Truck!'

Mike pointed out, in an excessively calm voice, that there was a handhold to my immediate right and that, if I so desired, perhaps I could reach over and pull myself up. Unless, of course, I wanted to rest some more. There was no hurry. This process is called 'talking through' and even veteran covers sometimes catch the fear and have to be talked through tough spots.

For every tight spot, there are dozens of crawlways: nearly oval tubes with fluted walls and ceilings. It was Jon's contention that certain crawls resembled birth canals. Sometimes, so Jon says, the Earth Mother is good, and the floor is sandy. Sometimes she is a bitch, and the floor is covered with sharp baseball-seized rocks that bite right through your mandatory basketball kneepads.

For some reason, the birth-canal analogy offends me, but even more repulsive is the phrase 'bowels of the Earth.' If you consider a certain passage to be a section of bowel, and carry the metaphor to its unfortunate conclusion, then covers, moving as they do throught the bowels, become...

Enough.

Jeff says caving scratches his explorer's itch. Where he lives, the land has been given over to farms for more than a century. But precious few people have ever set foot deep into the caverns he loves; and, amazingly, new, virgin caves are being discovered every year.

While Jeff is pragmatic about his romanticism-- Stanley and Livingstone in the the netherworld-- I prefer to let my imagination take control. We had, for instance, been following the sound of falling water for some time when we came to an unnamed waterfall. The dark green river erupted out of an upper passage and tumbled down a 20 foot pit. It shone green, then silver in our lights. The walls of the pit were striated in browns and greens and ghostly whites. Two smaller streams poured out of a lower passage through formations that looked like nothing so much as balcony windows. On either side of the windows strange, twisted gargoyle shapes stood patient guard. Opposite the falls there was a gnarled, pulpitlike affair, and one could imagine foul rituals and obscene sermons shrieking through the silent canyons.

The formations had the look of something otherwordly, yet man-made, elegant relics of some twisted culture predating the Ice Age: a culture that had flourished, and decayed. I wanted to imagine a people given to the worship of dark things: cruel dwarf gods and evil warlocks could be seen in the flowed and contorted sculptures before us.

Sitting in front of that waterfall, I got as goofy as I've ever been, dead sober. I had just run through a fantasy about ebony and albino warriors and their revolt against the evil king and his necromaniac rituals, and was working on the one about the torchlit masked ball in the Thunder Room: sauté'ed eyeless fish, batwing soup, a weird, discordant melody echoing off cold stone, when it occurred to me that this was a very vulnerable fantasy. None of it would be any good if there were some old candy-bar wrappers and a broken RC Cola bottle on the floor.

And I got my first dim glimmering of why covers are not evangelistic about their sport.

Millions of years ago this area of Kentucky lay submerged beneath a shallow sea. Uncounted billions of marine plants and animals lived, absorbed calcium compounds from the sea, died, sank to the bottom and formed thick beds of limestone. The sea retreated and, to the east, the Appalachian Mountains punched up out of the earth, wrinkling the landscape of Kentucky, forming ridges and low, rooling hills. Many of the valleys here have no surface drainage system: no rivers or creeks.

The water goes underground, and, in so doing, it carves out caves. Rainwater percolating through topsoil absorbs carbon dioxide and becomes cabonic acid. Limestone is soluble in carbonic acid. The weakly acidic waste finds cracks and fissures in the stone. Sometimes it carves out huge vertical shafts, pits and chimneys. Then again, the water may flow horizontally, hollowing out oval tubes , some the size of a straw, some 80 feet in diameter.

As the water table sinks-- because of drought, or the shifting of the Earth's crust, or simply because the nearby river has carved itself a deeper valley--the tubes and pits are left relatively dry. In the rainy season, water, seeking its own level, roars abrasively through the tubes, carving out canyons. Eventually, most of the water makes its way through the maze of underground caverns and empties into a major surface lake or river.

Meanwhile, especially in the big rooms, water is still seeping through small fissures. It may enter the room through a drop-sized crack in the ceiling. Because cave air is almost devoid of carbon dioxide, the acidic water wants to reach chemical equilibrium by giving off carbon dioxide. The water loses its carbonic acid and the dissolved limestone it carries will solidify. Over hundreds of years, limestone deposits, released from a single-drop fissure, can form a spectacular stalactite (these icicle-shaped formations hang _tight_ to the ceiling). Water dripping from the tip of a stalactite may form a corresponding formation on the floor (you _might_ walk into a stalagmite).

When water runs down the side wall of a big room, it can form fantastic draperies: and when a thin sheet of water runs along the floor of a cave, it forms flowstone, which looks very much like a river frozen into stone. Permanent pools often contain thin stone 'lilypads' held on the surface by

water tension.

Sometimes passages containing no formations at all have a special beauty. The ceiling may often be covered with closely spaced hanging drops that, in miners' lights, look like molten silver studs. A bat, hanging upside down in sleep there, may be covered with drops, shining silver in your light.

In certain rooms, bats congregate by the thousands, and they hang there in one vast furry silver gray colony. At dusk, they leave the cave to feed outside, belching up out of the earth like a mass of swooping, swirling refugees from some Baptist preacher's hellfire sermon.

Chip and Mike and Jeff like to tell a bat story on Jon, who was a biology major in college. It seems they were making their way through a narrow passage when a number of bats in exit swooped by. Jon told everyone to remain stil. Bats, he explained, send out high-pitched squeaks-- inaudible to the human ear-- receive the echoes and fly by an amazingly accurate sonar system. No way could one hit you. At this point, a bat flew directly into Jon's neck and fluttered there, frantically. The bat screeched, audibly. So did Jon. It was hard to tell which was which.

Bats, Jon found out later, switch off most of their sonar in the familiar confines of their home cave and fly by memory. Unfamiliar objects, like covers, confuse them. The audible sound the bat made, like the audible sound Jon made, was an expression of surprise and horror.

Bats have precious little company in caves. Near the entrances you may find common spiders and salamanders and some nesting birds. In the deeper caverns, far from the twilight world of the entrances, we saw white, eyeless crickets. They had antennae longer than their bodies and they moved surely, in braille. A number of pools contained eyeless, albino crayfish. There are also albino fish in some of the lakes, and where the eyes would be on these fish, there is only smooth, white flesh.

On the whole, however, nothing much lived deep in the limestone caverns we explored, and the air there was cool, sterile. It was without the scent and stench of life and death. There was no mustiness, no darkness. It was unexpectedly fresh and pleasant and primitive, and it tasted, I imagined, much the way the atmosphere of the earth must have when it was newly formed.

The saga of the West Virginia Death Cave is not something Jeff Thompson likes to talk about, but the tale does have its cautionary aspects. 'It was about four years ago,' Jeff told me. 'We were beginners-- a real buncha nerds.' In a retarded-sounding drawl he added, 'Well, shit-fire buddy, we read two whole books. We figured we knew it all.'

Jeff and Jon and Jon's wife Ronnie-- who wrote up an account of the ordeal for me-- had entered the cave about noon on a Saturday. The only smart thing they did that day was to tell some fellow cavers they would see them for a party that night around eight.

The first few hours were pretty routine: groucho walks, crawls, careful climbs over breakdowns, where the ceiling of a big room had caved in. No one thing was very difficult in itself; but, in total, it was exhausting work, especially when done with little rest and at the impatient pace Jeff and Jon cultivated in those days. Fatigue colored their judgment and they began to make mistakes, deadly mistakes.

Five hours in, at the point they should have turned back, they met another group of cavers, coming the other way. That meant there was a connection to be made from where they were, a way out without retracing their steps. They didn't carry maps or compasses at that time, so they listened to a complicated series of instructions, then started off to make the connection. 'We thought we had come through the worst of it,' Ronnie wrote, 'and that it would only get easier. We didn't recognize that the other cavers were very tired.'

They stepped up the pace a bit. The party was scheduled for eight. A low, two-foot crawl dropped to one foot. They had to remove their helmets and push them along ahead. Feet wouldn't fit unless they were splayed out sideways. It was a real nose-to-the-limestone, 300-foot squashed belly-crawl over sharp rocks. And now they were lost.

There was a hands-and-knees grotto at the end and two passages leading off from that. 'One was an easy crawl over a soft mud floor,' Jon said, 'and the other was much lower. That easy passage just sucked us in.' Jeff tried the passage to see if it would go, returned , and then Jon pushed it for 45 minutes, while Jeff and Ronnie knelt in the windy grotto. Jon returned and said that he had taken the passage to a series of short climbs that would probably take them to the surface. Ronnie noticed that Jon was very wet. She remembered the other cavers being dry.

Jeff led the wet, muddy crawl, then pushed over the short climbs through a small hole that should have led to the surface. 'Oh no,' Ronnie heard him moan. Her heart sank. She emerged into a pit surrounded by unclimbable 20 foot walls.

It was now 6:30. They were scared, lost, exhausted and freezing to death. The temperature in the cave was perhaps 52 degrees, and there was a slight breeze, say five miles per hour, which put the wind-chill factor at about 20 degrees. Worse, they were wet, and water chill is an even more efficient killer than wind chill. Jeff, who had been a medic in the Army, diagnosed hypothermia, that deadly dropping of the body's core temperature, sometimes called exposure. In its first stages symptoms of hypothermia include controlled shivering and goose bumps. Then comes uncontrolled shivering, followed by acute confusion and a lowered pulse rate. When the body's core temperature drops below 70 degrees, death comes quickly.

There was no good rest in that pit. Lying on the rocks was suicide! the cold wetness of the stone sucked the heat from their bodies. So they formed a standing tripod. 'I never believed I could sleep on my feet,' Jon said. But he did and almost instantly rescuers were there and he was whisked out of the cave and into a grassy West Virginia field under the warm West Virginia sun, drinking a nice warm cup of soup. Suddenly his knees buckled and he woke from his dream into a cold, dark, living nightmare. Jon was shivering uncontrollably; shivering so badly, in fact, that he pulled a muscle in his stomach.

Jon and Jeff, who had twice tried to made connections by crawling through half a foot of water, were the worst off. Jeff figured the two of them had about 30 hours to live. Ronnie, who was drier, might go 48. Maybe the cavers they had talked to would notice that they hadn't turned up for the party. Maybe. But more likely their absence wouldn't be noted until they din't show up for work on Monday, 36 hours in the future.

At half-hour intervals they did five minutes of jumping jacks in order to maintain their temperature. Jon's pulse never rose above an ominous 62. They were dead. It was absurd. Here they were, young and in the best of shape, and they could expect death in a day and a half.

Jon switched on his miner's lamp, the only functioning light they had left, and Jeff saw a sad, bitter thing in the sudden brilliance. The cave was sucking away the heat he built up exercising. Steam rose from his hand; rose in five straight shafts from the tips of his fingers. 'I'm watching myself die,' he said.

They had been hearing the sounds of running water all night, but now it seemed there was something more than water. If you held your breath and listened hard... yes, it was the muffled sounds of voices. They called out. They shouted themselves hoarse, and waited for a reply; but the only sound was the distant mumble of running water.

They slept, woke from pleasant wishful dreams of sunlight into their nightmare of frigid darkness. Again they exercised, and watched the cave suck the life out of them. Jeff found his bank book in one pocket, and that was pretty funny. Pretty goddam funny. They talked about their values and their lives, and the things they had left undone. They resigned themselves to death.

Ronnie had a Timex watch, and as sunrise approached their spirits lifted. It had been no use looking for an exit in the dark. In the daytimme they could switch off Jon's lamp and look for a shaft of light from above. At dawn, they started back down the agonizing series of crawls that had trapped them. They dead-ended, backtracked, and finally found a series of climbs that brought them to a big ledge.

Jon spotted a daddy-long-legs spider, an entrance dweller. And they could smell air: real living air, humid and heavy with the scent of wildflowers. There had to be an exit nearby, but when Jon snapped off his lamp it was, as before, absolutely black. The final desperate crawl had sapped the last of their strength. They sat down on the cold rocks and waited to die.

Which is when the members of the Monongahela and Pittsburgh grottos (chapters) of the National Speleological Society found them. They were 50 feet from a rabbit-hole exit; but, in their exhaustion, they might never have made the necessary traverse of a 3- foot pit to find the exit that was hidden behind a large pile of breakdown.

The rescue operation had been launched at midnight after Jeff and Jon and Ronnie failed to show for the party. 'They spent eight hours searching for us,' Ronnie wrote, 'and I want to thank them publicly.'

'We were,' Jeff said, 'literally born again. When they found us and discovered that no one was seriously hurt, we had to listen to a lot of lectures about what a bunch of nerds we were. Well, we were. I mean, that had been proven. But it didn't matter. I was as happy as I've ever been in my life and the feeling lasted for days. I was a nerd, all right, but I was a <u>living</u> nerd.'

Early one afternoon we rappelled down a narrow 25-foot-deep hole called the Post Office entrance. What happened that day is a good example of the way decisions are made in caves.

We pushed through a tight, muddy, painful crawl to a ten-foot drop into a muddy lower level, then walked for some time through a shallow, flowing stream. We climbed some breakdown before coming to a tight hole Jeff persisted in calling a 'whoop-de-do.' Imagine a vertical 'S' curve of basketball hoops eight feet long. Now imagine squeezing through it feet first. I would estimate that it took me a three-mile jog's worth of energy to squeeze my 210 pounds through Jeff's whoop-de-do.

We crawled to a waterfall so high we could see it from both an upper and a lower passage. The water fell in a silver circle around a perfectly symmetrical stone column the width of an old redwood tree. The circular waterfall emptied into a placid pool whose edges glittered like a plane of opaque green glass.

After a short rest, we pushed on. Our goal was to connect with either Screamin' Willy's entrance or Scowlin' Tom's. According to the map, we would pass through a big room, a lake room, a massive meeting of passageways called Echo Junction, and finally, Grand Central Spaghetti, a bewildering maze of interconnecting passages on several different levels.

An upward sloping, tube-type crawl ended at a porthole overlooking the Big Room. We were 30 feet up a 60-foot wall. There was a rope ladder at the end of the tube, but the rope looked old and there were some awful nasty-looking rocks below, not to mention a dull green lake, and no one was willing to bet his life on the ladder. Jeff drove a new expansion bolt into the rock and we rigged a rappel to a ledge 12 feet below. We pulled our

doubled rope down after us and followed the ledge to a pile of breakdown, then climbed over into the main section of the Big Room. We found ourselves facing a flooded passage. A heavy rock tossed into the lake confirmed what we already knew. Deep water.

We were only three hours into the cave. I wanted to see Echo Junction and Grand Central Spaghetti! I had connection fever. It seemed to me that doubling back the way we came would be an admission of defeat.

I proposed a plan: at its narrowest point, the lake was 50 yards across; we had that much rope. Since I was relatively certain that there was nothing in the lake that bit or leeched blood, and since I had spent a dozen years of my life engaged in serious competitive swimming, I offered to swim the rope across. I'd tie it off on my end, they'd tie it off on theirs, and they could hand-over-hand to my side of the drink.

A beautiful plan. Mike and Chip and Jeff and Jon were very patient. They never once called me a nerd. They simply pointed out, quite logically, why it would be dangerous and stupid to push on.

Point one: the map showed that parts of Grand Central Spaghetti were at the same elevation as the Big Room. That meant that essential connecting tubes and crawlways were likely to be completely flooded, top to bottom, and totally impassable without scuba gear.

Point two: inevitably, we'd get lost. If we got seriously lost, it could be deadly. We'd left word on the outside, but would rescuers assume that we swam the lake? There we'd be, soaked to the skin in some windy passage, dying of hypothermia and every few minutes I'd find my self saying, 'Gosh, you know I'm really sorry about this, guys.'

Point three: our lights and batteries were good for 12 hours. We could, conceivably, push on for three more hours. But then, if we didn't make the connection, we could double back and hit the Post Office entrance in 12 hours even. That left no margin for rest or error.

Point four: we'd already made a minor error. (Most cave accidents seem to be built on a foundation of minor errors.) We had brought the rope down after us. We should have left the rope, climbed the breakdown and examined the Big Room first. Now we'd have to climb from the ledge to the overlook without the aid of the rope.

Luckily, Mike had fastened his etrier to the expansion bolt and left it hanging from the overlook. An etrier is a long, strong piece of nylon webbing tied into two stirrups, one above the other. Like the rest of us, Mike had figured that we'd make the connection. He left the etrier, a sacrifice to an imaginary emergency that had just developed.

We trekked back over the ledge to the point just below the overlook. Mike tied into the rope and Chip put him on belay. If Mike fell, Chip could hold him easily. But say he fell from the mouth of the tube: he'd plummet 12 feet to the ledge, then probably 12 more feet to the end of the rope. A total of 24 feet. A fall like that means nasty cuts and abrasions, perhaps even a broken bone, and would leave poor Mike dangling there in agony. We'd have to hoist him up to the ledge where Jeff could put a splint on him. Someone else would have to climb the etrier. Then we'd have to pull Mike up to the overlook, get him down the tube, through the crawls, up the whoop-de-doo and finally pull him 25 feet up to the Post Office entrance.

So it was with some trepidation that we watched Mike make the first move around a large boulder on the ledge. There was room for more than half your foot and the handholds were good. It's just that the concave shape of the boulder forced one's ass into the abyss and, at this point, the heart refused to beat in a regular fashion. On the second move Mike got hold of the etrier, and on the third he placed his left foot in the lower stirrup. He searched for a high handhold, found one, put his right foot into the upper stirrup and did a pushup into the safety of the tube.

Mike belayed the rest of us from above, and this arrangement limited any potential fall to three or four feet. We each accomplished the climb with relative degrees of ease, and started the three-hour hike, climb, squeeze, crawl back.

In the tight crawl between the whoop-de-doo and the entrance, we heard the muffled sounds of what seemed to be a child screaming in terror and agony. The screams came from the entrance, the 25-foot drop we had made on rappel. From below, we saw a five-year old boy half-way up the drop. He was hanging there on a rope which was wrapped painfully around his chest and tied, dangerously, with an ordinary square knot. The rope itself was a wonder: frayed black plastic clothesline. The kid was being hauled out of the pit by an unseen force above and he was thumping against ledges and outcroppings with painful regularity.

On the surface, we met the unseen force, who turned out to be the boy's father, a pleasant, sandy-haired 30-year-old I'll call Bob. It turned out that Bob had done some backpacking and river running, and now he was interested in learning a bit about caving. Clearly, he wasn't the sort of pimple who'd snap off a 100 year-old stalactite for a souvenir, or go around spray painting his name on walls, or leaving empty tins of Vienna sausage in some pristine grotto. But he was dangerously unprepared, and Jeff had no idea what to say to him.

Bob obviously had no technical experience. Swinging the kid around on that idiot rope was likely to put a permanent end to father-and-son outings. Between the two of the, boy and the man, they had one source of light, a number that fell five short of minimum safety standards. The kid had no helmet, and since there are rockfalls inside, and because <u>everybody</u> cracks his head in a cave, he was risking serious concussion. Bob had no map, no compass. The kid had no coveralls. He'd have to crawl through flowing streams in a thin cotton T-shirt, then stand around in a 20-degree wind chill while Bob tried to figure out where they were.

Bob chatted pleasantly. Jeff didn't say very much. He was thinking: should I tell them about the West Virginia Death Cave? Can I really give this guy a stiff safety lecture in front of his kid? If he did, Bob would think he was an arrogant, condescending turd.

'What you ought to do,' Jeff said, 'is join the National Speleological Society. They have a grotto here...'

'I heard about them,' Bob said, 'but first I want to see if I really like caving. Isn't there an easier entrance around here?'

Chip and Mike and Jon faded away from the conversation and got real busy coiling muddy rope. Jeff hesitated way too long and the the fellow looked at him strangely. Someday Bob would tell his friends that cavers are, by and large, closed-mouthed, introverted, even vaguely hostile people.

'My boy really wants to see the cave,' Bob prodded.

Jeff worked hard on a smile and gave the two of them directions to a distant, empty, caveless field.

A Natural Experience

Marci Napoli

As I walk through this luscious river valley, the cycles of life, death, and time seem so apparent. The movement of the meandering river has left dry rock beds of the past. As it changes its course, it continues to eat away at the soft hillside, leaving exposed roots, ripping trees from the ground and pushing them aside, determined and forceful in its path to the Pacific. Above, the foothills of the Olympics vibrate in shades of green and yellow, these rolling hills only a hint of the snow-capped peaks beyond. A cold, yet chilling breeze is a constant reminder of the glaciers above which created this valley, this river. I take a deep breath and begin to hike.

In the forest, moss hangs from the branches like flowing hair, reaching down to the ferns below. I feel so small. Just one tiny organism in a forest full of life. Vibrant purple flowers stretch their limbs to reach the few sun rays which find their way through the towering trees. I stop to rest in a sun spot. I stretch out on the ground and look up. A barn owl is majestically perched on a dead limb. His large brown eyes stare into mine. We connect.

The sun becomes hidden behind swiftly rolling clouds. It begins to drizzle. The owl has gone. Leaves hiss in the breeze. I hear voices! No, it must be the river. Are you sure? Yes. I hike on.

An ancient fir tree, now dead and moss-covered, blocks my path. I stop for a look at the decaying matter. Inside are thousands and thousands of busily working ants. Bit by bit, grain by grain, they eat away at the decaying fir tree. They drop tiny particles of tree dust, one by one, onto the ground. Through this process they have formed a rather large pile of saw dust by the side of the dead tree. I hike on.

I hear something moving. A herd of fifty elk or more slowly move away from the trail as they sense my presence. One stops to gaze at me. He stands firmly, showing no fear. I return the gaze. The daylight is dimming. I hike on.

As I proceed, I come upon a skeleton. It's that of an elk. The skull, the ribs, the legs, the spine. It's all there. I retrieve a small vertebrae and continue.

I walk down to the river bed and sit on the eroded bank. I see no one but I'm not alone.

Oh, Yeah, So <u>What</u> If They're Nuts?

Brian Hoop

'Hey doc, have I got a story to unload on you. Let me tell you, I've seen some strange things, you know, like things normal people don't do.'

'Lay down here, kid, and tell me about it.'

'Well you see, doc, I happened to run into some cool guys this summer who happened to like rock climbing. Yeah, I say, that looks like fun so they take me to some gorge. For sure, the challenge was climbing to the top but getting back down was what they were after. Must be some trip getting high on gravity, I guess. I mean they wanted to fall fast, you know, like rocks do, banging on and off the cliff wall. I don't know, maybe they thought they'd start flying or something. Weee, hey look at me, I'm a bird. Ya - hoo! Oh boy, doc they must be flipping out or something.

This one's even better, doc. Some guy thought he was Spiderman. Heh, I'm serious. He actually tackled that rock wall without a rope. So I ask what if he slipped and fell. God only knows he'd probably do cartwheels back down the side and end it in a triple somersault. They're cracked, doc, you know, off the wall. Must have rocks in their heads, I don't know.

Here's another one for you. I tag along with a bunch to do some whitewater rafting. Uh yeah, and just exactly what does that mean, I ask. Well, it's like having a few too many drinks at a party. Afterwards you're driving down the road unconsciously swerving across four lanes about ready to run into a concrete pillar. Well yeah, when you're drunk, no problem, you're too wasted to be scared or freak out so you use the good old power steering and swerve by. But try convincing a boat full of sober land lovers that the churning waters weren't actually in a plot with the people-eating rocks to capsize us at every rocky rapid. Do rocks ever get hungry, doc? How silly of me to ask. But, I did see the river suck in kayakers and spit them back out. Must've not tasted too good, I guess.

One last note, doc. Something really strange about those cavers I've met. I keep my distance from them, doc. Their love for caving was too deep for me. They practically worship the thrill of caving, kind of like a church of hard rock. I mean really, imagine yourself sightseeing in a cave. I don't know what they could see down there except the back of the person in from of them. I told them I wouldn't go down there unless they provided an emergency door. For claustrophobia, you ask, noooo... don't be silly, in case I needed to find a tree to take a leak on, what else.

So what do I think is wrong with these people? Well, uh, nothing, really. In fact they're no crazier than the rest of us. But you know what, they're having a lot more fun being crazy. I don't know exactly why they do what they do. But like the old saying goes doc, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Hey, doc, wanna join us next week? Yeah, we're gonna climb Mt. Everest and do handstands on top. Hey, look at us, we're on top of the world! Ya-- hooo, yippie-- hi-- ho!'

'Tisk, tisk, another student lost to the Mountaineering Club. Send in the next case, nurse.'

Knots to You

Steve Kramrech

It has been interesting over the course of several years teaching rock climbing and observing other climbers, the wide variety of knots, hitches, etc. that are used, abused and misapplied. For myself, I have a rather limited (according to some) repetoire of knots, but I've found they carry me through a large variety of situations. There is an old saw about "give him enough rope and he'll hang himself"; I'd like to give you some knowledge to do it properly.

To start off properly let's get our terminology straight, since some "knots" are not properly knots at all. (By the way these definitions are my own and will be disputed by some persons. What counts is that they make your knowledge of knots better so that they can be properly tied. I could give a hang what you call them.)

Knot-- one or more intertwined sections created in a rope and passing it through one or more loops in the rest of the rope, an important factor is that at some point in the process the hand holding the free end (see defn.) must release it to continue tying the knot (for those who see it, I've tried to give this definition some topological meaning).

Hitch-- one or more loops in a rope which are intended (ususally) to encircle an object and prevent movement of the rope formins the hitch in some manner.

Bend-- a knot or knots that are used to join pieces or sections of ropes together.

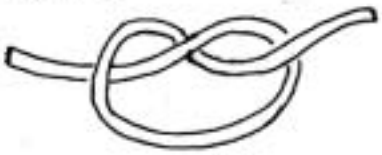
Standing Part-- when workins with rope and making knots, etc., there is usually a large part of the rope that will not be involved with the actual knot. this is the <u>standing part</u>.

Free End-- on the other hand, only someone interested in busy work would tie an overhand knot by forming the loop and passing the remainder (let's say 150 ft.) through this loop. Most people would work with the <u>free end</u>, the smaller length of the rope being used.

Bight-- what produces a hickey. Or, take one hand and grasp the rope anywhere. Take your other hand and place it anywhere else except on top of the first hand (both hands are generally 1-3 ft. apart) now bring both hands together and place that part of the rope in the first hand in the other. This loop of rope is a bight.

Length (of rope)-- any necessary linear measure of rope, usually either too short or too long when chosen by beginners, used to tie a knot or whatever.

Ok, now let's talk business. One knot which most people know but don't know the name of is the overhand, pictured here:



overhand

Wasn't that easy??? It is great for tying your shoes but not too sophisticated and if misapplied, not too safe. An improvement on the overhand is the figure-eight. Instead of putting the free end through the loop after crossing over the standing part once cross over the loop and then pass through the loop thusly:

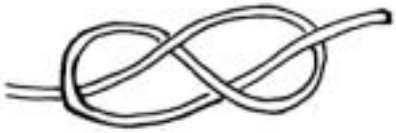
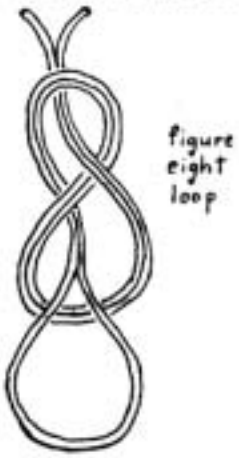


figure-eight

Why is it an improvement? Because generally a figure-eight is easier to untie after being stressed than an overhand.

<u>Now if you need a loop</u> or several in a rope, such as for clipping to, one of the quickest is a figure-eight <u>loop</u> The easiest method is to take a bight of rope long enough to account for the knot and the size of loop you require. Use the bight as though it were the end of the rope and the two parallel strands the standing part, and tie a figure eight.

Voila, a figure-eight loop!



Again, you could do this with the overhand but if you put a lot of tension on it it will be hell trying to untie it.

An even better method for obtaining loops is with the (shudder) bowline, a knot most persons learn (and forget) by the "the rabbit comes out of his hole and around the tree) trash. All I ever remembered is my dislike of such "memory enhancing" techniques. One of the best reasons for learning this knot is (1) it is probably even easier to untie after being tensioned than the figure-eight and (2) there are so many variations on it that you are bound to find the one or several that meet your specific needs, in fact my reference lists 16 types.

To tie it, take a bight of rope and put a half twist in it (i.e. rotate the bight 180 degrees). Second, and importantly, you now must take the free end and put it through the hole you created, but <u>wait</u>

Look carefully at the hole and you will notice that if you thread the rope through in one direction it will give you an overhand knot, through the other and nothing happens. Ok, now with the free end through the hole you have a second decision, which way to pass the free end around the standing part of the rope. Although a bowline (of sorts) can be created in either direction the genuine one has the free end going around in the direction the loop takes if you travel from the standing part along the rope to its end. The finish is simple. Put the free end through the loop opposite to how it went through the first time. Pull both parts that go through the small loop with one

hand and the standing part with the other and you're done. For extra security tie an overhand with the free end around the part next to it through the small loop.

bowline

There are two bends commonly employed in climbing, the ring bend (water bend) and the fishermans bend. Both are very good for joining two rope sections together. The ring bend is particularly apt for use with flat webbing. The fishermans bend is useful for joining two ropes in preparation for a double rope rappel and in tying the cord used in slinging chocks, etc.

The ring bend is fairly simple to tie as it's based on the overhand. First tie a loose overhand, next using the free end of the other rope section thread it back into the original knot paralleling the first rope until you exit from the original knot. Draw up both parts neatly and you're done. Be sure to be particularly neat using flay webbing so that the knot will not be too bulky and the maximum amount of friction is developed. A similar bend called the Flemish bend is created in the same way as the ring bend using the figure-eight as the basic knot. It is good for fixed lines subject to heavy strain, wet weather and clumsy climbers.

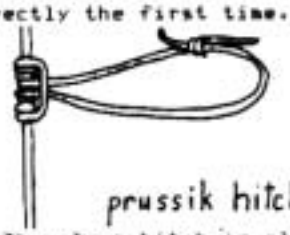
ring bend

The fishermans bend also has the overhand as its basis. To start lay (or hold) the two ends of rope parallel to each other with the ends pointing in opposite directions. Take one end and tie an overhand around it with the free end of the second rope going through the loop of the overhand knot. Now in forming the first knot you either wrapped the first piece towards or away from your body. To form the second knot you must take the free end of the second rope piece and wrap it around the first piece in the opposite direction to the first knot; i.e., if the first knot was started by wrapping away from your body, start the second by wrapping toward your body and completing with an overhand. By the way, you can keep the two knots separated by a foot or so initially to make it easier to tie. If you've done everything correctly when you grasp the two standing ends and pull, the knots will slide against each other and stop. You can tell if the knots have been wrapped in opposite directions. If they have been, they will dovetail neatly together, otherwise they will deform under stress. An improvement is to wrap the knots twice around the standing parts before completing the knot by threading through both loops you've created.

fishermans bend

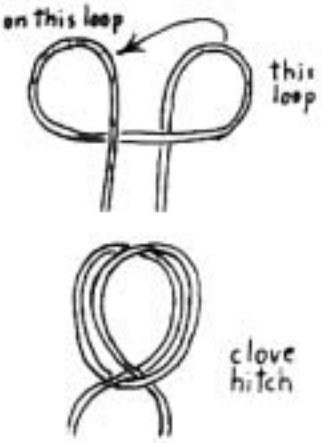
Two of the most-used hitches are the prussik and clove. The prussik is usually used for ascending ropes and the clove for anchoring a loop of webbing to a projection.

The prussik is easily formed. Using a loop of rope tied into a circle, bring one side of the loop around the rope you are fixing the loop to. Now, choosing one side of the loop, put the other side around the standing rope and through the chosen side of the loop. By wrapping in this fashion two or three times a prussik is formed. The hitch is correctly formed if both sections of the prussik spiraling around the rope exit and the part running over the parallel sections is moderately snug. Neatness is very important to this hitch to achive maximum grip, and it usually takes a few minutes to form it correctly the first time.



prussik hitch

The clove hitch is slightly harder to describe. Take a bight of rope in hand and give it a half twist to form a loop. now go to either side of the loop and take another bight This also gets a half twist however. It must be formed so that looking at the two loops one of loops has a piece crossing over and one under the section between them. Now take the loop which has a section running over the section between the two loops and put it under and together with the other loop. Draw the loop tight and you're done.



clove hitch

There are lots of other knots that are useful and in later issues I'll detail how to tie some of them.

Western Pacific Orient

Craig Patterson

Cincinnati! "I now pronounce you husband and wife." April 28th didn't change things, work and school plodded on. We still had two months to kill in Cincinnati before we could be set free. The weeks flew by quickly with spring fever and anticipation. Anticipation of July 12th, when our routines would be shattered.

Wyoming! We were determined to reach the alpine backcountry of the Wind River Range without stopping. Eight UCMC Trekheads saw opportunity and conquered, thirty-six hours later the trailhead was covered with dust. The Cirque of the Towers loomed in the starstruck sky. A jammin' group backpacking and climbing for six days in the wilderness. We spent our time on the edge of existence, a place with no access or security. Sentinnel Pinnacle, Cathedral Peak, Mt. Washakie; the miles disappeared, the memories remained. Our ten week honeymoon had uncoiled.

Idaho! No one lives here! Except for the Mormons in Idaho Falls, Idaho was made for recreation. A 2000 year-old lava field called Craters of the Moon was dwarfed by the Sawtooth Mountains on the west, and Borah Peak in the Lost River Range on the east. Borah Peak had a major earthquake on October 28, 1983, but still offered a 5000 foot scramble through the clouds. With relentless rain, we buzzed through the Sawtooths to Boise for a taste of cowboy bars and Herefords.

Oregon! Strawberry Wilderness was virtually unpopulated, plenty of room to breath in the solitude of dry pines and snow fields. So was the drive to Ochoco National Forest Contractors Camp. Here four timber cruisers met two newlyweds for an assault on Mount Jefferson. Three days of trail, ice and rock came fast. Out there! Loose rocks in the afternoon sun! Six up, six down, success amongst the Mazamas! Up the Oregon coast, out on the beach, the sunsets were all our own. We arrived in Eugene after the Olympics and another wedding, best men trading places, a home away from home.

California! The redwood highway moved south to San Francisco. We stopped for Chinese with x-UCMC Cindy Mason in Alameda. She will soon return east to live in North Carolina. The thought of going overseas hit the newlyweds in the kidneys; shrewd tactics and strategy followed.

Japan! It took twenty-four hours of travel to reach Shun Ohnishi in Osaka, a friend indeed of two friends in need. It went something like this; bus, plane, bus, train, bullet train, taxi, and contact. We enjoyed four days of traditional - untraditional international understanding with Shun and his family. The aftermath package included ten days of unescorted pointing. Don't miss the slide show October 24th. Hiroshima, Mt. Fuji, Pacific Resorts, Tokyo, and much more. We were lost in Buddha!

Hong Kong! Don't forget to reconfirm your flights! We entered the smog-filled city at night, ten hours later than planned. Hong Kong had enough shopping, enough Chinese, and enough plumbing problems to make 444 Dixmyth look good. Why not go to Macau, the Portuguese Province in China? After a round trip ferry and three bottles of Lancers, we found ourselves on a plane to Hawaii.

Hawaii! Aloha! We were welcomed to the luxurious tourist trap of Waikiki Beach on the island of Oahu. A jet lag mixed with hula shows and sunset cruises led us to Maui. We had to rent a car, it was the beautiful way. With its palm trees and golf courses, Maui was a resort paradise. The island had everything from windsurfers to whales. Maui Waui and the end of a rainbow led us to Hawaii, the big island. A challenging three-day, thirty-six mile climb of Mauna Loa followed. We shared the recently active volcano with a doctor of medicine and philosophy-- power in the lava fields of time. Our return to Oahu was less hectic with sunbathing and snorkeling. Our Polynesian cuisine consisted of pineapples, macadamia nuts, and Mai Tais. Mahalo!

California! The second time around, San Francisco landed on the weekend. The Thursday night red-eye flight from Hawaii kept us in bed most of Friday morning. But by evening, Bolinas Beach was surrounded by diving pelicans and moonlight. A second trip to the coast took us to Bodega Bay where the movie "The Birds" was filmed. The Bay had an authentic fishermans' wharf without any downtown crowds. On the way to San Diego, we stopped at Pinnacles National Monument and the infamous Beverly Hills of Los Angeles. Cheri's brother Bobby had a case of cold Heineken and room for us in San Diego. Day trips to the San Diego Zoo and La Jolla Beach and late night Jello rounded out a wild time.

Mexico! Tijuana, also called T.J., was definitely across the border. If you can't barter

(continued on page 22)

Mt. Rogers: An Alternative

Don Speller

Thanksgiving weekend. Cold and windy. A perfect day for a trip. The Sorry Seven packed up to go. Go where? Mt. Rogers. Where? Mt. Rogers, Virginia. Virginia? Yes. Virginia.

Marty, Bapi, Brigit, Sue Ann, Mike, Karen, and I left Cincinnati, the guys in my Gremlin, affectionately know as the Orange Lemon, and the girls in Sue Ann's car. Since it was Thanksgiving weekend, our plans to go to the Smokies faded out when Marty couldn't get reservations. Instead, we decided on Mt. Rogers Natural Recreation Area in Virginia. It would be only a little farther than the Smokies - or so I thought.

The drive was uneventful as they usually are until we stopped in Pikeville to eat. There was a large crowd near the shopping mall next door waiting to see Santa Clause parachute from a plane at one o'clock. We waited but no Santa. As we were leaving Pikeville, the girls in the front car turned into a store lot, drove back to the mall and into the lot with me trying to keep up. We caught a glimpse of a speck in the sky and soon Santa descended under his chute. Finally on the road again.

I seriously under-estimated the mountain roads as we drove through the strip mine areas of Virginia. At last we hit a highway again but we were still far from our goal. The mountains were spectacular. We exited the highway onto yet another mountain road. Thirty more miles of up and down backroads. My nerves were wearing thin. Finally, we reached Marion, the jumping off point for Mt. Rogers. More mountain roads, darkness closing in, my nerves fraying. At last we pulled into a parking area in total darkness. Over 10 hours of driving. I was frazzled.

The area was beautiful and cold with a thick snow cover. We set up the tents right there. While Mike, Bapi and Brigit were in one tent, Marty, Sue Ann, Karen and I all fit into Marty's tent and talked about the Club's future and what we could do to encourage its growth. We decided the main thing is to get people active.

The next day offered a better time. After packing up and securing the cars, we headed up the snowy Appalachian Trail toward Mt. Rogers. Soon we reached the A.T. Old Orchard Shelter. We met a group of hikers who recommended that we go to Pine Mountain rather than Mt. Rogers for the view. We took their advice and were soon on our way. It was worth it. After several miles in thick forest we suddenly walked out onto the largest mountain meadow in the area. The view was incredible and we savored it while lunching on top of a rocky outcropping. I can't impress upon you the beauty of the sight. We could see an entire section of the Appalachian Mountains miles away and

the rocky peak of Pine Mt. on the other side. For a moment I thought I was on Electric Pass in the Colorado Elks Range.

After lunch we hid our packs and hiked a winding trail to the top of Pine Mountain through alternating wooded forests, open meadows and thick rhododendron patches. The whole trip was hiking at its best. Our group made it to the base of Pine Mountain and some of us scrambled to the rocky pinnacle marking the high point. (The elevation there was 5526. Mt. Rogers was behind us at 5729, the highest point in Virginia.) We then returned to our packs and descended to the Old Orchard Shelter.

The shelter was small with just enough room for six of us to squeeze in for the night. Bapi volunteered to sleep on a picnic table. We were tired and ready for bed. But not before a good meal in front of a fire. The night sky was clear and Marty, Bapi and I tried to point out star patterns. That night set in my mind as that which brings me to the wilderness in the first place.

The next day we descended to our cars and packed up. We chose an alternate route home, avoiding many of the mountain roads. We raced home in the rain at a semi-reasonable hour.

Lately, I received a subpoena to appear as a witness to a car crash because someone is suing someone. My Orange Lemon has clutch problems. My nerves are wearing thin. Uh... anyone want to go to Mt. Rogers. Where? Mt. Rogers, Virginia. Virginia. Virginia? Yes, Virginia.

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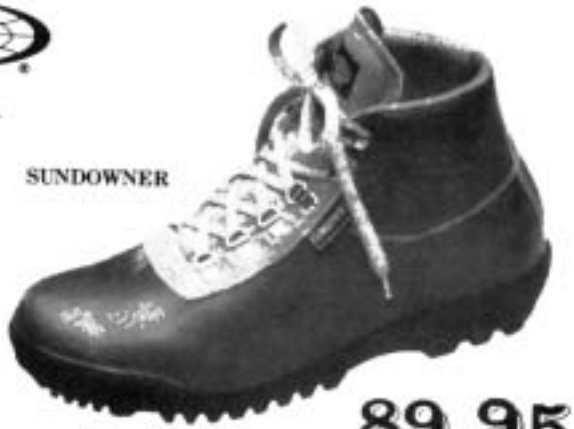

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Mt. Hoodlums

Bill Strachan

It might not have seemed worth it to some but there I was driving all the way across the country alone from Cincinnati to Portland, Oregon. That's what it took for this misplaced midwestern mountaineer to realize the next step in aspirations towards alpine adventures on the scale of the Alaska ranges, the Andes, or the Himalayas. It wasn't all that lonely knowing that when I arrived in Portland I would be attending an Outward Bound Alumni Seminar, attempting to climb Mount Hood, Oregon's highest peak. The snow and ice-covered volcanoes of Rainier, Hood, Shasta in the Pacific Northwest are among those considered to be training and proving grounds for up-and-coming American alpinists. This would provide me with a rare opportunity to team up with Joan Williams , a veteran Alaskan climber and the seminar's chief instructor.

Finally I arrived in Oregon and as I cruised through the eastern high desert in the catatonia of three days on the road, I thought that lone, large saguaro cactus by the road must be an apparition. I took a second glance as I realized it was actually a very large, real live cowboy thumbing because his pick-up was broken down. I picked him up and agreed to take him into town. 'What you doin' in these parts?' When I responded that I was on my way to climb Mt. Hood he asked, 'You into that ice climbing?'. 'Oh, yeah !' I said. 'Well I'm into ropin!' the cowboy smiled. Soon I was descending into the scenic Columbia River gorge from which I caught a fleeting glimpse of Hood's summit some 10,000' above.

To get the most out of this arduous adventure I had begun training almost six months previously in December. Then, it had been just over a year since I had broken my leg falling from a bouldering problem in Clifton Gorge. Yoga lessons from Lillias Folan had worked miracles in restoring full mobility to the ankle below the break. I began running in February, building up a mile at a time with a goal of working up to 3-4 miles. This was essentially what I was running before the Outward Bound course I took during high school. I started bouldering at Eden Park to build my ankle strength and stamina for crampooning despite the year-long ban on climbing in the park. I needed also to build my confidence in facing exposure since I had done little climbing since my accident. After almost two weeks of getting away with it the park police unfortunately took it upon themselves to abrubtly end my training and and if possible incapacitate this acrobatic menace to society by ambushing me by my car, beating on me, and injuring my wrists with handcuffs.

The Pacific Crest Outward Bound School is surprisingly nestled in a residential area very close to downtown Portland. I camped out in the parking lot after having a high-carbohydrate loading dinner at a place that had over 20 different types of beer on tap. I arose early, anxious with the anticipation of meeting the other Outward Bound Alumni who would be on the climb. It was just like a UCMC trip start. We sat around and guzzled coffee waiting for latecomers and assembled our gear. We headed off with my Subaru and a van towards the base of the mountain. In the parking lot of the Mt. Hood lodge we officially staged an expedition start, making a final check of our gear, dressing, and packing our packs.

In the parking lot it was warm with everybody in short sleeves despite the snow around and above. The instructors of the course, Joan and Dave, gave us a short discourse on what to expect and what was expected. After chatting with the director of the Pacific Crest Outward Bound School who was on Hood for a cross-country ski trip, we started off. The other students on the trip were Brad and Jeff, two brothers from Dallas, Cody and Ingaborg, a charming couple from Chicago, Doug, a hardcore from Washington state, and Carmen, a Portland native.

It was a clear and beautiful day as we ascended 2000' up the classic snowfield. We dug in at the base of the summit peak learning how to build an igloo then covering a trench in the snow with a McKinley tent tarp. As the full moon rose I gazed off into the distance at Mt. Bachelor, Mt. Jefferson, and the Three Sisters. Twilight afforded an airplane vista of the twinkling lights of Portland. Great group! Great mountaineering!

We arose at 2:00 a.m. to begin the ascent. Clumsily getting dressed in the cold darkness, I had enjoyed an amazingly good sleep considering the position and condition I had been in. Joan and I collapsed the tent, revealing that we were now in the clouds. A few brief holes revealed the lights of Portland far below as a far-off world. We boiled water and had a breakfast of milk, granola and wafers with butter, topped off with hot tea as we sat comfortably on our ensolite pads in the igloo.

We made final preparations and began to climb in frozen, crusty snow. Soon it was light enough to move up without headlamps. The most early light was an incredible icy blue making my partners turn dark blue and surrounding them in bright white halos. As the climb steepened we donned crampons and soon passed the odorous sulphur pots, the infamous devil's den, reaching the protected saddle where we proceeded to rope up. Dave led the first rope team and the route from here became very obviously steep as they disappeared into the clouds. After crossing the bergschrund the route was almost vertical and Carmen, having trouble footing her crampons, took a fall and self-arrested. I looked down to see where we might slide in a worst case fall and immediately was overcome by vertigo, staring into the foggy oblivion. Looking back around and coming to my senses from the biting wind and blowing snow, my partners ahead were vague silhouettes.

In the gulley of rhime ice just before the summit, Carmen was again having a hard time footing her crampons. Luckily Dave's group returning from their sucessful summit bid encouraged her that we could make it also. Finally the gulley opened up and the route flattened out. The summit scene was reminiscent of Alaskan and Himalayan summits that I have seen in photos: a hump of snow with ice axes stuck in a jumble of rope, huddled bodies on a promontory in the clouds.

Our instructor Joan commented that the descent would be much more difficult. Even though I said, 'Don't say that!', I knew she was right. The way down was made that much more difficult by 50 m.p.h.

MOUNT HOOD, OREGON

winds sandblasting ice crystals into our faces. On the way down Carmen took two serious slides. I self-arrested to belay, naturally digging my crampons in, even though I had never really self-arrested with them on before. At that point I was especially glad that I had brought my own ice axe and crampons which I had carefully sharpened. After reaching the saddle and unroping I found out that Carmen's school-supplied crampons had busted.

The remainder of the descent was uneventful. Just the will to return to the cars drew us on. At the lodge we destaged and debriefed while enjoying a round of refreshment courtesy of Cody. Relating her feelings, Engeborg praised the quality and caring of the instructors. Indeed the course had been an excellent assemblage of outdoor enthusiasts. To me it was hard to believe that it had happened. A group of strangers only 48 hours ago, we would remember the experience for the rest of our lives. Then we hugged, said our goodbyes, and I headed south alone again in my Subaru.

Desert Canyons of the Escalante

Bob Kessler

Southern Utah is a land of canyons. Arches National Park tops a string of inspiring geologic marvels which include Canyonlands National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area; all of which lead eventually into the mighty Grand Canyon. In the midst of this phenomenon of erosion lies the Escalante River canyon with its many tributary canyons. The upper half of the Escalante is on Bureau of Land Management administered land, and the lower section is part of Glen Canyon Nat. Rec. Area.

Escalante River is a very special place. Many say it is what Glen Canyon used to look like before Lake Powell inundated the many spectacular canyons. The Escalante is also a very rugged place. As of yet there are very few established trails, and the accesses into the canyon usually require a commitment of days, sometimes a week or more.

When I first heard about the Escalante I was intrigued by its remoteness and promise of unparalleled beauty. After much research and letter writing about "trail" conditions, I knew it was time for a visit. Since I wanted to also climb Kings Peak in northern Utah, I thought it would be an interesting contrast to afterwards visit the desert lands to the south.

Six members of the UCMC, Cindy Kessler, Jeff Cousins, Karen Riggs, Paul Barna, Brian Hoop, and myself, reached the town of Escalante in mid-September. It was hot, about 90 degrees, the sun was bright and high in the sky. We stopped at the National Recreation Area trailer just outside of town to get our permits. It had rained the day before and they warned us about the dangers of flash floods as we discussed our intended route in the canyon.

Permit acquired, we then had the not-so-easy task of getting to the trailhead. Leaving town, we soon turned onto the Hole-In-The-Rock road, a 55-mile dirt road that terminates at Lake Foul (I mean, Powell). We bumped our way along the road, crossing many washes, catching only glimpses of canyons in the distance. Most of what we could see, though, was flat, barren desert littered with scrub brush and cactus. It seemed incredible that somewhere out there were deep canyons, full of creeks and rivers.

Thirty miles down the Hole-In-The-Rock road came a turn-off: Fortymile Ridge road, trailhead 5 miles. The road went from bad to scary. Dusk was upon us and the washes seemed to get progressively worse. We knew that we would only be able to drive so far before a 4-wheel drive was necessary, and we fretted about getting stuck.

There was a curve in the road and a sign warning of deep sand ahead and we knew this was the end of the road. It was still two miles to the trailhead, but we would have to hike it, and so we camped there for the night.

Our goal was to hike the two miles to the trailhead, then go map and compass another two miles to the junction of the Escalante River with a side canyon called Coyote Gulch. Somewhere around that juncture was a crack in the steep canyon wall that we could climb down into the the heart of Escalante country.

We could faintly hear the mournful howls of coyotes far away as we trudged along the sandy road to the trailhead. It was still early morning, but already we could sense the day would be very hot. We looked forward to finding our way down to the promised streams at the bottom of the canyon.

After we passed the trailhead, we encountered slickrock, smooth rounded expanses of rock, typical of canyon rim areas. Off in the distance we could see our destination, but nothing could prepare us for the sights when we reached the edge. Words don't begin to describe the awesome vistas we looked into.

Rising from what looked to be a muddy ribbon of water were nearly vertical cliffs of red and brown sandstone, streaked with stains from centuries of seeping water. Some of the walls arched as they climbed the hundreds of feet to the canyon rim, providing ideal shelter, once for the Anazasi Indians long ago, now for the modern hiker. Like huge snakes, the merging canyons twisted off into the distance, the meanders so sharp it seemed incredible that the walls dividing them had not been punctured by the waters that had formed them.

And as if to simply astound the already impressed viewer, on top of one towering face of the Escalante Canyon stretched Stevens Arch, a monolith of rock stretching over a great hole in the canyon wall. If this was what we were to expect out of the Escalante, we could not wait to see more.

After looking in several locations, we found the crack-in-the-wall. We had to lower our packs over two ledges before we squeezed our bodies through a two-foot fissure in the rim wall. From there everyone followed a faint trail down a sandy slope about a 1/4 mile to the Coyote Gultch creek. It was quite a relief to finally reach water after seeing so much desert. Though the water was muddy, Brian couldn't resist and soon was laying in the many pools.

We searched around and soon found a nice camping spot under some convenient trees. Soon the tents were set up and we went exploring. Nearby was a seep, a crack in the beds of rock which allowed water to seep out, and fresh water was guaranteed for the duration of the trip. Rising above our camp was a trail that climbed up many ledges until one had a commanding view of the Gulch and the Escalante canyons.

That night we passed the time counting satellites and soon fell into well-deserved sleep.

Now that we had a base camp we spent the next three days day-hiking different sections of Coyote Gulch, Escalante Canyon, and Stevens Canyon. The Coyote features a series of picturesque waterfalls, two

arches and a natural bridge. Also, just about every southern exposure overhang contains Anasazi Indian ruins, as well as petroglyphs. One day we ran across some folks who frequent the area and they told us of a side canyon with an incredible pool of water. Following their directions we found that pool as well as a very nice climb up another fissure in the rim wall. When we climbed to the top there was another deep pool of water nestled between the slick-rock.

Another day was spent exploring Stevens Canyon. It contained deep pools of water that either had to be swimmed (which some folks did) or traversed on some rather steep rock (thank God for vibram!). At one point we came across the biggest overhang I'd ever seen. At the head of that canyon was a gushing spring and we guzzled refreshing water till bursting.

One afternoon was spent walking through the Escalante. It is a wide, shallow river winding through walls hundreds of feet high. Often we would step in quicksand. At first it was a scary phenomonem, but we quickly realized that it seldom exceeded knee depth, and we usually could escape without sinking by merely moving fast.

The last day found us breaking camp and packing up the Coyote in search of a steep but climbable slickrock exit out. We found it next to a really fabulous arch called Jacob Hamblin. It separates a large meander and is easily climbed up into. It dwarfs people once they are inside.

Brian found the route up and we relaxed the afternoon away waiting for cooler temperatures at dusk. About mid-afternoon dark clouds moved in and the wind picked up. We hoped it would rain like crazy because we were interested in seeing what a flash flood looked like-- from nice high vantage points. But the storm passed over and we started out about 4:30.

The 'trail' out was at first very steep, often needing to go up on all fours. Once we cleared the main canyon rim we still had to negotiate some lesser rock outcroppings before we spoted the van about 1 1/2 miles away. We camped again at the van that night, planning to drive out in the morning and finding the closest dairy freeze to pig out.

However, the next morning held one final surprise for us. The long dirt road in had not escaped the rains the day before. Well north of us, not yet to paved roads, we hit a two-hundred foot section of submerged road. Putting his van into imaginary 4-wheel drive, Jeff drove off road around the impasse. The last treat was just a little ways further: The road had been washed out and a bulldozer was busily scooping muck out to make the road passable again. There were three vehicles ahead of us, most of whom had been stuck there since the afternoon before. After about 45 minutes the dozer had finished and we finally got out.

The Escalante area is an area to treasure and protect. It offers simply unbeatable terrain and challenge. Don't miss it but tread carefully, there isn't anything else quite like it. If you want more information, write the BLM in the town of Escalante, Utah.

(WESTERN..., cont. from p.15)
for goods, you are not in Mexico. We tried their thirteen cent tacos and their Tequila Margueritas. Not bad, if you have a strong stomach. 'Take a look, amigos, everythings is here.'

Arizona! With less than five days left to cross America, Arizona's Sonoran Desert took priority. The Saguaro cactus outside of Tucson surpassed our expectations. We spent a breezy night in the mountains above the desert. The next day, we took two day hikes, one in Saguaro National Monument and one in Chiricahua National Monument. We seen a roadrunner, but didn't see no wolf!

New Mexico! We drove straight through New Mexico passing up countless opportunities to explore its variety. We did set to watch the sunset over White Sands National Monument. The White Dunes gave the illusion of snow in the desert.

Texas and Oklahoma! Texas had more flat rangelands and bigger grasshoppers than we had ever seen. Our friend Fritz showed us around Oklahoma City with its cowboys, holy rollers, and 3.2% beer.

Arkansas and Tennessee! We felt right at home with the Southern Baptists and Confederates. From Fort Smith to Little Rock and from Memphis to Nashville, the gospel and country music wailed from the radio. With a Red Carpet Inn and exercise on the Bona Kea and Natchez Trace Trails, the newlyweds high-tailed it home.

Cincinnati! In the early morning of September 19th, the Subaru rolled into town 8214 miles older. Sixty-nine days had passed without mishap! no injuries, no jail terms, no thefts, just one long smooth cruise.