

THE GOOSEDOWN GAZETTE

Spring Open

House Edition

Volume

22

Issue

2



In This Issue:

- ◆ Threading the Needle
- ◆ The Cornhole-Goochland Connection
- ◆ The Highest and Lowest of the 48
- ◆ If I Ever Become an Evil Overlord
- ◆ Upcoming Trips and Events

UC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Welcome to the UC Mountaineering Club

Enjoy Life! Get Outside!

We do it all!

We are the largest student organization on campus, with a membership of over one-hundred and average meeting attendance of over forty. Our activities include, but are not limited to: hiking, backpacking, camping, caving, climbing, white water rafting, kayaking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, downhill skiing, mountain biking, trail running, skydiving, hang gliding, snorkeling, scuba diving, recycling, partying, tree planting, ice skating, sledding, canyoneering, bungee jumping, star gazing, base jumping, ice climbing, and, of course, mountaineering.

We've had tremendous trips this year. Mountaineering expeditions, numerous backpacking trips, caving, whitewater rafting, countless climbing weekends, and introductory courses for beginners are just some of the things we have done.

Beginners' climbing courses are still a great introduction to a trip with the club. With summer approaching, we can look forward to Whitewater 101 classes, the annual Memorial Weekend trip to the Ocoee River, a climbing course, the second annual Beginning Mountaineering Course, and our first certified Swiftwater Rescue Course.

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Come experience LIFE! Go where you want- where you breathe a little deeper, sweat a little harder, and paddle, climb, hike, slalom, and push your limits to the perfect exhaustion. Or go where you tune into a slower pace, listening to the patter of rain on the tent fly, feel the wind play with your hair and the grass tickle your feet. Savor the simplicity of a warm campside meal with the stars overhead, and wonder how you could have possibly gone so long without it! I hope to see you all on the trail!

Join us every Wednesday at 7:00

Weekly meetings are in 525 Old Chemistry. We informally discuss trips, do a bit of business, then relax at the end with a program or slide show.

Membership is \$10/quarter, or \$30/year.

Membership entitles you to use the club's library, and check out enough equipment for yourself for one week. Gear checkout is every Wednesday after meetings, and should be returned the following Wednesday before the meeting.

The UCMC Office is located in 217 Tangeman University Center. Call us anytime at 556-6014, or just drop by.

Check out the UCMC home page for almost up-to-date news, minutes, trips, and cool links:

<http://www.ucmc.org/>

UCMC Webmaster: -Jeremy Sibert
- bigmarmot@hotmail.com

Need More Info?

Feel free to contact any and all officers!

President	Renee Ford	784-1307
Vice President	Ted Roll	281-7772
Treasurer	Robert Sexton	961-4612
Equip. Mngr.	Jen Goings	751-6284

GG Editor	Ted Roll
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Editor's Note: The Goosedown Gazette is published by the University of Cincinnati Mountaineering Club, a student operated non-profit organization. The articles and comments within are neither endorsed nor acknowledged by the University of Cincinnati. All contributions including articles, poems, stories, pictures, rumors, quotes, cartoons, notes, gossip, money, drawings, and food should be sent to the editor. Comments and criticisms are welcomed, but will be duly ignored without the subsequent offer of help with the next issue.

Cover: On the summit of Mount Hood, Oregon. From left to right: Carolye Asfahl, Ravi Kanda, Ted Roll, Matthew Kappen, and Greg Tumbush. Not pictured: Brian Allen. Photo by Brian Allen.

A Letter from the President



Renee Ford

To all Goose-down readers;

If this is your first time with the UC Mountaineering Club, I welcome you to join in our weekly meetings and the

plethora of trips and courses that are offered to anyone, especially those who prefer to live on a college budget. This spring and summer provides an excellent opportunity to enjoy the purpose of this club.

When at first it seems that everyone has years of experience (which many do) and you feel intimidated that your experience is not enough to be involved...just think for a minute and REMEMBER... everyone has to start somewhere. I was just a lonely freshman, looking for something to do one weekend and six months later... I was running for president. See, it does not matter how much you already know, it is much you are willing to be involved. Just think, you are doing this for fun, not something as work, but an escape from the daily grind.

So you say to yourself, "self, how do I learn these techniques so that I can feel confident to participate in trips?" No need to fear, we offer programs covering things from basic climbing techniques, to caving, to white water rafting and so on and so forth. These courses are an excellent way to get started, especially, be-

cause they are focused toward beginners.

Well, now you have an official invitation from the president to come and join in the activities of the mountaineering club. I reassure you that everyone has a great time with us. So stop on by the meetings, the office, or on trips, everyone will always be welcomed.





Pic: Paul Even on the summit of Mt. Whitney

The Highest and Lowest of the 48

by Mark Suer

- Daniels Pub

"Well then, do you want to go?", I asked while looking over the tip of my beer bottle.

"Yeah, sure!", Paul said with that excited look in his eyes.

"Where do you want to go?", I asked, taking another swig of my ale.

"I don't know. Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know. I asked you first."

"How about Mt. Whitney?", Paul suggested.

Hands on my head, I looked up to the ceiling thinking "Mt. Whitney... Has this bar **ever** had a ceiling? .HmMMM Got to be some code violation with this wiring Mt. Whitney?"

"Why Mt. Whitney?", I asked, just out of curiosity.

"Well, I've always wanted to go to the highest point of the 48 states," Paul explained as he drained his beer.

Mt. Whitney has the honor of being the highest peak in the lower 48 states at 14496 feet. I remember a conversation I had on a past trip in which we were

climbing/hiking down from the summit of Mt. Elbert. I met a couple who were on their way up. They commented on Mt. Whitney being an easier walk-up than Elbert—"almost like a sidewalk to the summit." However, that is an extensive John Muir Trail which reaches the summit via the south. Mt. Whitney also possesses an imposing east face, in which the vast majority of the climbs are technical. Although a non-technical hike to the summit would be enjoyable, we could probably do something more interesting. Last time I was in the mountains with Paul was in '91 in Colorado at Blanca Peak. We were overdue to do some climbing together.

"Sounds good to me. When do you want to go?"

"I don't know? When do you want to go?"

"I don't know?..."

- Daniels Pub... Two Weeks Later... Two Guide Books Later.

After reading a guidebook on the Sierras, I learn that there are several routes on the east face. However, most of them are beyond my rock climbing ability.

"Here's one, Paul. 5.11 or 5.10 A2. How about that one?", I say as deadpan as possible.

Paul groans at me in disbelief. Not really a groan, more of a mix between a groan and a whine. I love to see reactions like that.

"Just kidding. I think there are a couple of routes we can do here. One is the Mountaineer's Route, generally a steep snow climb to a col just north the peak, and then a talus scramble to the top. The other is the East Face, a class 4 climb, with one very exposed traverse, graded

5.4.”

“I was thinking of the Mountaineer’s Route, too, but the East Face sound interesting, too”, Paul explains.

“Why don’t we keep these routes in mind and decide when we get there based on conditions?” Paul agrees. As I reach for my ale to take another swig, something drips on my head from the ceiling. I think, “What the hell is that?..... Got to be some code violation up there.”

Since we both had bagged many Colorado peaks in the month of September, we really had our fill of scree slides and talus tripping. Since the Sierras get a substantial amount of snow, cruising to the summit on snow sounded much more attractive than dealing with a scree slope. So we decided to go during the third week in May, which is early in the climbing season in the Sierras. Paul and I announce our trip to the club, but the timing eliminates most students. Nonetheless, there is much planning to do: travel arrangements, food, car rental, maps, gear, physical training, etc. We spend the next



Pic:
Paul
Even
hiking
the
snow
slopes
above
Lower
Boy
Scout

several weeks training by cycling and by rock climbing at Red River Gorge.

- Saturday

Paul and I find ourselves leaving the airport at 7am on our way to Vegas via Chicago along with our extensive luggage. We arrive in Vegas early in the afternoon. I find the luggage claim area distracting: loud music, dim lighting and several slot machines. The place is jammed with tourists eager to lose their money. After a brief bus shuttle, we lug our gear to the car rental office. After an hour-long wait and several attempts by the not-so-slick salesman to entice us purchase unnecessary insurance and upgrades, we finally get the car. By this time, it is early afternoon. We need to get to Lone Pine, CA, which is at least a four-hour drive, before dark. Jamming our gear into the car and purchasing Coleman fuel at Kmart, we are finally on our way. Surprised, we find Las Vegas much smaller than we thought.

The drive through Nevada is uneventful. An empty road leading through a desert filled with shrub and rocks. We drive in silence; we brought no tapes and there is no radio reception. After Beatty, Nevada, we drive through Death Valley. However, the basic desert scenery doesn’t change at the stateline. Through the deep valleys (5000 feet deep), pass Corkscrew Mountain, a quick glimpse of the sand dunes and after many miles of desert terrain, we find ourselves in Lone Pine.

Lone Pine is a small tourist town in the middle of the desert. Along with the usual T-shirt and jewelry shops, the added bonus in Lone Pine is that practically every business doubles as a video rental. TV must be big in lonely Lone Pine. Lone Pine’s claim to fame is that most of the old Hollywood westerns were

filmed in the nearby Alabama Hills. Needless to say John Wayne has been deified in this place.

After registering at the closed ranger station, Paul and I drive up to the Whitney Portal camp ground, which is at about 8000 feet. After setting up camp and organizing the gear, we crash.

- Sunday

As we wind our way up, the imposing fortress slowly reveals itself in its entirety. The Day Needle, Keeler Needle and Mt. Whitney combine to form a 2000 foot wall of rock. Because of Mt. Whitney's proximity to several cities (L.A., Vegas, Reno, Fresno), it is a very popular climbing destination. Supposedly, it is almost impossible to get permits during peak season. We note, however, that we haven't seen anyone since the evacuated party. We are alone with Mt. Whitney.

To get to the base of the East Face, we must climb a headwall to an upper plateau. Although the slope gets pretty steep, we find an easy (!) access to the top. We follow the snow as far as it goes up. As we get closer the rock, we begin, not unexpectedly, to posthole. I mantle up one ledge, then another. Scoot up to the top of a boulder and then hop across a 3-4 foot gap to the top. I find this endeavor very awkward with a full pack. We pitch our tent next to large boulder, which will act as a windbreak and a cooking surface. The sun now is behind Mt. Whitney, and it quickly gets cold. Paul melts some snow for water and cooks supper. We eat and are out like lights.

- Tuesday

Today is a rest day. We spend the day

taking photos of the area, and exploring this upper plateau. The upper plateau is still snow covered. Not far from our camp is Iceberg Lake. Paul and I decide to save on fuel and get our water from the lake. However, the lake is still frozen over. With an ice axe, we hack through 6 inches of ice to fill our bottles. As we walk back to the tent, I notice a forbidding omen: clouds in the shape of horse tails. These clouds usually precede a storm by about a day. Hmmm....maybe we should've summited today. After lunch, we spend the cold afternoon in the tent reading. A strong wind storm kicks up. Although we secured it as much as possible, the four-season tent is almost blown flat. Bored with reading and tired of the wind, I put on my boots and grab the shovel. By cutting blocks of snow, we build a wind break for the tent. Of

Pic: The author and tent below the massive East Face of Mt. Whitney. The Mountaineer's Route follows the snow slope to the col to the right of the summit pyramid. (Photo: Paul Even)



course, as we finish building the wall, the wind storm dies down.

Looking at the mountain from our tent, the East Face route is outlined by a layer of snow. Knowing that the route is most likely iced-up and there are just the two of us on the mountain, we decided to forego the East Face route for the Mountaineer's Route. If some small mishap happened, a self-rescue as well as a retreat from the face with one able person was not too likely. Any assistance was at least 12 hours away. We decided to improve our odds with the Mountaineer's Route.

By this time it is late in the afternoon. We boil some water and cook dinner. After dinner, we prepared our packs for the summit attempt the next day, and then



Pic: Paul Even takes a break while making his way up the Mountaineer's Route of Mt. Whitney.

we jumped back into our sleeping bags as it gets cold quickly as the sun sets behind the mountain.

- Wednesday

We get an early start to the day. The climb up to the col is steep but straight forward. We make quick time under a solid blue sky. It appears that no storm is headed our way at least for the next few hours. As we get to the col, the snow be-

comes hard ice, and we push forward. Past the col, we traverse around the back side of the peak across a steep slope of ice. After about five hundred feet, we scrambled straight up to the peak. The west side of the Mt. Whitney is a gentle slope, a stark contrast to the East Face. Here we took photos and enjoyed the vista of the surrounding Sierras. All the peaks still had a mantle of snow this late in May. After inspecting the locked hut and the outhouse, we retraced our steps down the Mountain. However on the way down, we did not have to struggle with the snow slope. An 800 foot glissade was awaiting us. The swift slide down was thoroughly invigorating. We descended in about one minute the same elevation which took almost an hour to climb.

- Thursday

We stuffed our backpacks and prepared to head out. Of course, the way down was a lot easier. Traversing the Ebersbacher Ledges, unfortunately, were just as nerve racking. From here, we took the "unofficial" trail down which was easy to follow and completely avoided the boulder field. This should changed to the official trail. By the time we get to the cars, the skies open up with snow. We quickly packed the cars and head to Lone Pine where we cleaned up at a motel. We cruised the local stores and buy a few souvenirs, and then have a tremendous dinner of buffalo ribs and burgers. I had lost over ten pounds just climbing Whitney, and my body was demanding restitution.

- Friday

At the local laundromat we wash our clothes and look at Mt. Whitney. The entire range pompously showed off its new

coat of snow. After a quick breakfast, we drove back to Death Valley. We took a short hike down a small, winding, narrow canyon where the rocks were multicolored in hues of red and green. We stopped and inspected the Devil's Cornfield and then the sand dunes. From there to



Pic:The author takes a leisurely hike in a winding canyon in Death Valley. (Photo: Paul Even)

Badwater, elevation -282 ft. At Badwater, the ground is covered with white salt and the sun beats down mercilessly. The combination of the sun and salt blinded me. Shades are a necessity to enjoy the whole valley at Badwater. It was hard for me to believe that within two days we were at the highest and lowest points of the continental US. From Badwater we head back to Vegas for some Mexican food, accommodations and to see the night lights of Vegas. The lights are as subtle as a sledgehammer.

- Saturday

We have now fully converted ourselves to tourists. We spent half the day at Hoover Dam, going on the tours, etc. We also went to Lake Mead and watched a crowd of people being baptized fully clothed in the Lake. After tooling around town for the afternoon, we experience the night

life of Vegas once more as we head to the airport for the redeye flight home.

Aprendiendo a volar

By Michelle Kesterman



"We are each of us angels with only one wing.

And we can only fly embracing each other." --Luciano de Crescenzo

At 9:00 we were watching a bit of TV before bed. Chin climbed up on my lap with sleepy eyes, mumbling "Quiero dormir." We slipped out, brushed his teeth, and then had some quiet time to chat alone in the boys' dorm before the mad rush of children at 9:30. After a few minutes, he laid his head down on his pillow. I lay down with him until he fell asleep, then snuck out.

After graduation I made a decision which would affect me for the rest of my life, and in July of 1999 I departed for the unknown city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, where I would be a volunteer for the next six months. I both lived and worked at Mano Amiga, a temporary orphanage for impoverished boys and girls in the city. This particular orphanage is unique in that it is only a temporary solution, and the children who stay there either return to their families or move to a permanent orphanage at the end of the year. Many of the children do have families outside that are in serious trouble financially. The children stay at Mano Amiga so that parents and older siblings can work the long hours necessary to get the family back on its feet. Other children's parents have died, are chemically dependent, or are serving time in jail.

Our days were busy, as you would expect with as many as 60 children, ages 4 to 17. I spent most of my time working with the littlest children, "los pequenos" and "las pequenas." We woke up early in the morning to help dress them, fix their hair, have breakfast, and get ready for a day filled with chores, activities, outings, games, or any number of other things that just happened to pop up. The work was exhausting and often frustrating, and yet I was reminded daily of the importance of the work that I was doing. Who else would teach Jose Miguel to tie his shoes, make time to play with Cinthia, and encourage Romer to be good at something?

As is true of any intense and challenging experience, I learned a great deal in a very short amount of time while I was abroad. Some of my lessons dealt with learning to love unconditionally, some involved adjusting my lifestyle to a whole new culture, and others taught me about risk taking. All of them were worth the effort of learning and will undoubtedly help me in countless situations yet to come. I'd like to share just a couple such discoveries from my trip here...

With each day that I spent at Mano Amiga, the children opened up and trusted me a little more. Slowly I learned about their families, dried their tears when they cried for home, held them when they were upset or afraid. Some days I watched as a mother who stopped by for an hour to visit left with tears in her eyes when her crying children tugged at her skirt as if to change her mind. Or helped the new girl adjust to living in an orphanage and feel comfortable with the other children. These are the moments

that reminded me why I came to Bolivia. But each day that I spent there I also realized how much the children were helping me. They taught me more and more about how to love, and about the things that are truly important in life. Stepping out of my comfort zone was never easy or comfortable, and when I was tired or lonely, feeling homesick so far from home, the children were always ready to give me a hug, to play, or to make me laugh. One of the girls would beg me to play "This Little Piggy" one more time with her toes. Or maybe give me so many besitos (kisses) that I had to laugh and beg "¡No mas!" Surrounded by such energy and love, it was never very long before I felt better again.



So each day that I spent in Bolivia it became more clear to me that we are all here on this earth to help one another along life's journey. Each of us watching out for the people around us, and the people around us watching out for us. Together we can be happier, more content, and more at peace than we would be if we were alone. Moments which are too much to handle alone are lightened when they are shared.

Throughout our lives we will all have unique experiences that teach and shape us, and we will also learn through the experiences that others share with us. If I could leave you with any one thought from my experience, it would be to challenge yourselves, stretch the boundaries, and open your minds to new possibilities! Whether it means taking the risk to travel, to love, or to learn something new, what you learn in the process can change your life forever. The road may not be an easy

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 Leadership Retreat -Red River Gorge
2 Retreat Crested Butte	3	4	5 Program: Raptors, Inc.	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 Program: OPEN HOUSE	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Program: El Cap Slide Show	20	21	22 Caving in Pine Hill
23	24	25	26 Program: GEAR AUCTION	27 Climbing Course Lecture	28	29 Climbing Course
30 Climbing Course						

2000

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3 Program: Climbing Slide Show -Jim	4 Jazz Fest -New Orleans	5 Swiftwater Rescue Course	6 →
7 Jazz Fest Swiftwater Rescue	8	9	10 Program: NSS Slide Show -Nate	11	12	13 Guide Trip -Ocoee River
14 Guide Trip	15	16	17 Program: Elections	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Program: Slide Show -Jeremy	25	26	27 Whitewater Rafting -Ocoee River
28 Ocoee →	29 Memorial Day	30	31 Program: Eden Park Clean-up -Eden Park			

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June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Mountain- eering Course -Wind River Range
	E	X	A	M	S	
11 -Winds	12	13	14	15	16	17
Backpacking -Estes Pk						
18 -Winds	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Summer Classes Begin		Meeting			
25 Backpacking -Canadian Rockies	26	27	28	29	30	July 1
			Meeting			

2000

THREADING THE NEEDLE - A WEEK IN THE CRESTONES

by Mark Suer

And there he was. Standing next to several duffel bags of gear. Looking fit and trim as always, Jim gave me a hearty handshake as we met. I was glad that we easily found each other at the Denver Airport and that he had only waited ten minutes for us.

Jim Stanley, a UCMC alumnus and a hard-core rock climber and mountaineer, is currently condemned to live an engineer's life in the endless suburbs of Detroit. Jim has many rock climbs to his credit, including several multi-day big wall climbs. As we occasionally keep in touch about upcoming trips (both caving and climbing), Jim jumped at the chance to spend a week in the Crestones. I was glad Jim came along, not only because of his extensive climbing experience, but also because of his crazy sense of humor. The last week-long trip I took with Jim was a climbing trip to the Blanca Peak area in 1990. (Has it really been that long ago?) So, we were overdue for a long trip together.

Mike, Joe and I head to the baggage carousel to gather our gear. The whole area is packed - three flights have arrived at once. Struggling and stumbling with about 100 lbs. of gear, I dodge tourists who stare at the carousel like dazed mannequins. A small boy almost knocks me over as he blindly collides his luggage cart with me. Ughh, gotta get out of here.

We assemble a mountain of duffel bags away from the baggage claim. Now - we



Pic: Straight-on view of the Crestone Needle.
(Photo by Joe Lampe)

need some wheels! I have a reservation with one carrier, but Mike Gorman, a true disciple of free-market capitalism, takes over the task with a relish. He goes from desk to desk, starting a bidding war for our business. After about a half-hour of haggling like a third-world native at the town market, Mike is ready to ink a sweet deal for a 4x4 Trooper. Beats that cramped low-riding Buick.

Upon reflection, I realize it has also been a long time since I had been on an extended trip with Mike. Friends since high-school, we have gone several trips together: innumerable caving trips, the Mt. of the Holy Cross/Escalante trip in '88. Mt. Massive, Mt. Elbert. And how could I forget the wonderful 36 hour blizzard on the lower saddle of the Grand? Oh yes, the week long canoe trip to Quetico in '87. No matter how good (or bad) the trip is, Mike's presence always makes the trip better. From his demented antics to his thought-provoking discussions/debates, there is never a dull moment. Not to mention that he is always a dependable and reliable team player.

I leave Mike and Jim to finish the paper-

work for the vehicle. Apparently the city of Denver desires to add their small rental tax of 20%. I walk back to the luggage and wait with Joe.

I've known Joe Lampe for several years. He is easy going with a quick wit and smile. I usually enjoy giving him a hard time about anything possible. (However, paybacks can be hell.) He is an avid cyclist, and we have done several rides together. I have gone on one long trip with Joe previously in '94: Mts. Torreys, Grays, Bierstadt and an attempt at Mt. Evans. Although Joe is engrossed in the sights of this new airport, I can tell he is also so enthusiastic about this trip that it is almost contagious. Because of his self-reliance and boundless energy, he is a true asset to the group.

After Jim and Mike come back with the papers, we drag our bags onto a bus which takes us to the truck. Mike weaves our way through the Friday evening traffic of Denver. Now - we need to get some stove fuel.

We make a pit stop in Colorado Springs. Mission creep begins. We find some camp fuel in a Safeway, along with Doritos, cheese, bread, pepperoni, fashion cord for the sunglasses, etc., etc. I pass on the local generic soda: "Contains caffeine and other real flavors." Next stop: the liquor store next door. Yep, we've got our priorities. We purchase two quarts of "Fat Tire" Beer and small bottles of "Southern Comfort".

This is followed by a quick dinner at Boston Market, where Jim consumes $\frac{3}{4}$ of a chicken by himself. (Cashier to Jim: "Boy, That's a lot of meat! What's your name?" This comment is used endlessly through out the week).

After two more hours of driving we entered the National Forest near the in the small town of Westcliffe, Co. Night has now fallen. The guidebook recommends that the forest road is passable by passenger cars to 9300 ft, the rest of the way to 10500 ft is passable by 4x4. However, we find several cars parked at the beginning of this "road." From the looks of the road, I would not attempt any part of it unless the vehicle had plenty of clearance. As we started to gain elevation, the dirt road quickly deteriorates: talus and "potholes" are abundant everywhere. Our progress was painfully slow. At 10000 ft, we pulled off the road and camp for the night.



Pic: Profile of the Ellingwood Arete of the Crestone Needle (Photo by Mike Gorman)

I couldn't believe it: a few hours ago I was sitting at my desk at work, but suddenly, now I am in the Crestones. The Crestones are a group of peaks in the Sangre de Cristo Range in Colorado. There are four peaks over 14,000 ft ("fourteeners") in this area: Humboldt Peak, Crestone Peak, Crestone Needle and Kit Carson Peak. In fact, the Crestone Peak and Needle were thought to be unclimbable. However, in 1916, Albert Ellingwood plus three others made the first ascent of the Kit Carson Peak, Crestone Peak and Needle, the last of the Colorado fourteeners to be summited. A professor of political science, Ellingwood learned to climb while studying in England. Upon his return to the U.S., he found he was the only climber in the area who could handle a rope with any skill. In fact, his first ascent of the Crestones was "probably the first rock climb in the U.S. where a conscious effort was made to belay." After their descent, they noticed from the lake at the foot of the Needle a possible route up the northern arete, but the last five hundred feet appeared troublesome.

It wasn't until nine years later that Ellingwood would return to the Crestones. In the interim, he made the first ascent of Lizard Head in 1920, the first ascent of the South and Middle Tetons, and the fourth ascent of the Grand. In 1925, Ellingwood and three others pioneered the route up the arete of the Crestone Needle, one of the most difficult routes on a Colorado fourteener. The second ascent did not take place until 1937 and the third in the early 50's. The route was named Ellingwood Ledges and later the Ellingwood Arete. This route was the main objective of our trip.

The next morning we quickly packed the car and drove to the trailhead. At this time, we suffered from gear explosion as we transfer our gear from duffel bags to the backpacks. We easily take up a ¼ of the parking lot. Our hike in was about 2 miles. The hike was definitely shorter than our packing time.

During the hike, we met a group of students from Boulder. As we searched and debated the various attributes of several campsites, Jim found out that the Boulderites were planning to climb Humboldt Peak that same afternoon after they set up their camp. Jim was excited as a kid in a candy store, and he decided quickly to join the Boulderites up Humboldt Peak.

In the meantime, Joe had found a secluded, sheltered campsite near the South Colony Creek to which we transferred our gear. At this point, I was really dragging. I had a slight headache, was lethargic and out of breath. Typical acute mountain sickness symptoms. Going quickly to 11500 ft did a real number on me. While Jim was summiting Humboldt Peak, I acclimatized by crashing in the tent for a few hours.

In the late afternoon, Joe and Mike scouted out the trail to Humboldt Peak while I started on dinner. They returned an hour later saying they saw Jim running down from the saddle west of Humboldt. When Jim arrived in camp, he looked exhausted. Although Jim easily summited, he definitely felt the effects of the altitude. Jim reported that the hike to the top is easy and straightforward. The Boulderites, however, did say that the local weather forecast called for poor weather to move in on Monday.

According to the original plan, Sunday was to be an acclimitization day and on Monday we were to tackle Humboldt Peak, the easiest fourteener from our camp. However, with possible bad weather coming in, we decided to go up Humboldt on Sunday, thus ensuring that we bag at least one peak on the trip. Therefore, we loaded our packs for the next day.

We got started on the trail around 9am. As we got above treeline, the wind was blowing strongly. Although the sun was shining warmly in the cloudless sky, the wind was cold and biting. After reaching the Upper South Colony Lake at 12,000 ft, we start hiking up to the saddle. A wooden sign was adjacent to the trail recognizing the efforts of those restoring the trail, which is well maintained and marked at places with 5 foot high cairns.



Pic: At the windy summit of Humboldt Peak. From left to right: Jim Stanley, Mike Gorman, Joe Lampe and Mark Suer. (Photo by Mike Gorman)

From the saddle, the view was spectacular. I could easily see the entire cirque surrounding the South Colony Lakes a thousand feet below. We started to climb up the west ridge of Humboldt. Here, there is a little class three climbing, but it

is easy. However, the effects of the altitude were starting to really set in at this point. After taking twenty or so steps, I was out of breath. My body felt slow, but I plodded on. The further up I went, the more breathless I became. I slowly fell



Pic: Joe Lampe and Mark Suer make their way to the summit of Humboldt Peak. Crestone Needle and Crestone Peak in the background

behind the other three.

They waited for me on a false summit. Here the wind was very strong and cold. At times, it gusted enough to almost knock us over. The north face of Humboldt is a sheer drop of rotten rock. We skirted away from the cliff's edge, especially with the strong wind. After one last bit of scrambling, we were on the summit. At the register, there was a wind break made of talus behind which we all huddled together. I read the names from the register while I caught my breath. After resting and taking photos for about 30 minutes, we started our descent.

As I started to move again, I felt breathless and lethargic with a slight headache. For me acute mountain sickness is very similar to flu symptoms. Thank God, I didn't have any nausea this time.

I took the lead, but in a half hour everyone was in front of me. We took a break at 13000 feet, sat in the warm sun out of the wind and study the Needle. It looked intimidating.

Reluctantly, we got up and completed the descent. After several switchbacks that I had forgotten, we were back down to the lake at 12,000 feet and heading for camp. The rest of the day was spent napping and reading.

That evening began what was billed as the "World Championship of Euchre." Four men in one tent. At 11,500 ft. In the middle of Colorado. Only one team to be victorious. You could cut the tension with a knife. Although Mike and Joe won the first game, Jim and I took the next two.

The next morning yielded clear skies. Given the excellent weather, we decided to attempt Kit Carson Peak. We packed our bags and left the camp site around 8 am. (Another late start!) We understood that the route up Kit Carson Peak was non-technical, but the approach was long. We took the same established trail to the Upper South Colony Lake. Beyond the lake, we lost the "trail" and headed north around the lake. We knew that we had to reach the top of the cirque that is one mile west of the Upper Lake.

We traversed upwards through a sloping meadow which quickly turned into a talus field. As we headed westward, we angled upwards up the northern side of the cirque, stumbling through the talus. The air was cool but windless. Again, the sun which was beaming strongly in the cloudless sky kept us warm when we took a rest break. The view of the route up the

needle did not look as difficult from this angle - at least it didn't look vertical until near the top.

Tripping over talus, sliding in scree and scrambling up large boulders, we slowly made our way upward to the head of the cirque. Content in our progress, we suddenly encountered our first hurdle: a hanging couloir. We could have climbed down into the couloir, but we could not continue our traverse on the other side due to the extreme climbing required. We could not descend because that led to a cliff edge. Our choices were to go back and down and around or to hike straight up to the top of the cirque. Not wanting to lose precious elevation, we decided to go up. After a few hundred feet up we found ourselves at the top of the cirque at the Bear's Playground.

The Bear's Playground is a huge meadow at 13,000 ft. that is sparsely littered with talus. Although the level ground was a welcome relief, I was a bit concerned that it was nearly 11 am, and we still had over a mile to go before we reached the Peak. After admiring Jim's find of a completely planar piece of granite (a perfect table top), we continued our trudge.

Joe managed to detect a trail through the Playground and the subsequent talus slopes via cairns. Because of the angle of the sun, these cairns could only be found by crouching low to the ground. Again progress was slow. By noon we reached the saddle adjacent to the east of Carson's false summit. Decision time.

We were at 13,500 ft. and had at least 700 ft vertical to go. The route took us over the false summit to another saddle

and then to the true summit. The summit was still a half mile away as the crow flies. The sky was starting to produce some scattered black, angry clouds, and we had an hour of walking through the Playground before we could lose elevation. Joe was anxious to push onward, but Jim had lost most of his steam since this was his third straight day at elevation. Call it prudent or overcautious, but we decided not to attempt the summit.

Jim headed back to the cirque, while Mike and I gave Joe 30 minutes to reach the false summit. He made it halfway before turning back. All four of us met up again at the edge of the cirque. Luckily, the weather held up and no storms were rolling in.

We found ourselves at the top of a chute which led to the bottom of the cirque. Happy with this easy route downwards, we started to descend down the couloir. After about a hundred feet, we quickly realized that the chute was filled with highly unstable talus. We had to descend one at a time so that no one would be injured by rockfall.

Jim led first at stopped part way under a small ledge. Once he was out of the paths of any potential runaway rocks, I followed gingerly him. After I stealed myself safely under the small ledge, Joe joined us. With the three of us, it was crowded. Although we jammed ourselves as best we could, I noticed a couple of rocks shoot inches from my head as Mike descended.

We repeated this practice again until all of us were down. At the bottom, we noticed a less hazardous route to the top of the cirque. We would take this route up

when we would attempt the Crestone Peak.

We reached base camp late in the afternoon. Although we did not summit, we all performed well again at altitude. I was affected significantly less than I was the day before, but I was still not operating at 100%.

After dinner, everyone migrated to their bags for some reading. The "World Championship of Euchre" Series was postponed for a day as we drifted off to sleep one by one.

Tuesday was a day off from climbing. I slept in and ate a leisurely breakfast. Jim had decided to hike back to the van to retrieve more stove fuel and the two quarts of "Fat Tire" Beer. While Mike



Pic: Straight-on view of the Crestone Needle.
(Photo by Joe Lampe)

stayed behind, Joe and I went off to scout out the lower portions of the route on the Needle.

Once again the sky was cloudless, and the air was warm. We followed the familiar trail to the Upper Lake and then around to the base of the Needle. After some scrambling, we found the grassy

ledge which ramped upwards and to the left, terminating at an upper meadow on the eastern flank of the arete. The ledge was mostly easy going with one or two only fairly exposed moves. We hiked up the steep slopes of the upper meadow until we found another ledge which round back to the right to the edge of the arete. The route follows this ledge until we reach the first class 5 pitch: a long chimney. Satisfied with our reconnaissance, Joe and I picked our separate boulders on which to sit and eat lunch while looking over the South Colony Valley. The route to this point was straight forward.

Joe and I took several pictures and climbed off the Needle. On the return to the base camp, we found an alternate and more direct trail to our campsite than going up to the Upper Lake. We noted that this trail petered out near a huge, lonely boulder that looked like rounded monolith. This huge boulder was at the western edge of the lower lake, and the trail followed the northern edge of the lake. Although the topo map shows a trail, they are difficult to find in the willows. We made a mental note of these landmarks, just in case.

At base camp, we excitedly shared our findings: that the first 1000 ft on the Needle were easy. Joe had made his return with fresh fuel and the two quarts of beer for our celebration of summiting the Needle. Everything seemed to be falling into place. However, tomorrow's plans called for us to climb the Crestone Peak.

Although this route is not as challenging as the Ellingwood Arete, it is still a class 4 climb. We organized our gear: Joe and Mike would carry day packs filled with food and gear, Jim and I would carry

the ropes. With everything packed and ready, we were eager for dinner.

Jim usually provided entertainment during dinner. He shared his adventures of cross-country motorcycle racing and the lyrics of his favorite band: "the Loose Stools." Quite enlightening.

After dinner, round two of the "World Championship of Euchre" was initiated. While Mike carefully contemplated the playing of his hand and the odds of winning the next trick, Jim resorted to his biological weapons to maintain dominance in the Series: the emission of pungent flatulence. A hasty retreat from the tent was the only recourse for his adversaries (and partner).

Although the valley was windy most of the time (except at supper for some strange reason), the tent was buffeted by strong winds that night. After a quick breakfast, we headed up the trail at dawn. As the sun rose, clouds began to descend on the Crestones. Although the summits were picturesque in the early morning alpenglow, the weather was less than promising for a successful climb.

A cold wind was blowing so stiffly when we got to the Upper Colony Lake that the waves were tipped with white caps. The wooden sign designating the trail to the summit of Humboldt was snapped in half. We hiked around the lake to the trail leading to the top of the cirque. By now, the Crestones were fully socked in. Our only hope now was that the rising sun would burn off the clouds later in the morning. Maybe this was the bad weather system the Boulderites were talking about last weekend.

We waited out of the wind behind a huge boulder to see if there was any change in the weather. It seemed that the clouds were rising. We decided to push on. We hiked through the boulder field and up scree slopes to the top of the cirque. Scrambling up a different rock, Mike made it to the top first. As I climbed to the top, I saw Mike looking down at me with a silly grin. As soon as my head cleared the edge of the cirque, it was slammed by strong winds. Mike laughed at my reaction. Amazingly, the air was completely calm at my feet, but my head was in a hurricane.

The prospects for climbing that day were exceedingly grim. Strong winds, visibility less than 50 ft and the Peak was completely shrouded. Although we waited out of the wind for another 30 minutes, we could see that we weren't going any further that day. Reluctantly we returned to base camp.

Given that the Needle was the main objective of the trip, we decided over dinner that we should attempt it tomorrow. If we didn't make it, we could try again on Friday or Saturday. Jim and Joe would comprise one team, and Mike and I would be the other. However, at this time, Mike decided that he did not want to attempt the Needle. Therefore, we became a team of three with Jim as the leader. We reorganized the lead gear and stuffed it into Joe's pack along with our lunches. Jim and I would carry the two ropes. Joe would be at the third, tied into the second rope. Being second and tied into both ropes, I would alternately belay Jim or Joe while I wasn't climbing.

We got an early start that morning, hitting the trail at 6am. As we approached the

Needle, the sun was coming up basking the Crestone Ridge in a fiery crimson hue of alpenglow. We quickly covered the ground that Joe and I had checked out two days before. After going through the upper meadow, we were simultaneously traversing and climbing series of ledges. After a few hundred feet, the climbing became a bit steeper, the start of class 4 climbing. It was at this point we decided to rope up. Although the climbing was easy, any careless misstep was fatal – the Upper Lake was about 1000 feet below us.

As we did the first pitches, we found a few pitons along the way which confirmed to us that we were on route. After the fourth or fifth pitch, we did some easy class three scrambling until it terminated at a steep wall. We were confused and stymied. We shouldn't be seeing any class 5 until near the top. The guidebook mentioned that we were to negotiate a chimney, but nothing that we saw resembled a chimney. To the right was a steep couloir. Roped up, Jim down-climbed into the couloir to find the chimney. After rereading the guidebook and some scouting, we realized that we had bypassed the chimney and were to continue up couloir. Apparently, we had not traversed enough around the arete on the ledges to reach the chimney. Unfortunately, we lost a lot of precious time to find this out.

After two or three more easy pitches, the route led to an exposed traverse to a large crack/notch in another wall. After Jim belayed me to the bottom of this notch, I noticed that there was not enough room for one person much less the two of us. Because of the lack of room, Jim continued to lead up a crack in this notch

while I belayed, standing half-in-half-out of the bottom of the notch looking at 1000 feet of sheer drop below me. The exposure was a bit unnerving. After Jim reached a wide ledge, Joe and I quickly followed. Thinking that we were nearing the end of the roped climbing, we were jubilant until we realized that we were at the crux pitch.

Jim took his time, carefully leading the small dihedral 5.8 crack. While belaying, it was becoming obvious to me that time



Pic: The author making his way up the Needle (Photo by Joe Lampe).

was of the essence as shadows started to stretch across the valley below. My impatience grew the longer it took Jim to reach the top of the pitch. After Jim had set up the belay above, I soon understood the difficulty of the pitch. Even though I did not put on my climbing shoes but ascended in my mountaineering boots because of my urgency, I found the

pitch very difficult. I was thoroughly thankful that I was this pitch was behind me once I made it to the top. Jim made a dash for the summit as I belayed Joe up the crack. After coiling the ropes, Joe and I made the last scramble to the summit.

At the summit we took the customary summit photos: of ourselves and the surrounding mountain terrain. In the distance to the south we could see the fourteens Blanca and Ellingwood Peaks as well as the Colorado Sand Dunes. This terrain was highlighted by growing shadows of the setting sun. Although quite beautiful, it only underscored the fact that our descent would be done in the dark. Every successful summit bid is followed by a successful descent, and our climb was only half over.

Our descent route required us to go down the “standard route” of the Needle. This route is a class 4 climb, one of the toughest “standard routes” up a Colorado fourteener. We were to head in a southeasterly direction for the saddle between the Needle and Broken Hand Peak. Once reaching the saddle, we were to descend talus slopes to the valley. It sounds simple on paper; however, none of us had ever seen the route much less done it in the dark.

We quickly followed a well-worn path down a small ridge. After descending about two hundred feet, the path stopped descending and started traversing left. We followed the path until it dead ended at another hanging couloir. It was too steep to go into the couloir or go around it. We were forced to go back up to the summit. Frustration was beginning to build.

By the time we had reached the summit, night had fallen. We took out our headlamps, and Joe discovered that his batteries were dead and he had no spares. Because of this, we placed him in the middle as we followed another path down. This path turned into a rocky gully, a wash. Descending down this V-shaped channel illuminated with a headlamp was very similar to caving. I would go down about 50 feet and then stop and light Joe's path until he caught up to me. This went on for what seemed to be 45 minutes until the gully ended at a cliff. With no other choice, I noticed a small path traversing left. We were encouraged by following this path because we saw two cairns. We must be headed in the right direction, we thought. However, this path, too, ended at another steep couloir. We were exhausted and discouraged.

Back and forth we traveled along this path, looking for some alternate route we may have missed. Then, below this path, we started to descend into couloirs for two to three hundred feet. We descended one which dead ended into a cliff. The next did the same. Then a third – same result. Jim suggested we rappel down. I countered that we can't see the bottom, and how could we ascend back up if needed. We sat and ate as we looked at the city lights of Alamosa, 50 miles away. We briefly entertained the idea of bivouacking, but decided to continue. We all agreed that we needed to continue traversing to the southeast, but our progress was barred. It is difficult to find your way on the mountain when you have only a dim yellow spot to guide your way.

We went back to the first couloir and downclimbed again. With another look, we found we could continue further by doing some exposed moves. How exposed is unknown because it was pitch dark with no moon in the sky. We moved slowly and meticulously not only because we were climbing in the dark but we had to continually light Joe's way since he had no working headlamp. The going became much easier as we scrambled down, but then we were halted again by a steep drop. Without any recourse, we climbed out of this couloir to its lip to the northeast, traversing the mountain not ascending it. From this small ridge we could see Broken Hand Peak. Encouraged we gingerly downclimbed this lip into the neighboring couloir to the north. At the bottom of this steep downclimb we found a well worn path with cairns. We quickly walked the path to the saddle between the Needle and Broken Hand Peak. From here it would be smooth sailing to the tent.

However, just as we descended from the saddle, my headlamp died, and I forgot to pack extra batteries. Now we had to descend through talus slopes with one light between the three of us. Jim would go ahead about 10 or twenty feet and then turn around and illuminate the ground as Joe and I would scurry behind him huddled together to share the light. More often than not we would trip or lose our balance on the talus and scree. This procedure went on for what seemed hours as we slowly made progress, trying to find cairns as we descended.

As we neared the valley floor, we noted that we were at the southwest portion of the lake. This lake is completely surrounded by a jungle of willows except for

the trail on the northern side. Our camp was northeast of the lake; we had to circumnavigate the lake. We spied the huge rounded monolith which we noted marked the end of our approach trail. Unfortunately, this bolder was about 500 yards to our left separated from us by the tangle of six-foot high willows. Running on auto-pilot at this time like mindless automatons, we just plunged headlong into the brambles, branches tearing and scraping us at our every step. Exhausted from the mountain and chewed up by the willows, we finally reached the approach trail at which point the three of us collapsed and lay on the ground for about twenty minutes.

Somehow we found the will to drag ourselves to the camp site where we found Mike starting to become concerned about our absence. It was 2am; we were gone for 20 hours. After eating some food and drinking several quarts of water, all of us immediately crashed.

The next day was relatively uneventful. We organized the lead gear and drank our celebratory alcoholic elixirs. Just general R&R.

On the following day, we hiked out, jumped into the 4x4 and bounced our way down the mountain. After cleaning ourselves up in a motel in Denver, we went to a fairly upscale restaurant where we were served free beer because our server had worked with Joe back in Cincinnati. The customary end trip celebration was bountiful as we reminisced over the past week.

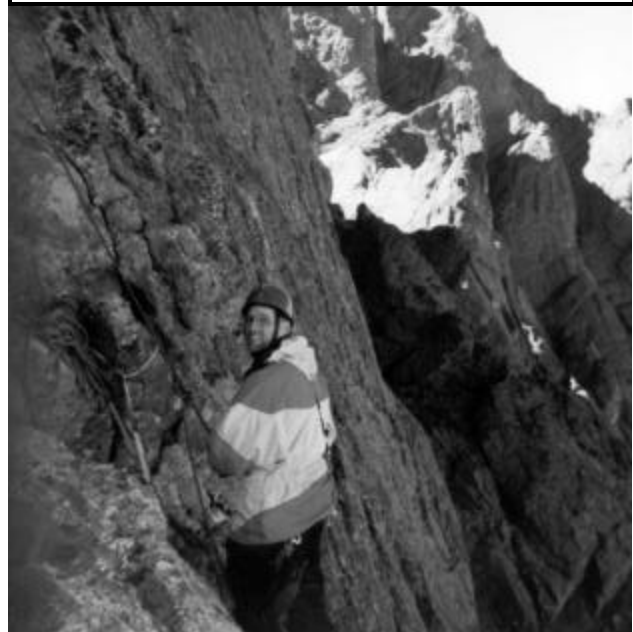
- Epilogue

A few comments regarding our climb up the Needle.

I am thoroughly thankful that our small team was able to work cohesively to overcome the formidable obstacles encountered that day. No one wiggled out or wimped out. None of us became accusatory or uncooperative. We all worked together to get ourselves down. Most of all, I am glad that we were well acclimated at this time.

What would I do differently to avoid similar situations in the future? 1) Make sure headlamps are in working order with an extra set of working batteries. 2) Leave earlier. Need more time when climbing three to a rope. 3) If possible, scout out and become familiar with complicated descent routes beforehand.

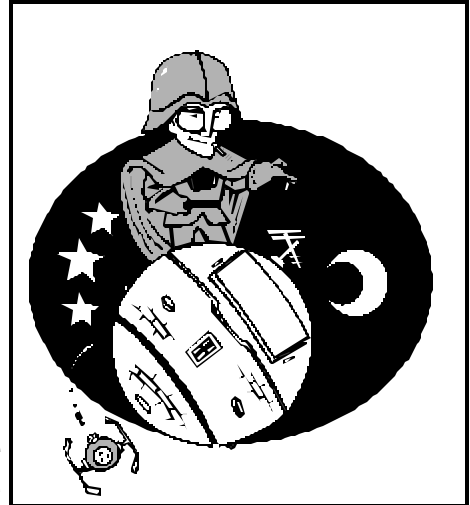
Pic: The author belaying while on the Needle. (Photo by Joe Lampe)



If I ever become an Evil Overlord,

Submitted by Robert Sexton

1. My legions of terror will have helmets with clear plexi-glass visors, not face-concealing ones.
2. My ventilation ducts will be too small to crawl through.
3. My noble half-brother whose throne I usurped will be killed, not kept anonymously imprisoned in a forgotten cell of my dungeon.
4. Shooting is **not** too good for my enemies.
5. The artifact which is the source of my power will not be kept on the Mountain of Despair beyond the River of Fire guarded by the Dragons of Eternity. It will be in my safe-deposit box.
6. I will not gloat over my enemies' predicament before killing them.
7. When the rebel leader challenges me to fight one-on-one and asks, "Or are you afraid without your armies to back you up?" My reply will be, "No, just sensible."
8. When I've captured my adversary and he says, "Look, before you kill me, will you at least tell me what this is all about?" I'll say, "No." and shoot him.
9. After I kidnap the beautiful princess, we will be married immediately in a quiet civil ceremony, not a lavish spectacle in three weeks time during which the final phase of my plan will be carried out.
10. I will not include a self-destruct mechanism unless absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, it will not be a large red button labelled "Danger: Do Not Push".
11. I will not order my trusted lieutenant to kill the infant who is destined to overthrow me -- I'll do it myself.
12. I will not interrogate my enemies in the inner sanctum -- a small hotel well outside my borders will work just as well.
13. I will be secure in my superiority. Therefore, I will feel no need to prove it by leaving clues in the form of riddles or leaving my weaker enemies alive to show they pose no threat.
14. I will not waste time making my enemy's death look like an accident -- I'm not accountable to anyone and my other enemies wouldn't believe it.
15. I will make it clear that I do know the meaning of the word "mercy"; I simply choose not show them any.
16. One of my advisors will be an average five-year-old child. Any flaws in my plan that he is able to spot will be corrected before implementation.
17. All slain enemies will be cremated, not left for dead at the bottom of the cliff. The announcement of their deaths, as well as any accompanying celebration, will be deferred until after the aforementioned disposal.
18. My undercover agents will not have tattoos identifying them as members of my organization, nor will they be required to wear military boots or adhere to any other dress codes.
19. The hero is not entitled to a last kiss, a last cigarette, or any other form of last request.



- 20.** I will never employ any device with a digital countdown. If I find that such a device is absolutely unavoidable, I will set it to active when the counter reaches 117 and the hero is just putting his plan into operation.
- 21.** I will design all doomsday machines myself. If I must hire a mad scientist to assist me, I will make sure that he is sufficiently twisted to never regret his evil ways and seek to undo the damage he's caused.
- 22.** I will never utter the sentence "But before I kill you, there's just one thing I want to know."
- 23.** When I employ people as advisors, I will occasionally listen to their advice.

The following is an excerpt from a report from Jim Stanley's climbing trip to Peru. Jim Stanley is a former officer and active member of the UCMC. He now resides in Michigan. Check out the rest of the story at <http://www.sopgear.com/newpage2.htm>

Shaun woke me up at midnight and we began the climb. The moon was full so we didn't even need the headlamps we carried, except for a few sections through the trees on the valley walls. As we continued up the side of the valley, Shaun spotted a cow. Cow, my ass! That thing had balls! And it was obviously not happy about our trespass. I picked up a few rocks and moved wearily past. The valley walls steepened, turning into a 3rd class scramble over rocks, both large and small. We approached the snowline about an hour before dawn. Shaun wanted sunlight to be sure to pick the best line up the snow and ice, so we tried to sleep. I got very cold. I tried using an emergency space blanket, but it did little good since the majority of the heat being lost was through the cold rock below. Recognizing my full-body shudders as the early warning signs of hypothermia, I decided to pull out the stove and heat up some Gatorade. Much better.



We made our way towards the snowline as the sun was rising. At the snowline we each tied to one end of the rope, strapped on crampons and pulled out the ice tools. Shaun headed up first. As the rope came taught, I too, began to climb. I swung the tool and the sharp pick bit deeply into the hard snow/ice. A sharp tug verified its secure placement. I kicked the front points of my crampons into snow. Again, a solid placement. Up I went, alternating climbing style as the steepness of the terrain required. Low angles allowed a relaxed French technique with the feet and minimal tools use. Steeper terrain required front pointing and using both tools. Every placement was solid and I moved with confidence. I did have to stop often to catch my breath. Even light work demanded fast, deep breathing. I had been at altitude for less than a week and was not nearly fully acclimatized. In the past I have had problems with severe nausea at altitude, but I was thankful that was not a problem on this climb, except that some ancient Peruvian king was trying to take revenge on my bowels. Occasional doses of ibuprofen kept the pain in my head at bay as well. The only real problem I was having was that, each time my heart pounded, my vision became blurry for an instant. This didn't slow me down, but it was a bit disconcerting.....

The Corn Hole - Goochland Connection

By Mark Suer

Finally the date had been set. I met Werner Jud at the Greater Cincinnati Grotto meeting who anxiously told me that the trip was scheduled in two weeks. I had been waiting for this trip for six months. I had expected this trip to be a big expedition with many people, but in the end, only four of us went.

Along with Werner and myself, there was Mary Gratsch and Wayne Barton. Werner and Mary were part of the SWORCA (South West Ohio Regional Caving Association) group that pioneered most of the cave exploration in the Goochland area of Rockcastle County, KY in the 1970s. In fact, Mary is still an extremely active caver, pushing virgin leads all the time. Although this was the first time I was going to cave with Wayne, I was certain that he, too, was a strong caver.

Werner took me to Goochland Cave for the first time in 1982. On that trip, we went way beyond the second breakdown (a large pile of boulders formed from a ceiling collapse that blocks access) on the right side of the cave. We visited the old SWORCA base camp, from which they would push virgin leads on multi-day trips. I remember that the trip was very long, and I was extremely exhausted by the end, thoroughly elated to see the car in the light our dim headlamps.

Every trip to Goochland Cave I made had always been through the main entrance. I never did a through-trip (in one entrance, out another) of the right-side to Poplar Pit. It is difficult to do since Poplar Pit is now

closed as per the land owner. However, this current trip offered me a through-trip that I didn't know existed until a few years ago.

Corn Hole is a cave that was discovered in around 1980, but its existence was a tightly held secret. A few years later Mary Gratsch pioneered the connection to the far end of left side of Goochland Cave. For more than ten years, very few people knew of Corn Hole.

In the mid 1990s, Mary took Tom Karaus (a well known caver from Tennessee) on the Corn Hole-Goochland connection. A few weeks later Tom led a trip of his own through the connection during Karst-O-Rama, going from Goochland to Corn Hole. However, on a difficult climb near the Corn Hole entrance, one of the cavers fell and broke his leg, and a major rescue was executed. Because of the rescue, the secret of Corn Hole was out.

Several cavers now heard of Corn Hole and suspected that the cave must be magnificent if it was held a secret for so long. For this reason, I thought there would be many people on this trip. However, only four of us were there to do push a virgin lead while doing the through-trip.

On October 10, 1998, Werner and I met Mary and Wayne in Berea, KY for breakfast. After breakfast, Mary headed to the parking area near Corn Hole while Werner, Wayne and I headed for the entrance of Goochland Cave. We approached Goochland on a 4-wheel drive road from the north. On this ride, I had a tour of parts of Rockcastle Co. that I had never seen before. In some parts, the road was almost non-existent, in others, it was just a pile of small boulders. After

some careful four wheeling, we reached the entrance of Goochland. There, a group of young men had set up an elaborate camp: a huge canvas tent, huge generator, other small tents, bottles of bourbon, rifles, guitars, a pick-up blaring the Grateful Dead music, a rope rigged over the entrance for rappelling. Although they said they were camping there since the previous Wednesday, it looked like they were ready to move in. We told them we would exit Goochland Cave out later that night so they wouldn't shoot us in their drunken stupor.

Werner left his Ford "Cave Explorer" at Goochland while we all had to concentrate on what to leave at Goochland and what to bring to Corn Hole. Werner and I hopped into Wayne's Bronco to drive to Corn Hole. After we parked the cars, hiked down the road, bushwhacked through the forest, we found ourselves at Corn Hole.

I looked at the entrance and asked Mary about the vertical shaft. She was surprised to see that new entrance had formed recently. Apparently, some collapse had happened within the last few months. This new entrance is adjacent to the original sinkhole entrance.

Pic: Looking into the new entrance at Corn Hole



We climbed down into the cave and took a few pictures of the new entrance. From there we traversed to a 10 foot drop off, which I down climbed awkwardly. After some crawling we reached a 20 foot ledge. While Werner quickly climbed down, Mary and Wayne set up a rappel line nearby. I looked at the climb for a few minutes. To get down, I have to place my body in a concave groove in the wall. However, the ledge is overhung by about two feet. I climb gingerly over the ledge, and swing my body underneath the ledge and back to the wall. My feet contact a tiny shelf as I stem the groove. As I squeeze my body underneath the ledge, I rotate 180 degrees and then stem my way to the bottom. I walk ten feet to my left to watch Mary and Wayne do a hot-seat rappel (i.e., ass-flossing) into the room.

The room quickly contracted, and we were then belly-crawling over large slabs. We continued to crawl until we reached a small "room" in which we could sit up. From this room there were three crawlways, two of which led to the ledge where the caver broke his leg. Werner headed down the right most crawl way while I went down the center crawl. Between these two passages was a small tube. I tied a 'biner to our rope and made several attempts to throw the rope to Werner's outstretched hand in the tube. We worked at this for about twenty minutes. I was lying in a puddle with the ceiling less than a foot from my face - hardly any room to throw anything. Frustration about the situation started to increase. Finally after about 50 attempts, I got the rope far enough down the tube so that Werner could grab the 'biner without dislocating his shoulder.

We brought our respective ends to the ledge to do a double rappel. I crawled back into the "room" and fashioned a seat harness out of webbing. I crawled back to the ledge and attach the rope to my eight ring while lying down. I swung my legs over and placed my weight on the rope. The 8 mm rope held. I quickly got down and off-rope. Wayne and Mary followed Werner.



Pic: Werner Jud swings over the ledge to rappel.

After everyone is down, we have a new problem: we could not pull the rope down because it is hung up. Wayne and I pulled while Werner flip-flopped the other strand. Progress was too slow. We finally got the rope down by

having Werner stand on my shoulders and flip the rope while Wayne pulls. Now, we were definitely committed to a through-trip.

From the ledge, the cave turned into a short sinuous canyon passage, through which we crawl on hands and knees. At some places, we were lucky enough to stand up. Endlessly we crawled on. The passage then widened, and we were able to crawl on large rocks, the canyon now is just a shallow, narrow crack in the floor.

As Werner was in the lead, he found this

crawl getting smaller and smaller, and tighter and tighter.

"This is getting awfully tight", Werner said.

"Keep going. This is the right way", Mary urged.

"God, I can hardly move!" Werner pushed the crawl as hard as he could: helmet was off and surrounding rock constricted all limbs. "This can't be the way. I don't have a good feeling about this crawl"

At this point, Mary and I turned around to look for alternate routes. About a hundred feet back on the left was another passage, a crawl of course. This passage was a hard right on our way in, so we missed it. Mary crawled down this passage to confirm it was the "right way" while I waited at the intersection. After crawling two hundred feet, Mary called for us to follow.

Here, the crawl was sandy with a wide passage and was high enough to be on hands and knees. After two hundred feet of this, Mary popped down into a passage. I climbed down behind her to a stream passage. She was a bit perplexed at the moment, as she wasn't sure which way to go. She checks one way of the stream passage - this way dead ends. The other way is virgin. At this point, we weren't in the mood for a wet crawl even though it was virgin.

Werner was certain that we weren't supposed to drop down here, but stay up and continue crawling. We climbed back up to the crawl and the passage height did not get above 20 inches. We push our

cave packs in front of our face and scooted forward on our bellies an inch at a time. The crawl seemed went on and on. The entire cave seemed like an eternal sandy crawl. Although I was wearing knee pads, my knees were getting sore by this point. My shoulders, too, were tired from alternatively pushing my pack ahead and pulling my body through the passage.

After about fifteen minutes, we were in the "wide room", an area where the floor drops down like a bowl. Although the passage was wide here, there was barely enough height to stand up. Here we ate some food, and then continued the dusty crawl to the "Connection Room."

After another fifteen minutes of tough belly crawling, the crawl terminated four feet off the floor of the Connection Room. At this point, we took another break to catch our breath. It was just a novel feeling to be able to stand and walk. We were at that point in the cave where we were to push a virgin lead. So far, it had taken about five hours of tough climbing and crawling to reach this point, and fatigue was starting to be a factor. Not to mention how dinged up my legs and arms were from colliding against the tight passages.

Pic: The author squeezes through the Triangular Hole.



We took the walk-in passage and tortuously climbed

d a breakdown pile. From the top of this pile there were several going leads. Since Mary and Werner wanted to push the passage they found a year ago; we headed down that passage.

The first obstacle of this passage is what we called the "Triangular Hole." At the ceiling of this 6 foot high chamber was a small hole in the rock in the shape of a triangle. To get through it, I had to step onto a small rock ledge and toss my pack and helmet and battery though first. Then, placing my hands forward like a flying superman, I jammed my body into this hole. My chest just barely squeezed through. Everyone took my picture as half of my torso had made it through the hole.

After about ten steps, the cave became a hands and knees crawl (Surprise, surprise!). This continued for about a hundred feet, and then it got smaller. At one point, the cave in front of me was a small tight tube. I take a breath for about a minute, to ward off the claustrophobic feelings which were pressing down on me suddenly. Mary asked what is wrong, and I reply that I think I've been in tight passages too long today. Mary tells me that it "opens up" just ahead. So, again I toss my heavy pack in front as I squirm through the tight crawl. After about fifteen feet, I'm on my hands and knees, crawling. ("Opens up!? My a\$\$!")

The crawl led down a short mud slope to a down-sloping ledge on which there is a lot of loose rock. Definitely virgin cave, or at least, traveled very little. In fact, Werner had been the first and only person to climb down this ledge.

Werner takes the lead and climbs down

fifteen feet to the bottom. He had to traverse across the ledge a few feet and then chimney down a wide crack. With some pointers from Werner, Wayne follows. I waited for Wayne to get out of the way before I started to make my move. Then it was my turn. Just as I swung my feet over this ledge, a large portion of the ledge suddenly breaks away. I find myself quickly sliding into the pit. With no holds for my feet, my hands quickly smeared the smooth rock around me. Somehow, I scrambled back and away from the edge like a frightened crab. Friction was my friend. We reminded ourselves that extreme caution was imperative because if a mishap did occur, a supreme effort would be needed for a rescue.

After everyone settled down, I gingerly returned to the ledge for closer inspection. I looked at the rocks Werner and Wayne stepped on to traverse, and they were precariously loose. With my foot, I freed one loose and let it fall into the pit. The other rock was like a loose tooth, wiggly but not ready to be extracted.

Satisfied that most of the loose stuff was knocked over, I cautiously traverse to my right, stepping only on firm rock, which unfortunately was not in abundance. Somehow, I make it across and chimneyed down the groove in the wall to the bottom.

Due to the instability of the pit, Mary declined to attempt the climb. From our vantage point, it appeared that she could traverse to the left where an easier climb was. We got out of the pit before she knocked a huge boulder into the pit that blocks the traverse to the left. Precariously pitched, the boulder was easy to

move. However, the ledge was steeply sloped, and Mary did not feel comfortable attempting the traverse.

The three of us headed into the going passage. Another constriction slows our progress: I have to fit through another small hole like superman. After the hole, we continued in virgin cave until we reach a tight, short, sinuous canyon passage. Severe disappointment set in: The passage was definitely just on the edge of subhuman size (too small for humans). I knew that I couldn't fit. After looking for other leads, we find ourselves in a dead-end. We picked our way back to the pit.

I helped Wayne get started on the climb up since he is a bit shorter than me. Simultaneously, Werner practiced his rock moves by climbing the fluted edges of the pit to my left. Wayne slowly traversed back to the collapsed ledge, avoiding most rocks. I scrambled up the chimney and traversed next. Now I knew why Wayne was so slow. Going down was easy; going up was a different challenge. I started the traverse right by placing my torso on the bottom portion of the ledge. There were no firm hand holds, and I had to be careful not to knock anything else loose with my feet. Because the ledge was down-sloping, any misstep would have me to my right back into the pit. I squiggled and squirmed my way up the slope, using only friction. Any hand holds I found were loose, and I used them for balance only. Soon, all three of us were up, and we were climbing up the mud slope to meet Mary.

We quickly crawled back to the triangular hole. Wayne and Mary squeeze through the hole first, then Werner and me. Werner suggests that we should give that

hole a name. I replied that I am too tired to be creative at the moment.

Back at the Connection Room, we rest again shortly. It is now 7 pm. We are all



Pic: A disappointed Werner at the end of the virgin passage.

tired and ready to head out the left side of Goochland Cave. However to do so we have another crawl to do. Mary had told us earlier that the first cavers had blown this passage off because they thought it was sub-

human. For the rest of the trip, we referred to this crawl as the "Subhuman Crawl."

The hands and knees crawl quickly turned into a strict belly crawl. I just simply followed the sole of Werner's boots. Luckily we could keep the helmets on, but I could not turn my head. Although the passage was relatively wide, in many places the ceiling was touching my back. After what seemed like many hundred feet, Werner disappeared feet-first into a small hole in the floor. I turned around and squeezed my body into this hole, which has been lovingly dubbed the "Gratsch Hatch." After I dropped through the hole, I belly crawled some more. (Push the pack; pull your body ahead. Repeat ad infinitum) By now, I was running on auto-pilot for some time when Mary suddenly takes my

pack. She was standing! I looked at Werner and simply said, "I'm dead." He giggled in a fatigued way. It was now 7:30. Thirty minutes of continuous belly crawling at a quick pace-we were all beat.

The good news was that we were finally in Goochland Cave, at the "terminus" of the left side. The bad news was that we were at the "terminus" of the left side of Goochland Cave. At least another two hours of caving before we are on the surface but it was mostly on our feet. As I stand up, I notice that coveralls on my right leg had been ripped to shreds. I gather up the loose material and tie it around my waist like a belt. Onward.

The left side of Goochland is generally wet. The water was initially frigid - turning my feet quickly numb. However, I "warmed" up to the water until we had to go across a couple of waist-deep pools. The secret to crossing these pools is to do it quickly, thereby minimizing your time in the water.

We trudged for a long time in a stream passage. Here, the cave was well worn by the stream; it was scalloped on the walls and floor. The trudging was interspersed with some stoop-walking and crawling. At last we stopped for a few minutes to get a bite to eat. I was too tired to dig out my own food, so I watch Wayne eagerly devouring his peanut M&Ms. Werner offered me some Vienna sausages, but I complained that I am too tired to chew. I contemplated the final obstacles before reaching the entrance (or exit in this case).

After traveling through immense cave (50 to 80 foot ceiling), the cave constricts to a

narrow stooping passage, a tight tube. Here, progression slowed again. At one point in this tube, a large bolder is wedged into the keyhole shaped passage. The only way to get around the

bolder is through a short but tight belly crawl underneath it, through a conveniently placed cold puddle. After we got ourselves wet one last time, we traversed through the five foot high passage to the entrance.

Pic: Traversing the pools in Goochland – Left side



The joy of being out of the cave is muted by the partyers camped at the cave. Rifles and Jim Beam bottles are in abundance. A pickup truck blares the play-by-play action of the World Series to an empty forest. As we quickly walk past their “camp”, one of the men asks if we will show him how to get through the cave. “Not tonight,” I reply as I tiredly remove my helmet and peel off my shredded coveralls.

From the Editor:

I hope you have enjoyed the Spring 2000 edition of the Goosedown Gazette, or as I have been calling it: the Mark Suer Edition. A big thank you goes out to Mark for contributing three articles to this publication. Thanks also to Michelle Kesterman, Robert Sexton and our President for writing down some words of varying wisdom.

To those of you who are new to the club, or just checking us out, I would just like to say that there is one important thing you can do: Go on a trip. At first it may seem a little intimidating, but do not worry, we all have been there. This quarter, there will be many opportunities to go on trips. If you are new, I highly recommend the Beginner's Climbing Course. That course has been the first trip for many, many present members. You will have a chance to learn some really cool stuff, as well as meet a lot of new people.

So jump in! This club offers a world of things to do and see. Make the most of it, and you will be very happy you did.

Ted Roll
VP-UCMC

P.S. To all those expecting Larry Cookies, ask me about it some other time.

