



THE ROC CAIRN



—RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC. — 15TH ST. LOUNGE, R. P. I., TROY, NEW YORK—

September 81



Welcome to the Outing Club. The Outing Club's approximately 200 members participate in the outdoor sports of caving, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, rafting, cross country skiing, winter mountaineering, and ice climbing. Trips go out on weekends and vacations throughout the year. Whether you are an expert or have no experience at all there are trips at just your pace. The club has many qualified instructors ready to teach the basics or the fine points. And if you're worried that you don't have the equipment, don't. The R.O.C. provides virtually all your needs, from tents, sleeping bags, and packs to kayaks, ropes, and headlamps. The equipment is free to members for use on any club trips.

The Outing Club has teaching sessions for the various activities such as learning to roll a kayak during pool session every Sunday night starting in about one month, learning caving techniques such as rappelling and ascending ropes in the armory Friday nights. Each winter a week long winter school is held in the Adirondacks or White Mountains where one learns basics as well as some more advanced techniques of ice axe use, snowshoeing, crampon use and general cold weather enjoyment. Gym credit can be earned in most activities once one becomes proficient.

Coming up the first weekend of October is the fall Lake George. It's a weekend of canoeing, kayaking, hiking, square dancing and a whole lot of fun shared with other outing clubs from many eastern colleges. It's held on Turtle Island on Lake George. It's a great opportunity to get to know people, learn to kayak or square dance and just have fun outside of Troy. Be sure to sign up or talk to someone about it.

Many extended trips have gone out in the past, such as caving in West Virginia and Alabama, mountaineering on Mt Katahdin in Maine, and Mt McKinley in Alaska, and rafting in Maine, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. In the future? There are plans formulating for caving in Mexico, rock climbing in Yosemite Valley and many more.

The R.O.C. has amazing possibilities but it's up to you, the new member to make it. Go on a few trips and see what you like. Just have a good time and get totally dedicated. It's all here for you. Your eight dollar dues entitles you to the use of many, many thousands of dollars of equipment, expert instructor, new friends, and a great chance to escape from the pressures of R.P.I. or Sage. So become a member, go talk to someone if you have any questions, or stop down at the pit (equipment room) after the meeting to see what we have.

RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB OFFICERS

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Rock Climbing - Glenn Caffery

Kayaking - Jeff Stern

Rafting- Mike Pesavento

Winter Mountaineering - Dan Cherwin

Cross-Country Skiing - Kate Sahlin

Ice Climbing - Glenn Caffery

What is a Patch Member?

1. Definition-owns red chamois shirt with ROC patch sewn to right or left shoulder, exact meaning of patch location has been forgotten.
2. A patch member is a person who would do almost anything not to miss the Tuesday night meeting.
3. This person has gone on 3 club trips each in a different activity, one of them being an overnight trip.
4. And has also done work for the Club ie. attended a Pit party*, fixed equipment, worked on a Fall Lake George Committee ect.
5. A patch member may vote in elections if he or she is an RPI student.

If 2,3,and 4 apply to you talk to any E-Con (Executive Council) member or any person with a red ROC shirt on and tell them you want to become a patch member.

* A work party down in our equipment room in the Armory basement, the Pit.

New Hampshire Climbing

When school ended in May, I vowed to get climbing in New Hampshire during the summer but work didn't allow much time and the summer was rapidly flying by. Finally in early Aug. I made it up there and immediately fell in love. I made the trip five times in Aug. and will certainly return. There are three major areas, Cannon, Cathedral, and Whitehorse, all three granite. Because of my inexperience with granite, I found the ratings to be tricky at first but they do tend to be very consistent.

Cannon is a beautiful place to be however, one must be careful choosing his route. ~~The Whitney-Gilman Ridge has some~~ some incredible positions, however, it doesn't offer all that much good climbing and they are a lot of loose blocks. It's a good introduction to the cliffs because of its great beauty. I wouldn't climb beneath another party because of its loosening up. Moby Grape is a long classic with many pitches of fine climbing/ The Reppy's crack variation takes you up a perfect hand crack, to start off the climb. This is followed by a few great finger cracks, an overhang, and the "Finger of Fate", an amazing feature where you get to do a little squirming. Union Jack and Vertigo are two other beauties of a more serious nature. Combining tiny belay stances great problems, fantastic rock, and even a pendulum.

Whitehorse is an amazing place. The slabs are so much fun. The first few patches were real easy and are great to play around on to get a little used to friction. It's neat to try night and/or rain ascents to add some fun. Sliding board is a great route to do. If you want to see what 5.9 friction is like scoot over below the crux pitch of the ninth wave and try a couple moves. If you're new to friction you'll probably do a dynamic descent as we did.

The South Buttress of Whitehorse is quite a bit steeper than the slabs. I've only done two pitches down there but they were both of incredibly high quality. Children's Crusade is an amazing line with great sloping mantles which are good for a good scare but aren't all that difficult. Ethereal Crack is a gorgeous 5.10 finger tip crack which is a true test of your footwork.

Of the three areas, Cathedral Ledge is the place to be. The very featured rock provides a wide range of situations. Some of the great climbs are Diedre, Ventilator, a very delicate face climb, They died laughing, short but fun, and then Airation, the most beautiful finger eating crack I've ever seen. Airation is a very well protected 5.11 and a great way to blow out your arms and trash your fingers at the end of your trip. We made the mistake of doing it the first day ruining us for the rest of the trip.

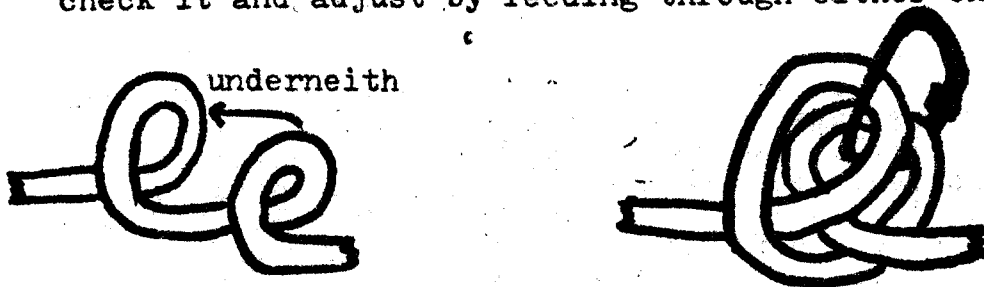
New Hampshire is an incredible place with enough classics to last a lifetime. Be sure to bring a frisbee for those rainy

Glen

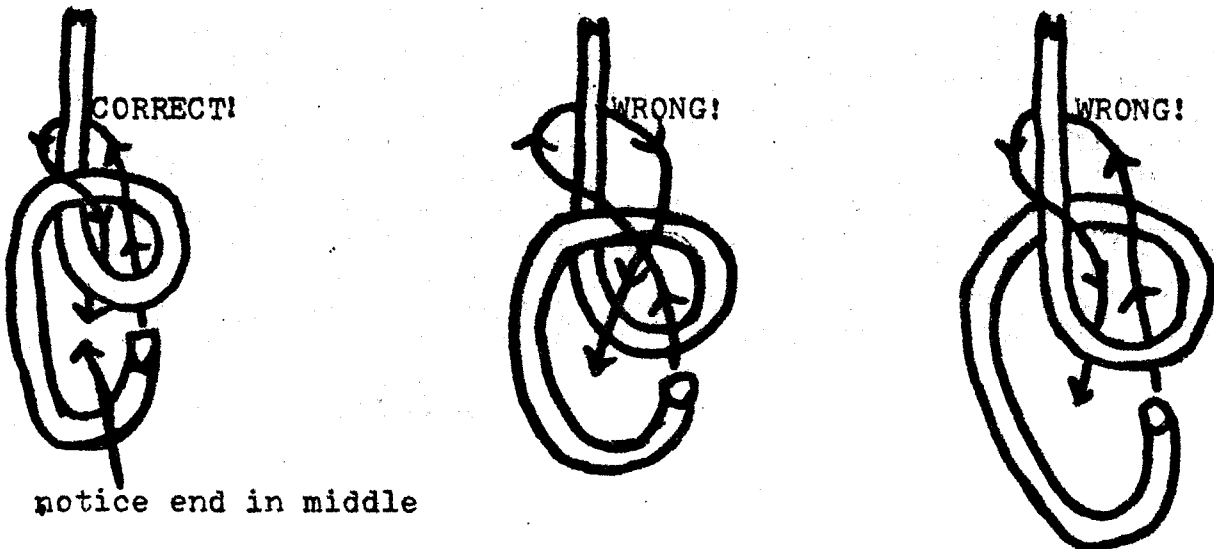
days which seem to be quite common. It is, without a doubt, worth the extra traveling time.

KNOT NEWS

A very convenient knot to use when setting up a belay is the clove hitch. It is very easily adjusted which makes for quick and comfortable belays. You may want to use two carabiners with reversed gates because if the knot slips around onto the gate it could open. The best way to make it is to make two identical loops, lay the second one under the first, then clip the biners through both loops (see diagram). Tighten it to check it and adjust by feeding through either end.



Beware of tying bowlines incorrectly. It is a great knot when tied right because it is fast and easy to untie but I've seen many climbers, from beginners to experts, have their knots come undone (always at the crux, of course). Make sure the rope going away from you is at the bottom of the loop and when you pass the end around that "tree" you don't pass in front of it first; the end should be in the middle (see diagram). If you are at all uncertain ask for help or don't use it.



by
Glen

Alabama Caving

The weather was good, the drive long and predominately uneventful. Unlike last year's trip to Alabama, were off season roads, winter snowstorms, roof racks that wouldn't stay on the roof, jack-knifed tractor trailers, and three in the morning talks to state troopers about gas stations that are open being two hundred miles away. The Cougar we rented from Avis was working fine except for the first thousand miles or so there weren't any brake lights. Undaunted the five of us took turns driving for 23 hours to Huntsville. Jim, our fearless trip leader, didn't because he couldn't see out the back window. We had tied two TT packs to the trunk. Everyone else took the chance even the token freshman Steve, who thought shoulders were a good place to drive on because there were more potholes to bounce into.

Anyway, we hit NSS headquarters on cave Ave. at 4 in the afternoon. Dave, Steve and I bought New England Cave guides. From there we went to Monte Santo Park for the night. We planned to do Neversink the next day. Steve was the only one who had a completed harness.

In the morning it was off to Neversink to try out the still unfinished harnesses. Tom and I were still speedy stitching at the top of the pit. We rigged the 163 foot drop with a 200 foot and a 40 foot rope so we could practice switching ropes. Saw two snakes at the bottom both seemed friendly and nonpoisonous. Steve was having problems when we came out. He had layered himself wrong by having the shock cord to his knee gibbs on the wrong side of the rope and his ammo box camera case over the harness. After he had hung on the rope for a long time, he asked Jim for a knife. All Jim knows is the knife flashed and Steve came crawling over the edge of the pit. I came out then Dave and finally Tom. Tom didn't want to switch ropes so he took a short-cut by climbing over the poison ivy to the right of the tree we rigged off.

Derigging was fun, especially when Jim's helmet decided that life was too much and dove for the bottom of Neversink. Lucky for Jim because he wasn't attached at the time. A three second wait occurred before the final thud. Jim seemed to think Tom had coerced the helmet into taking the plunge, so Jim tried to get Tom to go down and get it the quick and easy way. The helmet wasn't even cracked when we recovered it.

The rest of the day was spent driving to Lafayette Georgia to do Ellison Cave. Home of the 510 foot pit, Fantastic. Arriving after midnight at the police station to acquire the key to the cave, this little old lady gave us the key, and said it was nice that we were going caving. With quad in hand we went looking for Ellison cave. The 1964 quad was lacking in a few details. It seems the road it showed was locked up, and the key wouldn't fit the lock. Fearless leader Jim decided we should hike the 5 miles in, and do the cave tomorrow. The pack that I had couldn't be put on by myself.

Everyone needed help except Jim and Dave who had sixty pound packs. The short hike from the car to the locked gate left us complaining that 5 miles would take three days, but the packs were heaved over the fence. We had to be very careful on the gravel road because of the strange brown pies all over the place. This planted the seeds of doubt. The barbed wire fence across the road sent Jim into a brain lock, and Steve and I to mutiny. For the next half hour we drove up and down the highway looking for a likely looking cave road. Finally, we found a lock our key could open, and this booth with a sign saying cavers are responsible for their own safety. Even little cards with departure time and planned route were there. Jim said "I think we are here." Dave kept saying "how can you be sure."

Well, I drove the Cougar through the dry potential mudflats to Blue Bird Spring. The caviest looking spring I have ever seen. I drove up the mountain until the rocks got too big for the loaded down Cougar to scrap over, and we pitched a tent in one of the rare level spots.

The next morning Tom, Steve and I began the search. Just as we were about to turn around because Jim was supposed to have made lunch, we found the original Ellison's entrance (OEE). On the way down we looked around for the dug Ellison's entrance (DEE) because this entrance cut off 1 mile of stream passage and one long tight crawl. Relatively close to the car we found a likely looking spot. It looked dug by New York standards. A hole 4 feet deep covered with spider webs. Lunch wasn't ready since Jim and Dave both denied any knowledge of how to start a Phobus or a 111-B stove. We had Alpine tuna surprise.

All decked out in caving duds we moved. Jim went in first, and 5 minutes later he came out. All he found was a turtle at the bottom of a ten foot pit. I don't believe him so I go down to say hello to a turtle. No one has the foggiest idea of where DEE could be. In despair we wander back to the car. A little way down the road I was saying something about Rawdings stupid quad, he was the guy we borrowed the quad from, when this path jumped out in front of me. No one had ever seen it before. Up the path we went. Jim and Dave are close behind. The faint shrill of a whistle is heard as Tom tries to find out where we went to. Jim whistles back in a neat little code we worked out for communication in the pit. Suddenly, I see an opening in the ground so I grab Dave's flashlight and plunge in. A little ways in brings me to a twenty foot pit. It is slightly muddy and wet with limestone spikes rising on the far side wall, and the bottom is boulder strewn. Tom tells me to come out because Jim has found a bigger entrance. So with a little relief out I came.

Jim's entrance (JE) was a large sink with water dripping down a triangular opening. Dave says it drops ten feet into a pool of water. He knows this because he dropped a stone into it. Tom and I go over to look. We don't see much, but we do hear water.

Jim decides that this isn't the legendary and long sought after DEE. He says it is too big to be a dug entrance, which is the discription we got from a book on the history of Ellison. So Jim starts up the path, yes, it is still going up. A short distance brings us to a very familiar looking dirt road. Tom and I realize that this is the road that leads to OEE. Sure enough another 50 yards, and there it is OEE. Tom and I are now convinced that JE is in fact DEE. We seek out a large rock and wait. Jim arrives. A discussion arises between Jim and myself; no one else wants to put fourth an opinion. Jim now thinks that JE is Stair Step Ellison's entrance, an entrance that has a 400 foot rappel called Incredible, (SSEE). I tell Jim he is a buffalo chip, and that SSEE is on the other side of Pigeon Mountain. We grab a couple of lizards and a few scarab beetles from a nearby tree, and put the lizard down as DEE, the beetles down as DEE and SSEE making the two other corners of an equilateral triangle. North runs along a line connecting DEE and SSEE. Which, I said, proves my point JE is DEE. As the lizard bit Dave and disappeared into the undergrowth, Jim countered with it can't be a dug entrence look at it. Anyway, Tom, Steve and I decide to check it out. Jim tells me that if it is DEE there should be 900 feet of subway like passage, and a 120 foot drop ending the subway. Dave and Jim decide to walk down the dirt road, and look for their own private Idaho.

We do the 10 foot downclimb and skirt the small pool. Steve says to look out for any subway trains because the passage is walking, 15 foot ceilings and 20 foot across. On we go. Needless to say, the 120 foot pit was impressive with the white flowstone columns draping the far side being its highlight.

Later down by the car, I tell Jim that it is the right entrance, and Tom agreed by adding a few comments of his own. The trip is running behind schedule so a note is left in the car for any would be rescuers to read. Basically, it says don't bother. A short while later Ellison Cave is penetrated. The 120 foot drop is rigged, and the 600 foot rope is lowered. Unfortunately, the canvass rope bag decides to fall apart at this time, and the rope takes a nasty fall. At the bottom the rope is just able to crawl under the waterfall. I follow at a much slower pace, and rescue the soaked rope.

Right then guess whose lamp decides to get sick. Jim had this small crack in the bottom of his lamp which allowed all the gas to escape. Dave was able to produce his spare bottom. A 20 foot downclimb is done, and a 18 foot rappel. On we go from room to room, finally, a 15 foot climb and a short walk. There it is Fantastic pit, all six seconds of a rock drop. A small celebration is held Tom's famous kool-aid water with no sugar is passed around. The rope is checked very carefully and rigged on the right as you face the oblivion. 510 feet to the bottom; 96 feet to the top.

Why are you so grouch?

All of a sudden we start to hear voices. Not really expected. All they want to do is drop rocks. One of the guys, who has done the pit before, says that the rigging should be on the left side bolts. Also, he makes a few more comments about finding the keys to the Cougar to move it, and tossing our tent off the road. No biggy. They leave. Jim and I toss a coin to see who goes first. Jim won.

The rappel is unreal. You just hang there. Suspended in space all by yourself forever and a day. Steve puts on a light show with his camera. Small 100 foot sections of the wall are flashed 300 feet off the floor.

The pit is huge a canyon with a ceiling. It runs like that for 10 minutes of walking before the passage turns into a tight fissure.

Jim was the first to start gibbing out. Steve was the second on the rope. A short time later we heard Steve yell something. Tom thought he yelled barf. I was next up the rope with Dave as my second. The bouncing and twisting was really getting to me so I climbed almost continuously. Dave didn't appreciate this, but it is better than being barfed on. On top Jim told me about Steve threatening to drop his ammo box, and instead passing it to Jim to haul out. Then about Steve's buckle on his shoulder webbing breaking. He only dropped a few inches. Tom was the last one out.

Steve still had enough faith in his harness to gibbs out with it the 120 foot drop. We kept going. Outside it is dark and wet, and we are tired and wet. Steve takes a few more pictures and collapses. Sometime during the sixteen plus hours we were in the cave, a fairly mean storm had moved through. An excellent trip, and it is now 5 in the morning.

Into the car, an attempt is made to drive out. The car gets us about halfway out before it gets hopelessly bogged down. We had tried quite a few times to push it out, but it really was difficult with the car sideways in the mud road. So hike out in the mud. Good Alabama stickum mud. At the caver station we sit down, and fall asleep. Steve does so for a half hour. When the rest of us wake up Steve isn't there. What is left of us stagger down the road looking for a tow truck. About a mile or two later Steve rides by in one. The rest isn't that much fun, but the trip is one I will always remember.

Greg Leger