

huge, one should obviously choose the route of descent in advance, out of consideration for one's support party.

The "direct route" on Johannesburg is the N.E. rib of the N. Face. In July 1951 Tom Miller and I set out to determine its feasibility. We left the car at 5.00 A.M., crossed the river and brush slopes to the snow fan issuing from the Cascade-Jo couloir, and soon attained the base of our rib. For several hours we pulled ourselves up the brushy cliffside. Even in the densest thickets I could hear the avalanches pouring off Cascade and Tom's cheery voice praising the outdoor life. Here the climbing was an intensified version of that on the N. peak of Index, on which we had trained the week before. Above the seemingly near-vertical jungle, we clambered up seemingly near-vertical meadowland, slowed by the heat and our heavy packs.

Our meadowland petered out on a sharp arête. Here we roped. Miller led out along the sheer side wall of the arête and up again to its crest. We followed the crest a way, veered several hundred feet to the right over easy slabs, then zigzagged up some strenuous shelves, using seven pitons. Miller used three more in overcoming a rotten trough and a difficult overhanging chimney. This feat brought us into the reddening sunlight, atop the main crest of the N.E. rib. We bivouacked 300 ft. farther up the rib, beside the great snow cap. We had no fire, but were warmed considerably when we saw the threatening sky clear late that evening.

Next morning we followed the narrow, extremely exposed snow ridge up to the upper hanging glacier, belaying continuously with our ice hammers. After skirting wide, snake-like, around various crevasses in the steep snow field, we reached the rock pinnacle of the final summit. Three leads and two pitons later, we were relaxing on top in the glorious noon. We had arranged with our support party to descend by the Ayres route. The descent of the E. ridge, new country for us, involved several false starts and lost time. After the tedious traverse, just at dark, we met our support party and were glad to be guided by a shortcut over to Cascade Pass. The 1949 and Ayres routes of descent are about equally unattractive. About ten hours from the top to Gilbert's Cabin. Next time I think I'll just stay on top.

DAVID HARRAH

A.A.C. CAMP, 1951

Photos, R. C. Houston

UNITED STATES: CLIMBS IN OTHER AREAS

A New Route on Devils Tower, Wyoming. Since the first ascent of the "long column" by F. Wiessner in 1937, all successful activity on Devils Tower has been concentrated on the adjacent "leaning column," the route pioneered by J. Durrance in 1938. The register indicates that 13 parties have ascended the Durrance route. With thoughts that it was high time to look for a possible new route, a party from the Mountaineering Committee of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, of Washington, D.C., met at the Tower in late August 1951. The party of four included Herb Conn, Art Lembeck (A.A.C.), Ray Moore and Tony Soler.

Moore and Soler explored numerous frustrating leads on Aug. 29th and left a rope dangling through karabiners in several pitons and an expansion bolt N. of the Big Ledge (the easy traverse portion of the standard routes) and far below it. By unanimous consent, this 40-ft. start was abandoned in favor of a less impossible crack on the E. face of the Tower, beneath the N. end of the Big Ledge. The crack is about 150 yds. E. and N. (right) of the Wiessner route and out of sight of it. Broken sections at the base of the Tower allowed easy scrambling to the height of the leaning block. The climb was third-class for 30 ft., then fifth-class. A wide crack in the left side column begins working, 55 ft. up, toward the angle-piton crack between the columns. Another 70 ft. up, the left-hand crack becomes the piton crack, and the right-hand crack widens out. This is the situation for 40 ft. A short, bulging overhang was passed by means of a layback. The same technique was used for most of the next 40 ft. In this section pitons had to be inserted while the climber was in a semi-layback position, holding on with one hand. This exhausting procedure resulted in one fall. The leader dropped from 12 to 15 ft. above his upper piton, but was stopped, suffering only slight scratches on his arms, by the dynamic belay of his second. In use at the time were 7/16-in. nylon rope, an old U. S. Army angle piton and an Army surplus aluminum karabiner. Above this point the slope became slightly less, and the two cracks again became useful.

Since layback piton-pounding proved too difficult, Soler drove in six pitons for direct aid, skillfully edging on top of the one he had just placed in order to drive the next one. This maneuver whereby

each piton was used first as a handhold, then as a foothold, without a rope sling, was a beautiful example of balance climbing. The 23rd piton, placed in a horizontal side crack in the left-hand overhanging column, permitted a short traverse and retablissement to its sloping, splintered top—the first belay point on the climb. After the other climbers had “prusiked” up to this platform, three more pitons were used before the party reached the big ledge at the N. end, from which an easy scramble led to the summit. During the 9½-hour climb, 26 pitons (24 of them angle pitons) had been used. The first pitch of what is now officially known as the Soler Route was *belayed through pitons from the bottom* during a 240-ft. lead!

A. C. LEMBECK

The Chisos Mountains of Texas. Probably of most interest to the mountaineer in Texas are the Chisos Mountains. The rugged volcanic range rises sharply from the desert floor in a spectacular maze of jagged peaks, deep canyons, spires and volcanic necks. Located within the Big Bend National Park, the primitive region is pierced by one good road.

Most of the major peaks have been ascended by the simpler routes. There are numerous very difficult routes up the various faces of practically every one of them. Of particular interest to the climber are the countless unclimbed spires flanking the mountainsides and, in the southern part of the range, some isolated volcanic necks. The nature and complexity of the volcanic mass makes for a variety of types of rock. Characteristic of the larger peaks are sound rhyolites, jointed and fractured in such a manner as to afford safe climbing on very steep pitches. In contrast, there are peaks of relatively rotten rock, exemplified by the volcanic necks. The loftiest parts of the range rise some 4800 ft. above the desert floor, with the maximum elevation 7835 ft. above sea level.

It is well to be aware of the scarcity of water in this region, and also of the effects of sudden torrential downpours upon unpaved roads and in canyons.

A. E. OWEN

UNITED STATES: ACTIVITIES OF THE CLUBS

A.A.C.: Wind River Camp, 1951. California members of the A.A.C. have long wanted to become acquainted with members from