

# The Sierra



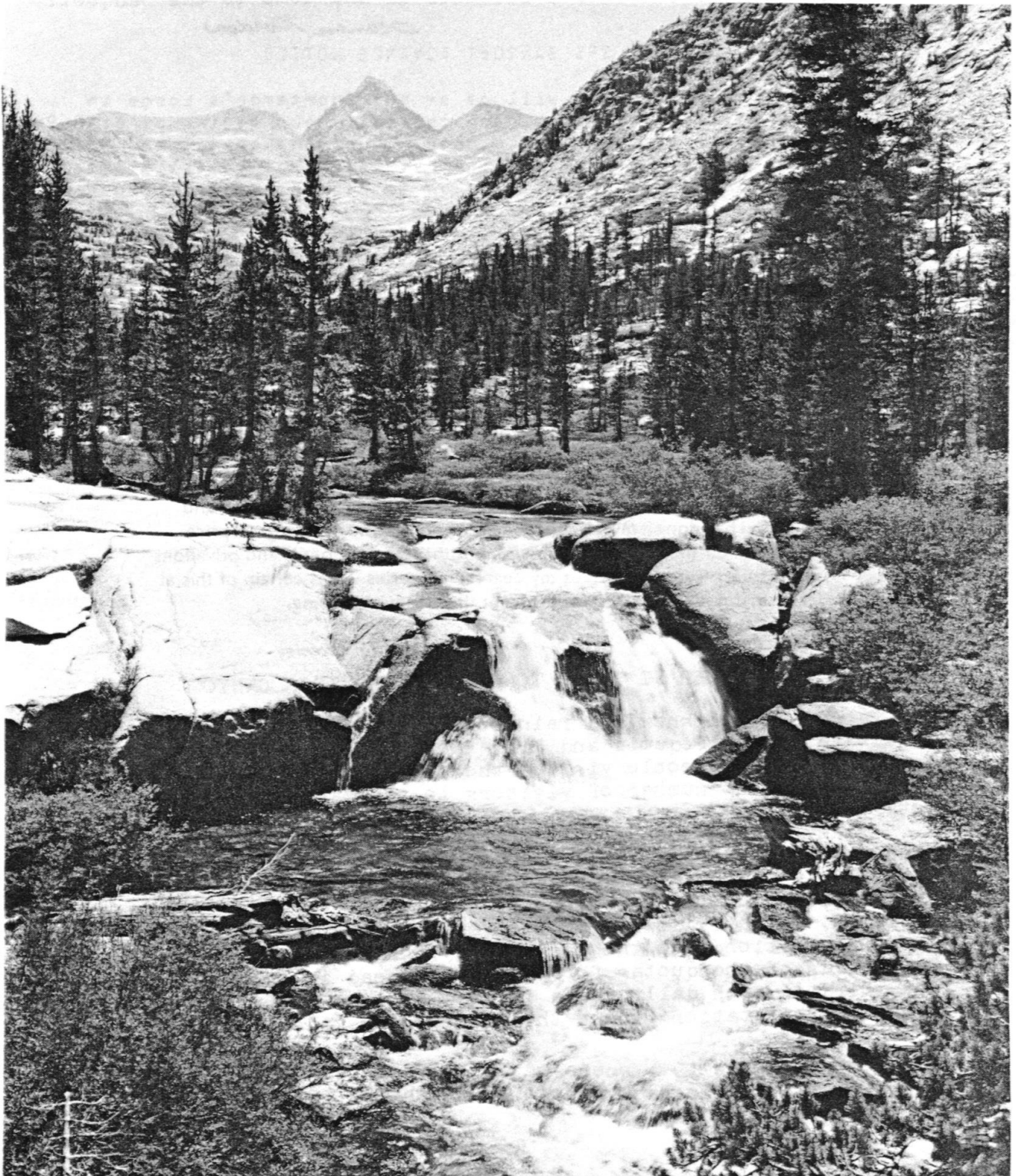
# ECHO

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NO. 5



FROM THE CHAIR

AUGUST 1984

Plans for the annual SPS Banquet are taking shape. Our banquet speaker will be Edward (Ted) Vaill, leader of the first ascent of Celestial Peak, a 17,500 foot granite face mountain in the Siguniang range of Tibet. The climb was significant in that it was the first time since 1932 that an American had made a first ascent in the Chinese Himalayas and it may open more Chinese mountain to Western climbers. Be sure to reserve December 12 and come to the Banquet!

*Hansen Gordon*

ANNUAL SPS BANQUET ADVANCE NOTICE

This year's annual banquet will be at the Sportsman's Lodge in Studio City on December 12th. The cocktail hour begins at 6:30 PM to be followed by a roast beef dinner. Our speaker, Edward Vaill, will show us "Tower of Challenge: First Ascent of Celestial Peak in Chinese Tibet." It promises to be an evening of great food, fellowship and entertainment. Be sure to join us!

NEW MEMBERS

DONNA R. O'SHAUGHNESSY  
GARY GUENTHER  
DON TIDWELL

NEW EMBLEMS

JANE EDGINTON # 454  
WAYNE R. WOODRUFF #455

NEW SENIOR EMBLEM

MARY SUE MILLER #78

■ I meant to tell mankind to aspire to a new state about which I could tell them little or nothing, to teach them to tread a long and lonely path which might or might not lead thither, to bid them dare to encounter all possible perils of nature unknown, to abandon all their settled manners of living and to cut themselves off from their past and their environment, and to attempt a quixotic adventure with no resources beyond their native strength and sagacity. I had done it myself and found not only that the pearl of great price was worth far more than I possessed, but that the very perils and privations of the quest were themselves my dearest memories. I was certain of this at least: that nothing in the world except this was worth doing.

*Aleister Crowley*

FEWER VISITORS TO SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON

Above normal snow and rain contributed to a 12.5 percent reduction in visitation to Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP in 1983 compare to 1982. In '83 1,619,988 people visited the parks, some 231,556 fewer than in '82. The highest number of visitors to the parks was in 1976 with a total of 2,168,477.

However, the number of people enjoying the backcountry increased over the previous year with a total of 44,031 compared with 37,299 in 1982.

Devils Postpile NM, which is also a part of S&K, received 73,612 visitors, slightly down from the year before.

Reservation into the backcountry for these parks is by mail only. Two-thirds of the quotas for each trail head is by mail in advance, one-third of each daily quota is available on a first come first serve basis at the stations where the permits are made available.

COVER PHOTO: Here is a scene of Bubbs Creek with Junction peak keeping perpetual watch in the background. Photo thanks to John Reed.

Here is a brief writeup of the May 12-13 Mt. Bradley climb I led last weekend.

Our group of seven started up the Pinyon Creek trail at 7:00. Over the past few years the use trail up the drainage has become somewhat better defined, but is still tricky in spots. The general rule is to try to remain as high above the creek as possible to avoid brush and thorns, but expect plenty of scree.

We passed the waterfall at 8000' by scrambling on the right, then followed the creek to the base camp ledge at about 11,000' below Center Basin Crags. Snow conditions were almost ideal, with little postholing.

Sunday we started at 6:00 and reached the summit by 8:00. Everyone was back at the cars by 2:30.

To reach the trailhead, take Onion Valley Road about four miles west of Independence. Turn left on the first dirt road past Foothill Road (about 3/8 mile). Follow this about 1/2 mile to its deadend at a T, turn right for about 200 yards to the end of the road. The trail begins there.

Ernie Tempelmeier,

NOTICE!!! NOTICE!!! NOTICE!!! NOTICE!!! NOTICE!!! NOTICE!!!

Writeups of the following scheduled 1984 trips have not been received by the ECHO editor. Please send them as soon as possible. Private trip writeups are also needed. Thanks in advance to all who send in info.

Apr 7-8	Dragon Pk	leader
" 28-29	Ernard, Trojan	Roberts
May 12-13	Mallory, Lone Pine	Tidball
" 19-20	Birch, Thumb	Titus
" 19-20	Langledy	Kachleder
Jun 9-10	Wallace, Haekel	Roberts
" 16-17	Excelsior, dunderberg	Holleman
" 16-17	McAdie, Irvine	Stein
" 16-17	Thompson, Powell	Roberts
" 23-24	Diamond, Baxter	Dykeman
" 30 to		Russell
Jul 8	Northern Sierra Pk Bagging	Dykeman

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I have been accused, justly, of underscreening trips. In response I have occasionally leaked out all the gory details of particular trips, with the uniform result, the big question not being one of participants (there would not be any) but whether the co-leader would still go. This trip, however, changed all that.

The three of us (two leaders plus game, able, but clearly illinformed Michael Wilder) met nice and early for the long drive to Silver Lake. Six hours, three gas stations, one body shop and one fuel injection brain later (Ron, I remain impatient for the inevitable company helicopter) we were for a second time departing my house for the Sierras.

Persevering due largely to Randy's damned enthusiasm, we were staggering into a 40 mile-an-hour wind beginning the trip promptly at 10:00 A.M. on Friday morning. We were supposed to use skis and skins, but up until Waugh Lake it was mostly sink and sweat. We did manage to stagger to within about one mile of Donahue Pass by 7:00 P.M. for our latest diversion of haute cuisine. Incidentally, with snow one can ignore the summer trail beyond Waugh Lake and proceed more directly toward Donahue Pass.

Not necessarily in honor of the impending Cinco DeMayo holiday, Randy produced hot sake, shrimps, water chestnuts, japanese vegetables, soy sauce, and even chop sticks for consumption that evening. Michael added health food goodies like Pinya nuts, while my contribution was largely that of an empty bowl (not for long!).

Saturday's itinerary called for extreme misery, but the Sierras had other plans. We skied neatly across Donahue; cramponed around upper Lyell Canyon with only perhaps 300 feet of loss, then continued stomping in crampons right up to the summit rocks, without a trace of the summer time Class III rocks. We signed in by lunch, early enough to allow a 1,500 foot ski run on wind-packed snow, followed by a traverse best not mentioned to the Safety Committee, and then by skiing efforts in mushy glop. Objectively, noting the recent resumption of interest in Whitaker Chambers, let me describe our return skiing style simply as unbalanced, but purposeful.

On Sunday, we proved ~~def~~ walkers on hard snow and made it to the car (the functional one) in just a few hours.

Silver Lake again proved a fine alternative roadhead for Lyell, and skiis proved a very enticing excuse and enabler of spring climbs. In fact, I may lead a similar trip next year -- we failed to get McClure and I do need it, you know.

Doug

The dishonest hardware salesman were very happy.  
They were having sturgeon eggs on crackers for tea.  
But as the party 'tooled' along,  
You could hear that ancient 'sawng':  
"Caviar Empty".

Definition:

Altar Ego" A bride who insists on a church wedding.  
Incongruous: That's where they make all those laws.  
Possibility: Very slight possibility.

Doug's theme song:  
"Climb Every Moun-  
tain---twice".

Ancient saying:  
"The Lord giveth,  
and the trashman  
taketh away".

"GRAND OVERLOOKS"

SPS Scheduled Trip, Sept. 17-19, 1983  
GORDON MacLEOD, BARBARA LILLEY

Plans for a 3-day traverse with car shuttle were scrubbed due to uncertainty of stream crossings in favor of a 2-day weekend. On a beautiful warm Saturday, the four participants backpacked up the Don Cecil trail from Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon National Park to a campsite at 8000' on a small stream just outside the Park below Sentinal Ridge, climbing Lookout Peak (8531') en route. Illusions of a seldom visited area were marred by the sight of a road with fresh tire tracks coming up from Soldier Meadow, but only one hunter's shot was heard in the distance and a pleasant evening around the campfire was enjoyed.

Sunday, after first climbing Pk. 9739', the long Sentinal Ridge was traversed down to Sentinal Dome (9115'), a Class 3 ascent. Return to camp was completed just at dusk, and cars were not reached until about 10:00 PM. Common sense prevailed; all chose to spend the night in the Park and to drive home on Monday--the trip took the 3 days after all!

BJL

CLYDE MINARET

July 13-14, 1984-----Norm Rohn, Vic Henney

Permit problems in spite of a March 1 request, necessitated rescheduling this trip to Fri.-Sat. instead of Sat.-Sun. and we lost most of our participants. Four, however, took off from Devils Postpile R.S. early and set up a camp on the saddle of the median peninsula of Minaret L where there is apt to be a mosquito-discouraging breeze. A dry-foot crossing of Minaret Creek on a large downed tree is available 2 or 300 yards upstream of the Muir Trail crossing and just below Johnson L.

Since we had over eight hours of light remaining we decided to give the peak a try. All went well to a point above and right of the red rocky area on Rte. 1 of the Climber's Guide (10,600'). Then the heavens opened up and we were treated to an hour of flashing, booming, heavy hail and rain. Cold and soggy, we retreated over the wet rock when things calmed down temporarily.

Saturday we started early and followed closely Rte. 2 in the Guide and Bill Russell's elaboration in the June '80 Schd. An easy start is from the grassy area just west of the Cecile L outlet. There was a large snow field beginning about 300 or so feet up the ridge at the top of which the famous 10ft. wide ramp begins. The only problem was a deep bergschrund which we crossed roped on a steep bridge. Everything from there on was straight forward and the afternoon thunder storms held off. Crampons went along for the ride, unused in the soft snow. A 1984 ... 1984

University Peak -  
A Climb With A South  
Bay BMTC Group

July 23, 24, 1983

This weekend climb started Friday when I was picked up by this trip's assistant leader Rich Livingston and another participant Adrian "Butch" Zarr, a bearded mountain man like myself. After dinner in Mojave, we drove past a short section of smoky skies, and entered the warm Owens Valley as the darkness took over. Our next stop was at a gas station where Rich met some folks also heading to Onion Valley, but to climb Kearsarge and Dragon. We arrived at Onion Valley a short while later and bedded down by our car in the parking lot. We settled into our bags and watched various others arrive.

Saturday dawned clear and sunny as we hustled to eat and pack for our 7:30 AM meeting time. I had a nutritious breakfast of Fruit Loops and milk amidst alot of good-natured kidding. My reply was "Didn't all mountaineer eat this traditional meal before climbing?" A few words from our provisional leader Inge Rittner and the other assistant leader Galen Heisey, and we were off up the trail to Kearsarge Pass. Since this was a leisurely pack in, we stopped at Flower Lake for a break, before continuing up past Gilbert Lake, where we left the main trail and forded the stream by a few snow patches. We cut up to Bench Lake where we setup camp and enjoy the rest of this lovely Sierra day. I could still hardly believe this frail looking woman, a computer programmer by trait, would lead us up University Peak one day hence. They (Galen And Inge) had climbed the peak two weekends before, but the fact that it took them some incredible amount of time to climb it did not sit well with me. I broke the well conditioned, but fairly unexperienced BMTC group in to the art of the gruelling, iceberged, Sierra lake swim with most of the afternoon spent on a small island in Bench Lake. Everyone swam except for Leri, who fished, and the gang that went exploring above our camp (Rich, Dean, and Doug.) Inge and Galen went off to cut steps in the steep snow of tomorrow's route, but since they were going to be married, we didn't say anything when we found none the next day. The evening was spent with a few of us including Leri, Iris, Robb, and myself playing cards for sips of my "mountain margaritas."

Sunday we were up before dawn cooking our breakfast and preparing our day packs for the climb--no I didn't have Fruit Loops? University Peak--my to be 4th Mountaineers Peak loomed 2700' above and beckoned to all of us. You could feel the excitement amongst us all from the experienced to the very inexperienced. We climb to the frozen tarn on the bench above our camp. From there we contoured around and then up a hard packed snowfield clutching our ice axes in hand in case of a slip. To the apex of the snowfield we climbed, and then one thousand interminable feet or so of the worst crumbling talus slopes I've experienced in my 12 years in the Sierras backpacking. Inge was doing a superb job leading the group with proper timing on the rest steps, proper route selection (even when I disagreed), and checking various members of the group as to whether they kept eating and taking fluids. She seemed to have an innate sense of the group that is vital to all leaders. Her good friend Iris turned back at the top of the snowfield not feeling up to the climb, but all the rest of us reached the ridge crest without incident. Our new, but now in my view, a most capable leader (Inge) led us over the slightly exposed class 3 crux of our climb and around the false summit on the ridge. A short spurt across a sandy section brought us to the final summit rocks. The views were impressive and included Telescope Peak in Death Valley and the vast unusually snowy Sierra. We returned to camp and later to the cars where we met the other successful BMTC group. Inge was congratulated first by me (previously her biggest doubter) and I learned a valuable lesson myself about prejudging. We had a group dinner in Lone Pine and then said our goodbyes. I would like to dedicate this to Inge Rittner and other new capable and strong Sierra Club Leaders.

Other Participants:  
Iris Wolfe  
Robb Wolfe  
Tony Ackerman  
June McMichael  
John Connolly  
Adrian "Butch" Zarr  
Doug Aldham  
Dean Tower  
Laurie Woolfel  
Bill Cox

by Michael V. Fridella, Jr.  
Proud Climber of 17 SPS Peaks

The recent interest in Chouinard's book Climbing Ice (1) is, for the most part, useful and constructive. It is a comprehensive work, and certainly deserving of our attention and evaluation. What bothers me is how often people make invalid statements citing Chouinard's book as the alledged source, and how an excessive amount of concern is being given to some of the material presented. This preoccupation has reached the point that section committee members are feuding in word and print, and at least one LTC instructor is considering retiring until the debate is resolved. Of specific concern is the alledged "no leash" law, and whether the practice may be adopted as policy within the Sierra Club. There is also the "pick forward" panic, which carries with it the same concerns. There is the "ten essential" tragedy, and how the instructing community will cope with it. In addition there is the "off belay" option to keep our heads just swimming. And of MONUMENTAL concern, of course, is the "French terms" trauma.

The primary issues in question are described below, along with the passages from the text. Following each is a discussion of how the issue may impact the Sierra Club, its training programs, or recommended practices. It is hoped that such a treatment may cool some of the passion and clear some of the misunderstanding surrounding these issues.

Chouinard uses some French terms in his book Climbing Ice. (pg. 43,44)

"...there are names and terms for the various positions of the feet and for holding the axe. Most of these names have become international; others I have thought up myself when necessary."

He never actually claims that these terms are accepted and in use worldwide. He only implies that some of them have become "international" - whatever that means. He also avoids revealing which ones he made up and which he has actually heard in use.

The unfamiliar terms included in Climbing Ice are collected below with the literal French translation and a description of what is meant by each.

French	English	Pg	Usage in <u>Climbing Ice</u>
-----	-----	----	-----
Pied	Foot	(44)	Foot
Pied a plat	Flat footing	(44)	Walk or sidestep on bottom points
Pied assis	Seated foot	(78)	Rest a foot on slope at knee level
Pied en canard	Duck walk	(44)	Herringbone walk
Pied marche	Walk	(44)	Walk
Pied troisieme	Third position	(95)	Face across slope, point lower foot downhill for stability
Piolet	Ice Axe	(44)	Ice Axe
Piolet ancre	Ice Axe anchor	(75)	Plant pick, hold axe for protection
Piolet appui	Ice Axe support	(79)	Pick touches slope for support
Piolet canne	Ice Axe cane	(42)	Hold axe head, use as walking stick
Piolet manche	Ice Axe handle	(45)	Grasp adze and pick, use for Direct Ascent technique
Piolet panne	Ice Axe breakdown	(46)	Plant pick, use as handrail
Piolet poignard	Ice Axe dagger	(91)	Hold axe head, stab snow
Piolet ramasse	Ice Axe gathered Up		Hold with two hands, use as glissade

		(73) brake or for Cross body technique
Piolet rampe	Ice Axe bannister	(79) Plant pick below, use bannister grasp
Piolet traction	Ice Axe traction	(28) Alternately plant 2 picks while front pointing upward.

Scatterings of unfamiliar French terms in an otherwise English book seems to add unnecessarily to the difficulty in following his thoughts. After all, it is the thought he is trying to convey. Once a technique is practiced, found to be acceptable, and adopted for use, the user no longer needs the words to verbalize his actions, he just does them. For training purposes, the techniques can all be referred to by the English name, so there really shouldn't be a problem.

Since Chouinard used some French terms in his book, should the BMTC, and LTC training programs be rewritten to adopt these French terms? There could be several possible reasons for entertaining such a proposal.

1) As a cultural appreciation exercise. Speaking foreign languages is a healthy activity, and I welcome the Sierra Club to teach, or hold outings in foreign languages. I'm sure someone will attend.

2) The technology is so new and specialized that it cannot be described conveniently except using the words of the inventors in their mother tongue. This has happened a lot lately in lasers, semiconductors, and the computer field. Mountaineering, however, is not quite so new or technical. The techniques described in Climbing Ice are in use already in countries around the world, and in each country the local terminology prevails. The Germans have the Pickel, we have the Ice Axe, and the French have the Piolet. There is very little reason to change now.

3) Chouinard is so prominent a fellow that whatever he recommends should be dogmatically adopted. If you're that easily convinced, perhaps I could interest you in some nice bottom land in central Florida.

Chouinard advocates holding the axe head with the pick facing forward. (pg.43)

"Always hold the axe with the pick pointed forward...there are several excellent reasons for the practice. One is obvious: Keep the pick away from the body "

(pg. 45)

"When ... held with the pick forward, the adze creates a nice platform and prevents you from getting that creased, "Monkey grip" hand."

The inference that injuries are reduced when the pick is carried forward awaits verification. The argument of giving the palm a comfortable place to rest is probably valid, although I have never personally had a problem pushing down on the axe head, especially when wearing thick mittens. The principal argument against the point forward carry is the necessity to reverse the grip for self arrest.

Chouinard admits that practitioners of the point-forward technique must reverse the grip to self arrest. (pg. 47)

"It is certainly true that the climber doing a self-arrest must have his hand reversed on the axe's head, but this changeover shouldn't take more than half a second."



Unless he drops it! I am not convinced that most beginners should be asked to cope with the added change of grip during a fall. Stopping safely and quickly is hard enough for BMTC and LTC students without an added chance to drop the axe.

Chouinard refers to situations where a leash on the axe is a disadvantage. (pg. 42)

"There is a strong temptation to add a wrist loop to the axe to make certain it stays with you, but there are several disadvantages. Zigzagging up the slope, you will need to change hands on the axe head at every corner...when you get on ice, the axe and hands will change position so often...that a short wrist loop would be very impractical. Finally, in a severe out-of-control fall, it might be best to get rid of the axe "

He also mentions cases where one is desirable. (pg. 42)

"There are situations where a leash ... is ... necessary: on a dangerously crevassed glacier where you could lose your axe in a fall; on mixed climbing ... ; and in the winter ... where your hands are in clumsy mittens and the shaft is slick with ice."

He seems to avoid making a recommendation one way or the other, but is instead only suggesting alternatives and trying to provoke useful thought. I had my axe ripped from my hands once on a fast fall on the Eiger, and doubt that I would be here to write about it if I hadn't had a teacher to reel it in for another try. Understandably, I will always use a leash, and I don't feel this conflicts with Chouinard's teachings. The Sierra Club recommended practice remains unchallenged.

Chouinard advocates moving together roped on semi difficult terrain as opposed to the philosophy of moving unroped part of the time, and on belay part of the time. (pg.128-129)

"You cannot make haste by setting up belays and moving one at a time."  
 "A strong party will usually do the big snow faces roped up but moving together."

This procedure is of little concern in the Sierra, since 4th class pitches are short and infrequent. It is done extensively in Europe, however, and seems well adapted to their prevailing conditions.

Chouinard advocates leaving most of the ten essentials behind in the interest of speed. (pg. 154)

"Carry light packs and leave most of the "ten essentials" and other impedimenta behind. Remember: if you take bivouac equipment along, you will bivouac."

It's hard to determine if he threw in this statement in the interest of humor, to antagonize BMTC instructors, or is really serious.

Chouinard indicates that French climbing terms have become "International"

(pg. 43,44)

"Most of these names have become international; others I have thought up myself when necessary."

Are French ice climbing terms really an international standard?

A Swiss book (2) by Werner Munter (of the Munter Hitch) describes both flat footing and front pointing without resorting to a French word or a reference to the "French Method". Instead he uses "Frontzackentechnik" to mean front point technique, and "Allzackentechnik" or "Eckensteintechnik" to mean flat footing. Since most of the Alps lie within the borders of German speaking countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland), and only a small part lies in France, it seems unlikely that Alpine terms can be considered "international" until they at least find their way into the literature of these Alpine countries.

Chouinard indicates that the flat footing technique was originally worked out by an Englishman. (pg. 15)

"In 1908 ... an Englishman named Oscar Eckenstein created a ten-point crampon."

"He was the first to work out the flatfooted cramponing technique "

A mild contradiction appears later. (pg. 44)

"The French are the ones who did most of the original work on the "Pied a Plat" (or French Method) "

It is unclear just what contribution was made by the English and what portion by the French.

Chouinard frequently uses the term "French Method", but never seems to precisely define the term. (pg. 15)

"...the flatfooted cramponing technique...today is generally known as the "French Method" "

What is the "French Method"?

Of the various foot placements that climbers use: (pg. 73, picture pg 43).

- 1) Walk on the flat
- 2) Herringbone on gentle slopes
- 3) Sidestep as it steepens
- 4) Front point on near vertical

Which ones fall under the collective heading "French Method" and which don't? How does one know when he is using the "method", and, more importantly, how does he avoid its use, by selecting an alternate "method"? It seems from the context that the "French Method" is supposed to include all crampon use except front pointing, and that there is no alternative to its use. Two clues suggest this. There is a 22 page chapter entitled "Climbing Ice: The Front-Point Method" (pg 85-100), and a 25 page chapter entitled "Climbing Ice. The French Method" (pg 59-84). This seems to infer that the "French Method" encompasses everything except the material in the Front-Pointing chapter. A second clue is that Chouinard avoided giving us a French term meaning "Front Pointing". This may be through error or intent, but again seems to imply that

front pointing is not a part of the "French Method". Literature on crampons published in France (3) uses the phrase "La Technique Pointes Avant" to mean front point technique. Perhaps the reason this phrase was omitted from Climbing Ice was to further reinforce the distinction between the Front Point method and the "French Method". This argument, however, leads to a contradiction because the term "Piolet Traction", used in the book, is an application of the front pointing technique.

Is it appropriate to refer to something as a "method" if it has no substitute or alternate? The first 3 steps of the above list are intuitive and unavoidable. Can something as unavoidable as walking on the bottoms of your own feet be commemorated as somebody's "method"? To avoid utilizing this "method", and being labeled as "French", must one tip toe around on flat ground ballet-style using his front points only? This is unnatural.

It would seem more appropriate if natural and intuitive actions were left as unnamed parts of standard crampon skill, and the term "French Method" only referred to use of this "method" on slopes of such steepness that some climbers switch to front pointing, and others, by virtue of their skill, stick with flat footing. Under such conditions, the distinction suggested by an optional choice between the "Front Point Method", and the "French Method" would make sense. I would prefer not to see the term used at all because it is so imprecise, and seems intended only to give historical credit to one of the pioneers of cramponing.

Chouinard's book is an excellent work in its technical presentation. His insistence on carrying the axe "pick forward" is somewhat inadequately supported by solid arguments. His use of French terms is a fine expression of creativity in the writers art, but seems to somewhat diffuse the impact of his presentation. It is no crime that he uses a French ice climbing vocabulary for descriptive purposes, but it is unlikely that the French terms will be adopted into the everyday speech of today's English-speaking climbing community. The book is useful and non threatening. Therefore, I recommend that we overlook the language confusion, use the book for its fine and comprehensive technical content, and just go back to climbing and being friends.

- (1) Climbing Ice. Chouinard, Yvon. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1978)
  - (2) Berasteigen II. Munter, Werner. (Bern, Switz: Hallwag AG, 1981) P.38
  - (3) Saunglard Sports. Brun, Jean-Claude. (Chamonix Fr. 1981) P.35
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