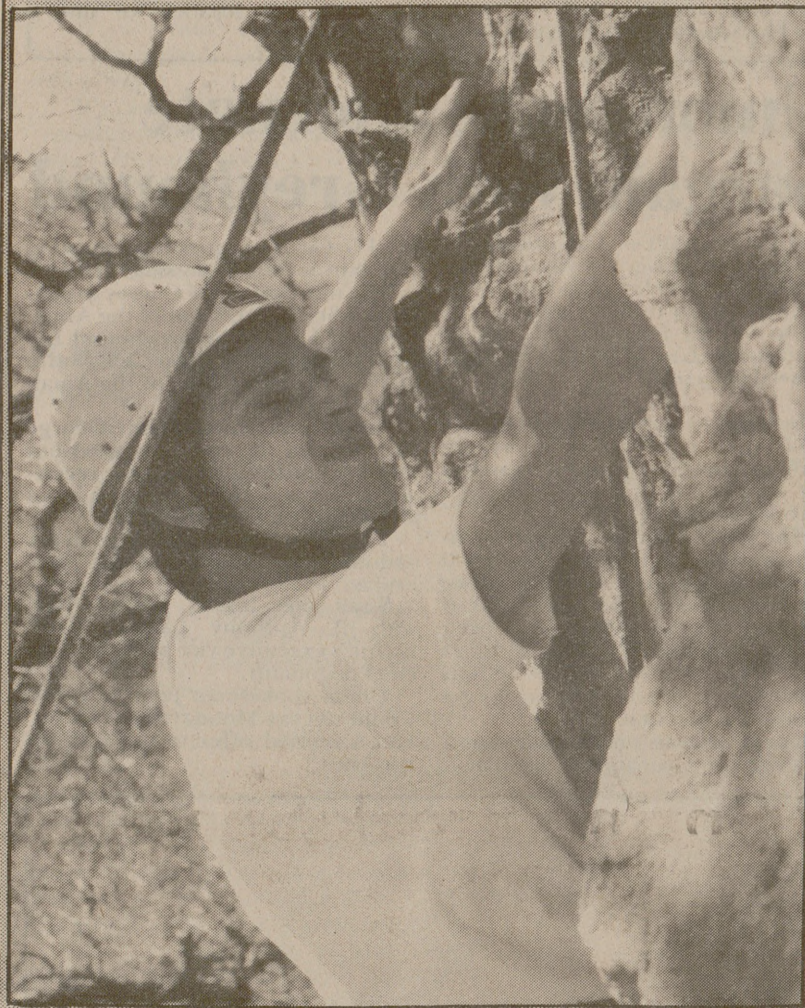


Go Climb A Rock



Mike Smith grimaces while trying to get a hold on the rock.



Above: Climbing guide Lynann Moses belays for Janice Carston as she begins her rappell. Rappelling allows a climber to safely descend after a climb.

Right: Halfway up the climb, Lisa Boehnke reaches for a new handhold.



Many people think rock climbing is an insane sport.

If you were suspended 40 feet in the air by a rope that is not more than an inch and a half in diameter, you might agree.

But insanity doesn't play a part in this intense activity, Bob and Michelle Chase, climbing instructors for the Texas A&M Outdoors program, said.

Bob said many people have the misconception that rock climbing is a dangerous sport. Most people do not realize the precautions built into rock climbing, he said.

Bob said safety is the most important factor when he climbs.

"I want to be alive to climb tomorrow," he said.

There are three types of rock climbing. Bouldering is walking, or hopping up the rocks. Climbing requires a rope. In free soloing, all safety precautions are abandoned.

Most rock climbers, however, choose to use safety equipment, Bob said.

Climbers use devices they can place in a crack in the face of the rock and bolts and chalk for keeping their hands dry. However, Bob said the rope is the most important piece of safety equipment a climber can own.

But as some climbers progress, they discard some of the equipment to make the sport more of an individual challenge, Michelle said. Even so, she said, rock climbing still is a safe sport.

"Rock climbing can be as safe as you want, or as dangerous as you want," Michelle said.

She said experienced climbers have several different ways to make the sport more challenging while still keeping it safe. The experienced climber could lead a climb, she said.

Lead climbing is more difficult because there is no rope to rely on, Michelle said. The lead climber must find his own way up the cliff using finger and toe holds, she said.

The lead climber uses an assortment of different safety equipment on the way up, Bob said. He works with another rock climber called the belayer.

As the lead climber places safety gear and threads the trailing rope through the equipment, the belayer keeps the rope taut. The belayer then uses the taut rope to stop a climber's fall.

Bob said most beginning climbers follow the lead climber in a maneuver called top-roping. Although top-roping might seem to be easy at first, it still presents a difficult challenge.

Tom Taber, president of the A&M Outdoors Recreational club, said he believes safety equipment is essential to a fun rock climb.

Taber, who has been rock climbing for several years, said climbers



Maureen Smith pulls herself up to a ledge that marks the end of the climb at a rock climbing and rappelling clinic at Sugar Loaf in Gause. Clinics are sponsored by the TAMU Outdoors Program.

Photos by
Steven M. Noreyko
Story by
Sean Frerking

must use their upper and lower body strength in order to be successful. Agility and flexibility are also important, he said.

A climber's technique is of upmost importance, Taber said. Even with a great amount of body strength, a person can fail to reach the top of a climb because of wasted effort.

A climber's technique can save muscles strength and give the climber an extra push when he or she needs it.

Rock climbing's ultimate goal, Taber said, is to conserve as much

energy as possible so a climber can make longer and more difficult climbs.

There are many good spots for rock climbing in Texas, Taber said. Austin's limestone bluffs are very popular. The granite cliffs of Enchanted Rock near Fredricksburg also are a favorite spot for vacationing rock climbers, Taber said. The Outdoors Club, which is a student organization, frequently takes day trips to Austin and weekend trips to Enchanted Rock.

Bob said the Outdoors Club offers

a rock climbing clinic at Sugarloaf near Hearne. The Outdoors Club also will be travelling to Enchanted Rock March 30 to April 1 for a beginner's trip and April 20 to 22 for an intermediate climb. Groups also travel to Hueco Tanks near El Paso.

Bob said rock climbing's popularity is rising. He said the sport is open to all types of people.

"Some people do it for the challenge, some do it for the thrills and some do it because it's a way for them to keep on playing a kid's game," Chase said.

After the climbing portion of the clinic, student climbers learn to rappell. The hardest thing

about rappelling is leaning back into the open air with nothing but a rope to hold on to.



WAR
WELL
HATE
THAN
SUBS
WR
I WA
WAL
WALDO
THE STE
SPAD
DIAMONDS
COOKIES
CENTURY
BEER
DASTA
A
H
MSC JO
M
be
m
AMERIC
at
ta
PRO-CH
sh
PSYCHO
in
AGGIE F
at
WOMEN
in
GAY AN
C.
Ca
UPSILON
ta
WILDLIF
10
TAMU N
sp
DEPT. O
"M
tur
MSC RE
MS
BIOMEDI
pils
Co
TAMU HO
p m
for
THE MED
from
ma
INSTITUT
8:3
MALE SU
in th
SPEECH
que
Col
OFF CAM
the
tion
AGGIE TO
Rob
STUDENT
era
the
AGGIES
Ove
or C
AGGIE AL
p m
STUDENT
ing
form
COLLEGE
J.D.
info
MTS/SNA
Res
mor
TAMU BIL
369
TAU KAP
rel
NARCOTI
C.D
ALCOHOL
C.D
ABSENTE