

# Students achieve new high in climbing class

By Fritz Wenzel  
Of The Print

One movement at a time. And always in the same order. Before you do anything else, you must make sure that your second has a good belay on you.

Do you have enough "biners" to finish the route? Do you have your figure eight for rappelling? Is the knot that connects you with your safety system tied correctly and securely? Then you are ready to go. Straight up.

The first thing that you need to learn if you are going to climb is the language. If you are the first one to start climbing, you are a leader, which is rational enough. The second person is called a second, and he is commonly the one who is responsible for the leader's safety, which is called a belay position.

The collection of equipment that hangs around the climber's neck is called a rack, and a prussik is a piece of thin rope that helps a person climb up a thicker rope by means of friction. One thing that remains universal in climbing is that when you find yourself falling, you should yell the word "falling" in an audible tone.

There are people going straight up every Thursday night in Randall hall at Clackamas Community College. They are students enrolled in the mountain climbing class at the College, which is taught by Music instructor Gary Nelson.

"We are mainly interested in teaching rope management skills, because it is a skill that you need regardless of what type of climbing you do," Nelson said. The students spend most of their climbing time closer to the ceiling of the gym than the floor, making a good understanding of how a rope works vital.

The climbers are learning a style of climbing called aid climbing, which means that they are wholly dependent on hardware to help them go up, and to keep them from going down.

Their equipment arsenal includes slings and ladders made of a rope-like material called webbing, and many metal, five-inch tall oval rings with a gate that is not unlike an oversized safety pin. The rings are called carabiners ("biners" for short) and they are used to join the climbing rope or a ladder to the anchored metal

"hangers" on the gym wall. The biner is the universal joint-maker in climbing.

There are close to a dozen people in the class, and as they prepare for the evening's work they joke with each other in a way that makes one think they are trying to break the tension of the situation more than anything else.

There is a camaraderie in this class that is seldom found anywhere else on campus, and this might be mainly due to the absolute trust that each has to have in his or her partner.

"You only get to make one big mistake" Connie Conner, an instructor at the College and one of two women in the class said. "I used to be afraid of heights, not deathly afraid, mind you, but afraid, but this class has taken that fear away. You just learn to overcome it," she added.

The climbers begin their classwork in the south stairwell of the building, where there are a variety of warm-up activities and beginner's routes that can be done. They then move out onto the southern balcony in the gym and start to climb.

They have a few different directions that they can go, and some routes have names like "Pressbox", where the climber goes up from the balcony about 12 feet and then over to a beam that supports the ceiling, and across to the pressbox on a different wall of the gym.

Another direction is called "Tyrolian" which is named after a section of the route that spans two beams and demands that the climber use only a fixed rope between the beams to cross over. The climber clips a biner to the rope and slides his way across to the second beam.

This looks like it would be frightening at an altitude of 10 feet, but at 70 feet, courage is the calling card.

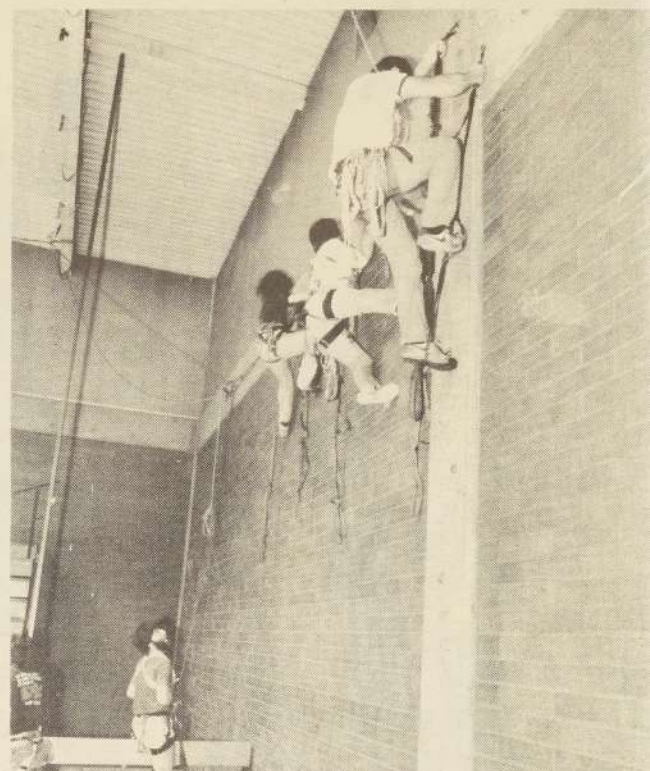
At first the movement is slow. The two students who were first to begin their climb took a good seven or eight minutes discussing which way the rope should go through the carabiner, a technical point that could be overlooked by anyone, but which could cause tremendous drag on the rope later in the climb.

The students explained that getting off to a good start is essential. The climber who begins has two webbing ladders, one for each foot, hooked into a hanger on the wall,

each with a separate carabiner so that they can be moved independent of each other. He steps into one rung of the ladder with his right foot, steps up, and he is off.

Next he unclips the ladder that will be used by his left foot from a low anchor and clips it back to the wall at a higher anchor point. He puts his left foot into the ladder and steps up. He reaches down for the biner that keeps his right foot's ladder clipped to the wall and moves it up to a higher anchor point with a method that will repeat itself throughout the climb.

Some members of the class go on climbing ventures outside the confines of Randall Hall; Smith Rocks State Park just north of Bend is one example. The class has been there to do some work last fall, including a climb on a well-known route called Monkey Face, which calls for lots of exposure to danger at many points and a long rappell off the summit to get down.



INSTRUCTOR GARY NELSON (below) keeps a watchful eye on students as they traverse the south wall of Randall hall.



MORINE HARRAHALL REACHES down helps her maintain balance throughout exercise. Rope hooked to waist harness

Photos by Daniel Wheeler

## CCC Alumnus honored



Dan McGrath

Clackamas Community College alumnus Dan McGrath was recently distinguished by his co-workers as Employee of the Year. McGrath was recently honored by his peers by being named Willamette Falls Hospital's 1984 Employee of the Year.

"I was very happy and proud when I found out," McGrath said in regards to being honored as employee of the year. Having won the hospital's July Employee of the Month award, McGrath

The hospital's 500 employees chose from among 1984's Employees of the Month, and when the ballots were tallied McGrath was

was aware he was in the running for the grand prize.

