

How do you carry your pitons on a climb? If you're like us, you put them on an overcrowded carabiner and cuss when you can't get the right one loose when you need it.

Perhaps you too have occasional nightmare visions of the carabiner gate opening unexpectedly at the wrong end and the whole load of hardware raining into eternity (or on the second man's head).

Recently, two better systems have been suggested to us. Both allow easy selection of the desired piton with one hand. (The other hand is usually busy holding you on the rock.)

From Jane Showacre, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club of Washington, D.C., comes this idea which is gaining popularity in eastern climbing circles. Make a loose bag for the pitons of sturdy cloth or soft leather, like Sketches 1, 2 and 3. It is surprisingly easy to pick the right piton from the bag by sense of touch alone. If the bag is made right, the pitons won't spill even if you climb upside down.

The bag may be worn on the belt. Ideally, however, it should be on a separate waist strap that doesn't go through your pants loops. Then it can be shifted around easily to front, back, or either side—wherever its bulk is least in the way on a particular pitch.

Dave Rearick, Sierra Club of Los Angeles, suggests another arrangement, made of nylon parachute cord. A sling (Sketch 4) is worn over the shoulder with as many

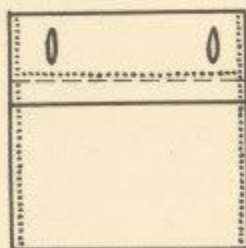
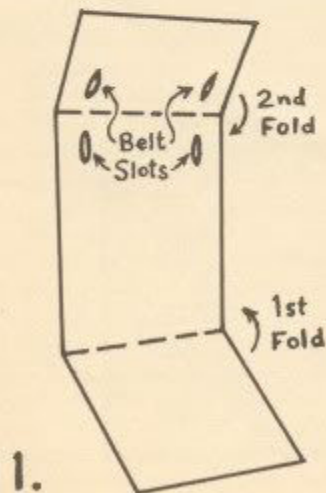
loops attached as the number of pitons desired to be carried. The top of the piton loops should hang at about waist level, though the most convenient height seems to be a matter of personal preference. The pitons are caught in the loops as shown. A one-handed operation removes them—something like working a syringe. (See Sketches 5 and 6.) With a little practice it is easy to do.

For very short pitons an extra turn through the ring may be a good idea. Otherwise the piton might occasionally jiggle out of its harness.

The Rearick system seems ideal on high-angle rock. There is never the bulk of a bag or a clump of pitons to come between climber and cliff. For traversing, it is hardly necessary to shift the pitons to the side of the body away from the rock.

One objection appears when the going gets too easy. Pitons and loops tend to snarl in trees and bushes, and a piton can even catch in a crack on rock. If the sling is carried in the pack during the approach to the climb, a few extra minutes and some little patience must be allowed for unsnarling.

To many climbers there is no music like the jingling of pitons. With the Rearick sling the pitons' tones are exceptionally clear and bell-like. So it may prove worth an occasional snag in the timber to have music on the trail!



stitch
dotted
lines

2.



3.

You Need It

By Herb & Jan Conn

