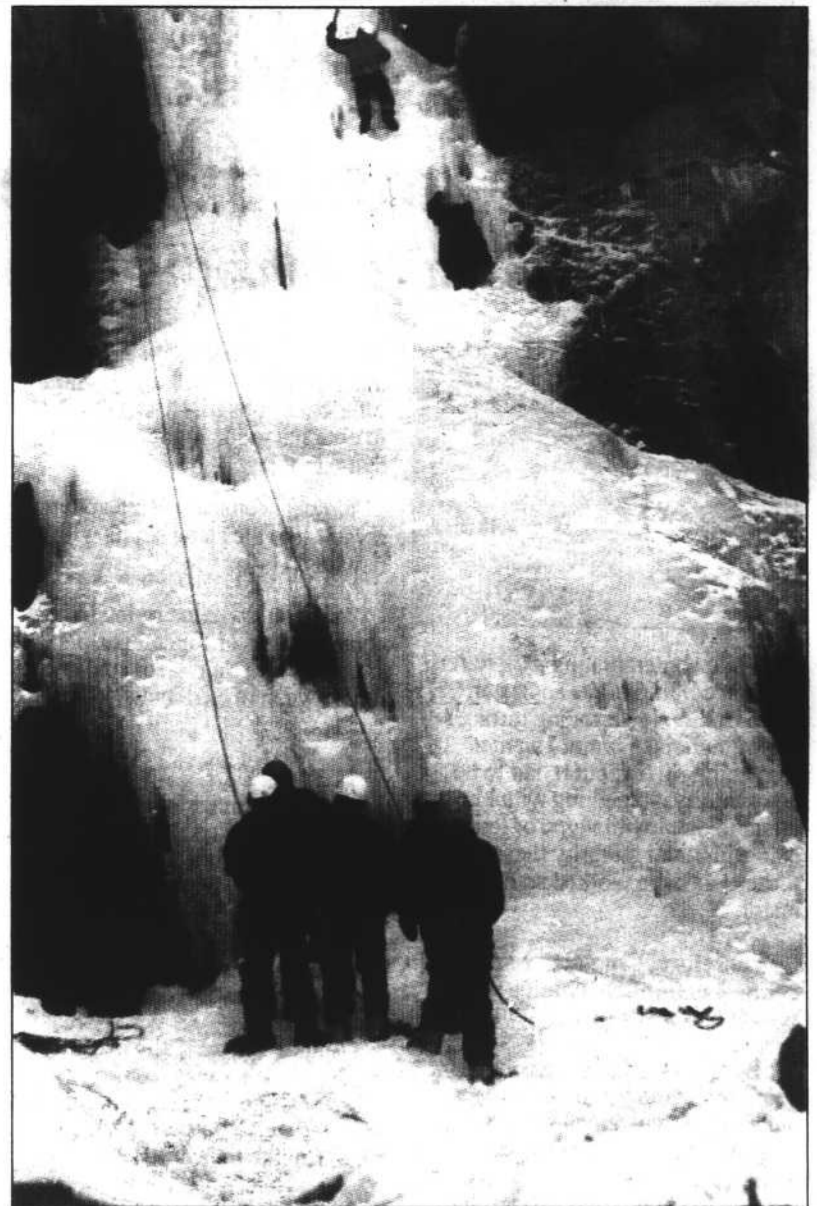


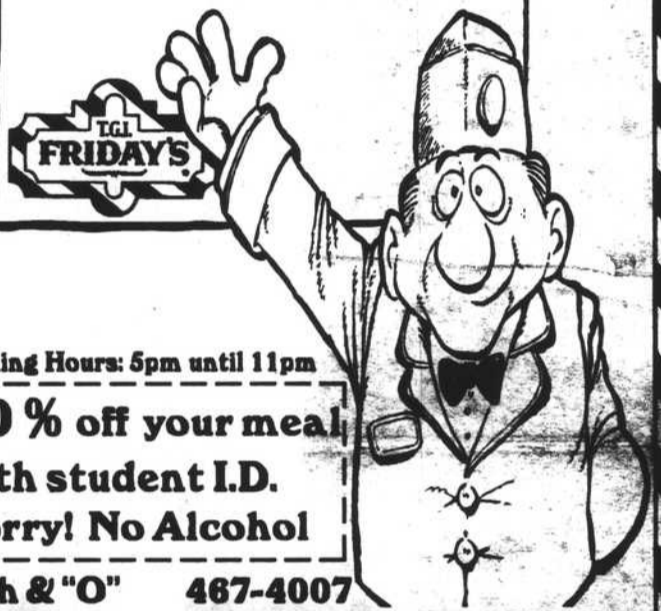


PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CASKEY/DN
(Above) BRAD MARTIN, the UNL Outdoor Adventures graduate assistant, demonstrates how to climb the Big Thompson Ice Jan. 6 in Rocky Mountain National Park.



(Right) MATT BAUMEISTER, a UNL freshman, climbs Hidden Falls while a belayer and a backup belayer control his top rope Jan. 7 in Rocky Mountain National Park.

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Nebraska climbers brave icy Rocky Mountain falls

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parts of the waterfall, they had to let go of the ice and dangle from 20 to 35 feet over a ledge a third of the way down.

The alumnus who had the slow start climbing the day before redeemed himself on Hidden Falls. He climbed it four times, and dangled

from the safety at a scary height.

The participants and leaders did 65 total repetitions on three different waterfalls and seven different top ropes — anchored ropes attached to the climber's harness that go up and through a metal loop (called a carabiner).

One night, when the group wasn't climbing or attending snow school, they slept in tents and sleeping bags in zero-degree weather at an elevation of 10,000 feet.

Instead of sleeping in a tent, Marshall Mahler, 27, another UNL alumnus, built a snow cave complete with indoor plumbing, which he described as, "building a mound of snow and digging a hole in the middle of it."

Because it was so cold that night, Mahler and his friend did not leave the snow cave to use the restroom.

The snow acts as a natural plumbing system, Mahler said. After using an area a climber designates as his own, the surface can be covered with snow, which eventually freezes in place.

"That's the beauty of the system," he said.

During snow school, the seminar participants learned how to climb snow slopes and to recover if they fell.

Tim Epp, a student staff member at Outdoor Adventures and a forestry, fisheries and wildlife major at UNL, explained how to safely dig an ice axe into a snow slope to stop a fall without impaling oneself on the axe.

All the participants learned how to stop, or self-arrest, while sliding backward feetfirst and headfirst while on their stomachs and backs.

The participants had to snowshoe about three miles with packs weighing 40 pounds or more to reach the snow school site.

After snow school, the group hiked to the Lock, a large frozen lake at the base of several glaciers.

"I almost cried, it was so beautiful," one participant said.

Nature's splendor made the trip for Mahler, he said.

"Half the fun is to be able to see

"*Half the fun is to be able to see what God created. It sure beats the architecture in New York City.*"

MARSHALL MAHLER
 UNL alumnus

what God created," he said. "It sure beats the architecture in New York City."

Many of the participants, including Mahler, said they did not think ice climbing was dangerous.

Ice chips and larger chunks — some the size of footballs — fall as climbers scale frozen waterfalls. Climbers take precautions, such as wearing safety helmets.

Martin, the graduate assistant at Outdoor Adventures, said exposure to extreme temperatures was another danger.

"All these dangers come from lack of preparation and lack of experience," he said.

"Outdoor Adventures tries to teach people with no experience how to be competent, which minimizes risk."

The participants and leaders in the seminar said they participate for the experience, not the danger.

"I get a feeling of self-accomplishment from stretching my personal limits," said Nicole Cuffey, a student staff member at Outdoor Adventures and an anthropology and environmental studies major.

"Going back to the basics puts you in a different perspective," Cuffey said. "When you go back to everyday life, you realize that there are more important things than petty details."

"At least you have shelter, food, basic necessities. Also, when you're in a group like this, you are more dependent on each other so you learn to adjust to other people."

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