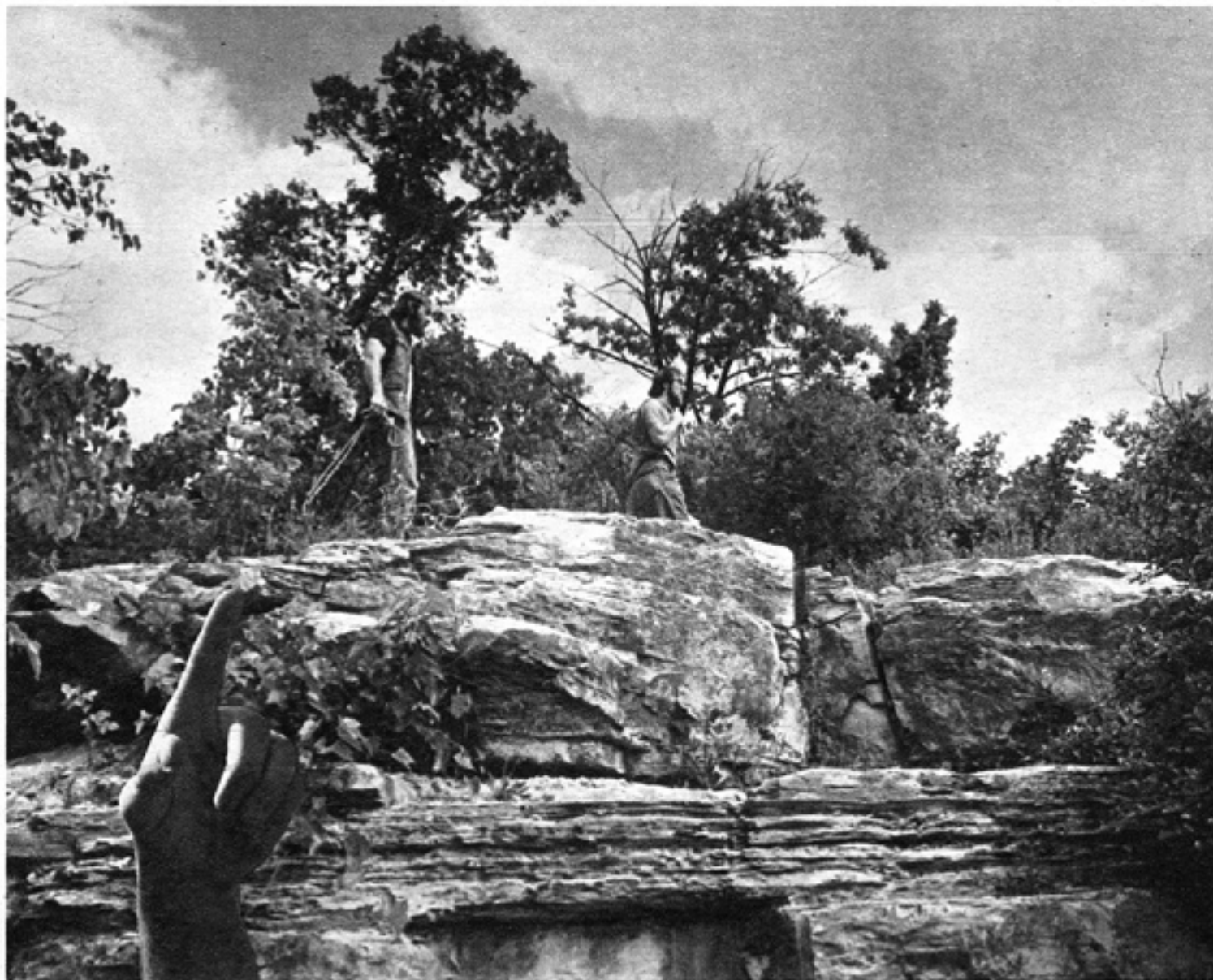


On the bluffs of the Mississippi river near Cliff Cave, Ted Hill, (left) and his brother, George, a physics major at Washington University, prepare to rappel down the 150-foot cliffs. Hill has taught his brother and others the sport of climbing. "I taught them how to do it at some rock quarries near Defiance. Once they had learned the basics I took them to the highest peaks I could find." Below, Hill selects a likely cliffside point for rappelling.



A Cliff Is A Challenge

Ted Hill doesn't climb mountains because "they're there."

"I just do it because I like exercise. I also do sky diving and motorcycling for the same reason. I like to get outside in the sun and fresh air."

Hill worked this past year as an administrative assistant in the Department of Applied Math and Computer Science at Washington University.

The long-haired, bearded young man, 27 years old, hits the local cliffs about once a week to practice the second half of any climbing venture, coming down. The process is called "rappelling" and involves driving an eyebolt-shaped spike called a piton into a rock and then descending the cliff face in great leaps by means of a double rope, one end tied around his waist, the other wrapped around his leg. At the bottom, the rope may be retrieved.

Climbers use pitons to keep the rope from fraying, as it would if it were payed around a rock or tree.

Hill said he had climbed a bit in the White Mountains in New Hampshire but that he had really learned the sport while a cadet at West Point in 1962. It was part of his training in

mountaineering techniques. After a two-year scholarship at Stanford University, he joined the West German Army mountaineers at the German Military Academy at Munich as an exchange cadet. They trained in the Alps.

He later served in Vietnam with the Combat Engineers after attending the Army Mountaineering School at Dahlonga in northern Georgia. "There was no need for climbing in Nam but I did manage to do some rappelling in my spare time," Hill said.

"I also climbed in the Andes although we weren't there for climbing primarily. We were prospecting for gold. We did find that the high altitudes gave us terrific sinus problems that took us out of action for days. Gold? We found only traces."

Hill has suffered only a sprained ankle in all his climbing. He plans to return to Germany for some serious Alpine climbing this year.

"Those Germans are magnificent, when it comes to mountain climbing. They are unbelievable. They have huge barrel chests and thick calves and they walk up a mountain as though it were a Sunday stroll."

Photos by GENE POSPESHIL of the POST-DISPATCH Staff



Hill executes a normal rappel jump and drop, paying out the rope as he descends. "You can cover as much as 40 feet in one rappel but the average is usually much less."

Meeting The



The Commando Rappel is not generally used for sport climbing. It involves facing downward so that the man can see where he is going and be ready to use a weapon as he descends. Hill wears heavy gloves to avoid rope burns. The tall, muscular Hill says this method is "much more strenuous and dangerous than regular rappel."



Challenge



Hill, having cleared the overhang, executes a pendulum swing to get purchase for his combat boots on the rock face, then another leap outward and down. "As long as one hand is gripping the double rope I can free the other for whatever I need to do."

End