

The following article about the Jumar and the man who invented them appeared in the Fall 1970 issue of the *Southwest Texas State University Grotto Newsletter*.

### **THE JUMAR FACTORY** by Brian Peterson

This summer while travelling in Switzerland, Keith Heuss and myself decided that we would try to locate the factory in which Jumar ascenders are manufactured. After examining our Jumars, we finally found a label still intact and managed to pick out the name of a town, Reichenbach, Switzerland. After about two hours of looking over a map, we located a tiny dot symbolic of the town. Quickly we jumped in the Volkswagon camper and proceeded to look for it.

Could this small town be the home of a great factory? The name of the town did correspond to the name on the Jumar, but there were only about thirty chalets. We stopped at a store and I got out with a Jumar. Speaking no German, I proceeded to wave my arms, roll my eyeballs, and shove the Jumar in the proprietors face. He quickly got the idea and sent me on my way down the road. However, he did provide us with a map.

Obviously, he was somewhat less than proficient in the arts of geography because by using his map we got completely confused. We decided that we would ask the help of other locals. After talking to several housewives; many of whom thought we were trying to sell them the Jumar, we arrived at still another chalet.

I knocked at the door and a man came out. When I showed him the Jumar and asked if he knew what it was, he replied, "Yes, I make them." Quietly picking myself off the ground, I began to explain why we had come. The man, **Julius Marte**, was very receptive and asked us inside. He speaks only a few words of English so he called a friend to translate. When the friend arrived we went down to the factory which is in Mr. Marte's basement. Jumar parts were everywhere! Wow! Fantastic!

Mr. Marte opened a drawer approximately three feet long, two feet wide, and one and one-half foot deep. It was completely filled with right-hand Jumar jaws. He said that he originally designed these ascenders for use in climbing down to eagle nests to band baby eagles.

This was back in 1958. Mountain climbers quickly saw the value of these devices and then later cavers started using them. The recent change in the alloy of the cams was necessary due to the grit and mud encountered in caves.

We rigged a rope in his yard and showed him various methods of prusiking with his devices. He then showed us the method which is enclosed with the Jumars. He saw the value of our methods but joked with us by saying, "I can understand why you don't know how to use them, I have never translated the instructions to English."

We all laughed. We also demonstrated various rappel devices and Mr. Marte was quite interested. He requested that we collect and send him pictures of different climbing methods using his ascenders and any recommendations or improvements that we may have.