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Letters

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Letters

Did a School Group Get Special Treatment?

“In the Heart of Winter,” about the group from the Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania (Winter/Spring 2015, LXVI no. 1), makes no mention whether the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department charged the group for its rescue. Of the incidents you reported in this issue, that one struck me as by far the most wantonly negligent on the part of its organizers, who fully deserved to be charged the rescue expenses and arguably gone after on criminal grounds as well. Was the university not charged for the rescue costs? If so, why? There is a long history of cavalier academics leading their charges wantonly into danger because they don’t have a clue, and such incidents have more than once led to death (as on Mount Hood a few decades ago, in an incident particularly close to me). Unless and until schools and their faculty members are held as responsible as everyone else for safe and sensible behavior in wild and semi-wild places, they will continue to act in a self-satisfied and nonchalantly endangering fashion, the worse because they are leading young people who implicitly trust them.

—Paul King

Putnam, Connecticut, and Vancouver, Washington

Editor’s note: The question of billing for the cost of rescue did not come up, we believe, because this rescue was led by the snow rangers of the U.S. Forest Service, which has no rule or policy about billing those rescued (as the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department does). For more about that incident, see the Accidents report on page 115. Sandy Stott follows up with the university, which has changed its safety rules and which enjoyed a successful trip in 2014.

Not Skiing: Set the Record Straight

The frontispiece photo of Philip Levin [a former *Appalachia* editor] in the Winter/Spring 2010 issue (LXI no. 1) is mislabeled. It’s not a skiing shot, but a climbing shot—Phil appears to be belaying an unseen climber. I doubt there are skis under his feet, though the cropping leaves it an open ambiguity. As far as I know, Phil did not ski.

—W. Kent Olson

Southwest Harbor, Maine



Editor's note: Olson is a former Appalachia editor. We welcome the chance to set the record straight about this photo, which also appears in the Appalachia anthology, No Limits But the Sky (AMC, 2014) and is correctly labeled there.

On Sources and River Health

John Gioia quotes debatable authorities Dr. Ed Wick and Dr. Jeff Sellen (“Save the Colorado,” Winter/Spring 2015, LXVI no. 1). If the content is valuable, it deserves primary attribution, rather than secondary opinion. I would challenge Wick or Gioia to show me a river that is “dead” because of sediment trapped behind a dam. Altered—yes. Dead, no.

The discussion of the effect of the Glen Canyon Dam on the Grand Canyon is flawed. While it is certainly true that the dam has “affected the ecological integrity” of the river downstream, those effects deserve citation. I question if the temperature of the river water has had a measurable effect on plants and animals (although it has on fish)—I am given no direction for verification. And his understanding of the physical and chemical function of the dam is weak—sediment in Lake Powell places little pressure on the dam (most of the sediment accumulates upstream, and the pressure on the dam

is hydraulic, not directed laterally). The sandstone detritus carries no waste or nutrients—it is dominantly quartz. Shale debris does have exchange sites that can carry trace elements, for both good and ill. Sequestration of uranium mine tailings behind Glen Canyon Dam could be considered a good thing. Gioia's writing, at least in this context, is sophomoric.

—Bill Locke
Bozeman, Montana

Editor's note: Locke is a retired earth sciences professor from the University of Montana. Gioia quoted Dr. Jeff Sellen and Dr. Ed Wick. Dr. Sellen is a social scientist who directs the Colorado Water Workshop and the environment and sustainability program at Western State Colorado University. Dr. Wick is a fisheries biologist who has studied native Colorado River species for 35 years. Both men are respected professionals. We appreciate Dr. Locke's point that we could have provided more scientific background about water health and dams in the Colorado. We hope to follow up on this in future articles in our Research department. But Appalachia is not a scientific journal. Gioia's assignment was to show the vulnerability of the river from the vantage point of an adventurer's raft.

Goetze, an Unassuming Athlete

I was pleased to see Doug Mayer's reference to Chris Goetze in his Summer/Fall 2014 article on trail running ("You Can't Run That," LXV no. 2). I knew Chris as an "old guy" (he was in his 30s and I was still in my 20s) when he was editor of this journal in the 1970s. As Doug noted, Chris was a quiet, unassuming man. I only learned of his first ascent of Denali's Wickersham Wall, the first winter traverse of the Mahoosuc Range, and other feats, by reading about them. Chris never mentioned them. It was clear that, for Chris, the journey was the reward—a throwback to an era when adventure was more about pushing one's internal limits than seeking external rewards.

—Douglass Teschner
Conakry, Guinea

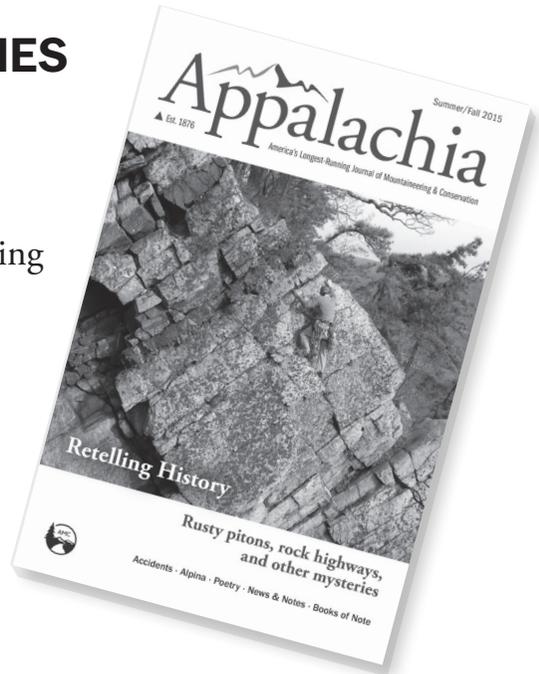
Editor's note: Teschner, a Peace Corps director, served as News and Notes editor when Goetze was Appalachia editor (1975–1977). Teschner, who served for years on the Appalachia Committee, has continued to write for these pages every few years and rejoined the committee as of February 2015.

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