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## Letters

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# Letters

## Avalanche Ratings

Sandy Stott (Accidents, Winter/Spring 2014, LXV no. 1) suggests that the second-lowest rating on the White Mountain National Forest avalanche scale should be something other than “moderate,” which places insufficient risk on the dangers at that level. It emphasizes, I would point out, the unlikelihood of natural avalanches and downplays the possibility about which we are most concerned: “human-triggered avalanches.” How about changing that category to “intermediate” and defining it with the human element first and the natural one second?

—Marvin Swartz, Center Conway, New Hampshire

*Sandy Stott replies: I like your suggestion that the possibility of human-triggered avalanche be printed first in the assessment of risk for the moderate category. It seems the primary concern at this risk level to me. Although I'm not wild about the word moderate, I do prefer it to intermediate, which is more often applied to skill level than to risk level. Were the U.S. Forest Service snow rangers to effect this change, it would make sense to do so throughout the scale. And, to me, such a change would make sense in our often thickly populated mountains.*

## “Echo, Echo”

Your commentary on the “Echo, Echo” man (The Long Way Home, by Christine Woodside, Winter/Spring 2014, LXV no. 1) certainly struck a note with me. I have hiked nearly 5,000 miles on the Appalachian Trail, including two thru-hikes. During those times I met/ran into/got away from/ignored a fair number of “knuckleheads,” those folks whose stories/diatribes would just get to be too much to listen to. At times I let them distract me and I would miss out on some of the sheer beauty of the Appalachians. Thanks so very much for sharing your story and observations.

—Willie DiFabio, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

I believe the tale about the yodeling stalker was fiction. Even if it wasn't, anyone who imposes a monologue on a stranger, especially one like that, has no sense of social boundaries. I doubt the man who told the tale was

dangerous. Still, it must have been a comfort to have other people at the shelter that night.

—*Richard Andrews, Springfield, Vermont*

### **Slumping and Glaciers**

Dr. Chrisman's first name was Donald (News and Notes, "Slumping Down the Trail," by Marty Carlock, Winter/Spring 2013, LXIV no. 1). He was an orthopedist in Northampton, Massachusetts. His wife, Miriam, was a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. They were both long-standing members of the Appalachian Mountain Club and my sponsors when I first joined the club, in those ancient days when two members had to vouch for the good character of applicants. Dr. Chrisman, of course, would have known about the anatomical advantages of "slumping," or what I call "trotting," a gentle jog with knees bent.

Allow me to reinforce David Breashears's conclusions on the receding glaciers in the Himalayas (Research, Winter/Spring 2013, LXIV no. 1). On a trek to Annapurna base camp (south) in May 2012, I used maps that showed the South Annapurna Glacier extending behind the camp at 13,550 feet. When I arrived, I saw that the glacier had receded about 1,000 feet higher, back into the mountain valleys.

—*Marvin Swartz, Center Conway, New Hampshire*

### **Miriam Underhill: Manless, Not Solo**

"Manless climbing," of which Miriam Underhill was the great exponent, is not to be equated with solo climbing, which Catherine Buni seems to do (review of Christine Byl's book *Dirt Work*, Winter/Spring 2014, LXV no. 1). It's a pretty serious misreading of Miriam's achievements. Miriam's ascent of the Grepon was not a solo ascent, but made with her climbing partner Alice Damesme, making this the first all-female ascent.

—*Laura Waterman, East Corinth, Vermont*

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*"I started reading Appalachia for the accident reports, but I kept reading for the great features."—Mohamed Ellozy, subscriber*

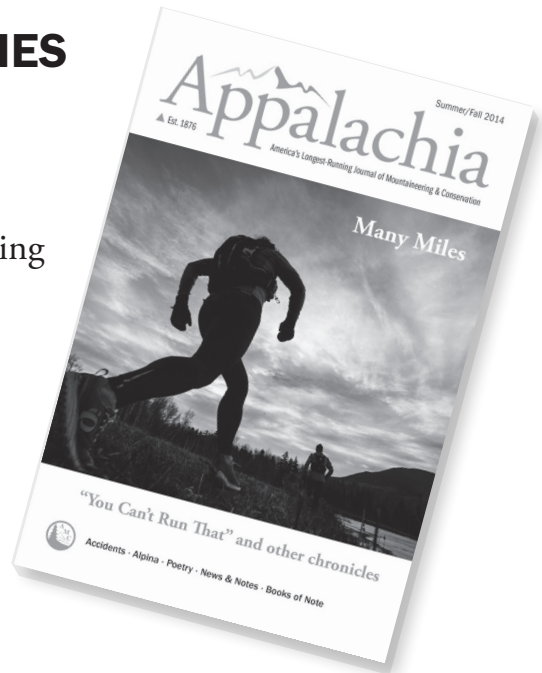
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