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Summer/Fall 2011

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876

America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation

Off the Turnpike



Rediscovering wild New Jersey



Accidents · Alpina · Poetry · News & Notes · Books of Note · Research

Volume LXII No. 2, Magazine No. 232

Summer/Fall 2011

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876 America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation



Appalachian Mountain Club
Boston, Massachusetts

AMC MISSION

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, advocates, and supporters, promotes the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of the Appalachian region. We believe these resources have intrinsic worth and also provide recreational opportunities, spiritual renewal, and ecological and economic health for the region. Because successful conservation depends on active engagement with the outdoors, we encourage people to experience, learn about, and appreciate the natural world.

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A New Jersey state wildlife officer weighs a black bear during a population count.

MICHAEL PLUNKETT/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876 America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation

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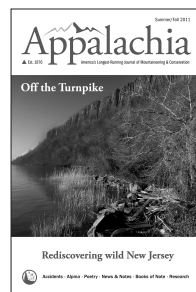
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Title page photo: Southern New Jersey's Pine Barrens, a beautiful sandy forest, suffered abuse for many years. Finally it was saved as the Wharton State Forest. NJHIKING.COM

Front cover photo: *The Palisades of New Jersey as they look from a boat launch on the Jersey side of the Hudson River. Activists saved these cliffs from quarrying in 1900.* GEORGE ARONSON

Back cover photo: *Jeff Fair in the field in western Alaska, holding a yellow-billed loon. For his article on the struggles of common loons, see page 146.*

KEN WRIGHT



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Erratum:

In the Winter/Spring 2011 issue of Appalachia, the middle name of Dr. Marcia Schmidt Blaine, assistant professor of history at Plymouth State University, was misspelled. We apologize for the error.

Human Nature on the Herd Path

THE LONE RIDGE CALLED OWL'S HEAD IN NEW HAMPSHIRE lies covered in balsam fir 4,025 feet above sea level. Nine miles from asphalt, standing hidden between the Bond and Franconia ranges, it's famous for the dread it inspires. Deep in the federal Pemigewasset Wilderness, getting lost rises to near the top of the list of what could go wrong. You know a woman who paid her daughter to go along. The final mile straight up tramples a herd path through an overgrown rock slide, marked by conflicting cairns, crushed plants, and the remains of blown-down trees. It feels as if the fascination of the hunt for the Owl's Head summit amounts to disrespect.

When you finally go, you expect it to be as lonely as the underground peakbagging community has told you in multiple war stories spouted off on the other summits. You leave Owl's Head for almost the last of your 48 mountain-summit trophies because you expect it to be the worst. This Thursday in mid-September brings with it an appropriate, driving rain.

Every moment in your hiking life has prepared you for the task of jogging in eight miles and crawling the final one; for checking the ridgeline and scouting your way up; for spending all day alone and wet. Nothing can prepare you for the reality that this peak is awful not because it's remote but because of the way people have left their marks here.

You trot for hours to the bottom of the ridge. You find a small cairn that isn't supposed to be there—Wilderness rules forbid an official trail here. You turn up the treed-in rock slide that soon yields to an open slide. You claw your way up the loose rocks and around boulders.

A path others have slashed through mats of moss and lichen veers north. You might miss this trail, but only if you were dozing off. You need no signs or blazes, no compass to find the top. Even large blown-over trees can't hide the trail that is not supposed to be there, lying chiseled into the vegetation. You help it stay so.

The herd path branches into multiple scars. Trudging along the ruts, time compresses into one wet, despicable moment. The mountain didn't ask for this. You did. You tell yourself you would not have slashed such direct routes into the side of a mountain deep in a federal Wilderness Area. You go beyond what used to be considered the summit to what you now trust others to tell you—with signs that also aren't supposed to be there—is the real summit. Here lie more balsam fir.

About face, and you circle around an extra loop just as everyone before you ambled in confusion before diving back down the mud to the rocks.

Yes, it's awful, because this is what people accept until the day comes when federal Wilderness regulations forbidding new trails, signs, markers, and trail maintenance change and someone is allowed to cut a less eroded route from a better direction.

You wake up the next morning with a sharp pain in your right shoulder. You remember a few mistakes on the rock slide, following a constellation of cairns (unofficial, of course). On the rolling boulders you would not wait for good judgment to take over, because this is not a place for common sense.

Owl's Head amazed you, making you into someone who values the good that people ought to do in navigating wild lands. It made you question which is more wild: carefully graded trails, or rogue trenches? It made you cringe with embarrassment at what people are capable of without "rules." It made you promise yourself never to go there again. It made you cherish your awful day, because you know you should have left Owl's Head alone.

I'M FROM NEW JERSEY. MY ANCESTORS WITH NAMES LIKE Fuhrman Woodside spent hundreds of years farming in places no one ever heard of, down near Vineland. My father delivered milk in the 1930s in Trenton, and he met my mother at the shore. I can still remember how the mud and rocks smelled in my Princeton backyard.

Many of us who have become mountain people learned to interact with the struggles and weather and stillness of nature in the plains and low hills of the Middle Atlantic. People think they have to leave New Jersey for an intense wild experience. They're wrong.

—Christine Woodside
Editor-in-Chief

Wake Up

*The most densely populated state has
preserved one-fifth of its land*

Ronald J. Dupont, Jr., with Paul E. DeCoste



NEW JERSEY IS—LET’S FACE IT—FAMOUS FOR ITS TURNPIKE. AND its parkways, industry, and congestion. Cut through the stereotypes and myths and here’s a fact: The percentage of New Jersey’s land remaining as natural open space outranks that of 25 other U.S. states, including Colorado, Arizona, Wisconsin, Hawaii, and Texas.

Equally amazing: By area, New Jersey has a higher percentage of parks, forests, and preserved farmland than most other states. More than a fifth of our land area (21 percent) is permanently preserved open space. This in a state with a higher population density than Japan or India.

A conservation ethic in such a heavily stereotyped state as New Jersey always shocks people. “I’m from Jersey.”—“What exit?” went the sketch on the television show *Saturday Night Live* 30 years ago. Joe Piscopo—a native of Passaic, New Jersey—improvised that line during a broadcast. Self-deprecation seems to be part of our state character. Get beyond these jokes and find a happy truth. For more than a century, New Jerseyans have been fighting and winning battles to keep the Garden State green. An extensive system of parks, forests, reservations, wildlife refuges, trails, and greenways is the abundant evidence.

YOU’RE WALKING DOWN THE OLD MINE ROAD IN SUSSEX COUNTY. Here, in the heart of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, you pass an old stone farmhouse and a stretch of fields. You cross an iron bridge. Woods spread across the valley, and streams are clear and filled with trout and crayfish. White-tailed, wild turkey, and black bear show up. Looming to the east is the level Kittatinny Mountain, a 1,000-foot wall separating this place from the rest of New Jersey, imbuing the valley with silence. It’s a page from a Robert Frost poem, but it’s within a 90-minute drive of the homes of about 20 million people. How did this survive?

“A barrel tapped at both ends”—this was (apocryphally) the proclamation of Benjamin Franklin about New Jersey, noting the state’s position sandwiched between the urban centers of New York City and Philadelphia. Those growing cities used and abused New Jersey’s land and resources. To preserve open space had to start with arguments, scuffles, and sometimes wars.

The view from Pinwheel’s Vista on the Appalachian Trail, looking south across the Vernon Valley, looks more like a remote New England Valley than a town a little more than an hour from midtown Manhattan—which it is. RONALD J. DUPONT, JR.

The story can be roughly divided into two phases. First, the campaigns to preserve open space—building the blocks—and then to connect them with trails and greenways—connecting the dots. These stories span 120 years.

Building the Blocks

Open space preservation today in New Jersey means taking a few precious acres in a heavily built city center and discarding plans for condominiums to make a park. It was not always so. Early state efforts typically aimed to acquire large tracts—often a thousand acres and up—usually for timber management and water conservation.

Officials sometimes bought smaller parcels, though, to secure fishing access on popular lakes or to preserve historic landmarks. The Division of Parks and Forestry began with Revolutionary War landmarks, the Monmouth Battlefield (acquired in 1881) and Indian King Tavern (bought in 1903). Later park managers looked for land to protect wildlife and give people areas to have fun. The goal in these early days was to set aside mega-sized chunks of land. These blocks formed the backbone of New Jersey's network of parks, forests, and watersheds. It makes sense that the pioneers of land conservation went for the big stuff. They had to act quickly. In 1900, New Jersey had the greatest concentration of railroad tracks in the United States, soon to be augmented by highways. Other threats were poised to take the land or already had: timbering, quarrying, industrialization, reservoirs, and transportation projects. And so the stories of what protected a backcountry in New Jersey includes tales of reclamation, salvation, and heroes—people who campaigned for these lands.

Water has been one of the most vital resources New Jersey had to offer the nearby cities, and this led to one of the state's first open-space battles. In the 1870s, Philadelphia millionaire Joseph Wharton began acquiring land in southern New Jersey's vast, sandy, swampy Pine Barrens (as they are usually called; officially they are called the Pinelands). Philadelphia needed a water supply; Wharton calculated the water-rich Pine Barrens could supply it. The Cohansey Aquifer beneath this land contains some 17 trillion gallons of pure water. Wharton acquired 150 square miles of land for this water before political forces put the kibosh on his plan.

Neither Pennsylvania nor New Jersey ever got water from Wharton's vast tract, but his buying up and consolidating all that land created, in 1955, the

Wharton State Forest, the largest in New Jersey at a whopping 123,000 acres. It's one of the places in New Jersey where you can get seriously lost.

One of the next preservation battles was over stone. The Palisades, the stately basalt cliffs along the Hudson River (see the cover of this issue), were a famous scenic landmark by the Victorian era. Wealthy urbanites whose mansions lined the Hudson River loved the Palisades. So did quarry operators, who were slowly but steadily dynamiting away the Palisades for rock that could be cheaply shipped out via Hudson River barge.

One of the Palisades' famous features was Indian Head, a 200-foot-tall cliff thought to resemble a Native American in profile. In 1898, a quarry operator invited the press and public to witness the leveling of Indian Head with 7,000 pounds of dynamite. In a few seconds, the prominence became paving stone.

Around the same time as this act of natural vandalism, members of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs began lobbying to preserve the Palisades. Many of the women were well connected (with names like Rockefeller and Harriman). Their efforts led to legislation by the states of New York and New Jersey to create a bi-state agency, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, to acquire and preserve the Palisades. The quarrying stopped, and one of America's great urban parks was born in 1900.

Two other epic Jersey conservation battles were over air space. The first began in the 1950s, when the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey sought to build a fourth major airport for metropolitan New York. The vast, empty 7,000 acres of north-central Jersey's Great Swamp became the preferred location. But its swampy forests and wetlands were also critical habitats for wildlife. A local citizens' group, the Great Swamp Committee, under the persistent leadership of Helen Fenske, took steps to turn the Great Swamp instead into a National Wildlife Refuge. It was a David-and-Goliath battle—the grassroots group seemed to have little chance against the huge bi-state agency. But having engaged the financial assistance of some well-heeled benefactors (including Geraldine R. and Marcellus Hartley Dodge), group members managed to acquire a core area in the swamp, which they donated to the National Park Service. The Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960.

The Great Swamp wasn't the only place to be eyed for a potential airport or saved after an outcry. Many miles south, between the fertile lands of central New Jersey and the sand of the coast, the Pine Barrens, an abused

landscape if ever there were one, had been almost forgotten. During colonial times, at least 30 bog iron furnaces operated there, consuming a thousand acres of timberland a year. Later, more than 200 glassworks similarly gobbled up forest and sand. By the time the glass industry had vanished in the early 1900s, the Pine Barrens were barren indeed.

So it was no surprise that people talked about building a jetport and adjacent 250,000-population city in 1964. Suburban sprawl already gnawed at the edges of the Pine Barrens.

John McPhee's 1967 book *The Pine Barrens* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) was a paean to the vanishing landscape and culture. The resultant public outcry led to the establishment of the Pinelands Environmental Council in 1971 and, in 1978, the creation of the Pinelands National Reserve. It could not have hurt that McPhee's tennis partner was New Jersey Governor Brendan T. Byrne.

At 1.1 million acres (22 percent of the state), the Pinelands National Reserve is the largest block of open space on the eastern seaboard between the northern forest of Maine and the Everglades of Florida; it was declared an International Biosphere Preserve in 1989. The successful effort to preserve the Pine Barrens provided legal precedent, paving the way for later programs to preserve the New Jersey Highlands, including the 2004 Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

These actions all focused on the preservation of areas that, although threatened, were still in a natural state. Other preservation efforts focused on industrial areas, including the Hackensack River Meadowlands, across the Hudson from New York City. The freshwater wetlands and ancient cedar forests that once occupied these meadows were a rich biotic environment. But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an array of activities laid waste to them: stone quarrying, cedar lumbering, damming, ditching, draining, diking, dumping, pollution, and landfills. By the 1950s, the once-beautiful Meadowlands had become the stereotype of "bad" New Jersey: a reedy, garbage-strewn, smog-choked miasmic wasteland crisscrossed by highways and railroads, hemmed in by belching factories. It had become—literally—the largest garbage dump in the world. And yes, the northern end of the New Jersey Turnpike does pass through the Meadowlands.

Things only started to change in the late 1960s. First came the establishment of the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (now the Meadowlands Development Commission) in 1969; next was the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. These actions arrested the continued

onslaught of pollution, but it took further efforts to begin restoration of the blighted area.

Land acquisition and environmental remediation began in the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1997, the nonprofit Hackensack Riverkeeper Inc. formed to advance restoration and management plans for the Meadowlands and open them for recreation and ecotourism. Today, the Hackensack River Meadowlands includes more than 8,400 acres of preserved open space, which, though hardly returned to its primordial state, is rich in wildlife and recreational opportunities. All this in one of the most heavily populated areas on Earth.

One of New Jersey's longest—and most bitter—battles involved not the question of open space per se, but rather what form it should take. In the 1950s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers laid plans for a massive flood control dam on the Delaware River. By 1965, the engineers had fixed its location: Tocks Island, just north of the famously scenic and historic Delaware Water Gap. The plan required acquisition of 70,000 acres in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and demolition of some 3,000 to 5,000 homes and farms to build a 37-mile-long reservoir and surrounding recreational area.

Around the same time, in 1965, a local power company had announced plans to build a hydroelectric power plant pumping water from beautiful Sunfish Pond, which lay close by on Kittatinny Mountain, near the Delaware Water Gap. The proposed destruction of the mountaintop lake led a local custodian, Casey Kays, to publicly oppose it. Leading hikes and writing letters, he enlisted the support of some heavy hitters, including Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. The plan was scrapped in 1966 and the pond donated to the state of New Jersey. It was a harbinger of environmental victories to come, including at Tocks Island.

The Delaware Valley is one of the most beautiful and venerable in the Mid-Atlantic, with some farms in the same family since the early 1700s. The destruction, both natural and cultural, required for the Tocks Island dam became a lightning rod for this nascent environmental movement. A coalition of organizations, including the Appalachian Mountain Club, mounted a concerted effort to stop the dam. After years of wrangling and controversy, the government shelved the dam plan in 1978 and transferred the property to the National Park Service. It became Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

The Tocks Island dam was not formally de-authorized until 2002. By then, thousands of structures, many historic, had been razed, and thousands of residents displaced. The resultant 70,000-recreation area has evolved into



By the time the iron and glass industries vanished around 1900, the Pine Barrens were indeed barren. A public outcry helped preserve large sections. PAUL E. DECOSTE

a treasured regional open space. It is now the eighth most visited national park, seeing more than 5 million visitors annually, more than Yellowstone, Yosemite, or the Grand Canyon. The AMC's Mohican Outdoor Center, located at a historic former Boy Scout Camp (Camp Mohican), is one of the recreational jewels of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

The circumstances of northwestern New Jersey's protection remain a tragic and bitter memory decades later. Some open-space battles took place on a mega-scale, but others were quite local, such as the crusade in the highlands of Morris County. During the 1980s boom, upscale housing was swallowing open space. One battleground was Pyramid Mountain, where the remarkable glacial erratic, Tripod Rock, balanced on three boulders. Alarmed at the mushrooming development, resident and historian Lucy Meyer formed the Pyramid Mountain Committee to press for public acquisition of the land. Faced with often-hostile developers and sometimes-disinterested public officials, Meyer methodically built support for her plan. Great Swamp activist Fenske commented, "She just wouldn't give up." In 1987, Morris County used state open space money to establish the Pyramid Mountain Natural Historical Area, which today amounts to more than 1,500 acres. For this widely admired grassroots campaign, former President Bill Clinton gave Meyer an award.

The conservation of the almost 18,000-acre Sterling Forest State Park in New York offered New Jersey officials the chance to show how much they care about drinking water. New Jersey was the first state to donate funds for Sterling Forest because the Wanaque Reservoir is the primary drinking water source for Newark. Joining in this effort to raise \$55 million were New York, federal and local governments, and foundations. In 2000, a 575-acre tract in the center of the forest went on the market. A developer planned large, expensive houses. Citizens rallied and were able to procure the tract for the state park. The AMC New York-North Jersey Chapter conservation chair at the time hosted the first meeting. In the decade that followed, many other pieces of land within and near the park boundaries have been protected.

A newer crusade has been to preserve the northern New Jersey Highlands, nearly 900,000 acres in extent. Just as the Pine Barrens had been preserved two decades earlier, the 1980s and 1990s saw increased interest in protecting the Highlands, a densely forested mountainous region across state lines into Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut, where land is rapidly fragmenting under development pressures. State and county parks protect some large blocks of the Highlands, but it represents a small percentage of the overall area.

Among the Highlands' critical resources is drinking water for 5 million people. After years of struggles by preservationists, New Jersey passed the Highlands Water Protection and Preservation plan in 2004. Just a few months later, Congress passed the Highlands Conservation Act that designated the four states of the Highlands a "nationally significant landscape" and threw federal funds and resources behind its protection. Some landowners have said their property rights are unfairly restricted, but the act has survived legal and political challenges. The AMC has spearheaded efforts to keep the Highlands preservation moving forward. As a leading force in the Highlands Coalition, an alliance of almost 200 organizations spread out over Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the AMC continues to advocate for preservation of the Highlands. Spread across these state boundaries are 3.5 million acres in the western shadow of one of the most heavily developed regions in the United States.

Parks Aren't Just for Cities

Much open space preservation in New Jersey has occurred under conflicting land-use visions. The solution was typically simple: money. For the last

50 years, New Jersey citizens and their government have almost always enthusiastically supported open space preservation, and philanthropists and nonprofit organizations have greatly assisted the cause.

In 1895, Essex County created the first county park system in the United States with its Branch Brook Park. The belief that public parks and open space weren't just for great big cities was a new concept. It was a forerunner of things to come, in New Jersey and nationwide.

The state of New Jersey started acquiring land for conservation and recreation shortly after 1900, when it created the New Jersey Forest Park Reservation Commission (later the Department of Conservation and Economic Development, now the Division of Parks and Forestry). Bad lumbering practices had degraded forests and caused erosion across the state, and public acquisition ensured better forestry management and recovery of these abused lands.

Public land purchases also meant opportunities for camping and recreation, though these were somewhat secondary goals at the time. Bass River State Forest was acquired in 1905; Lebanon (now Brendan T. Byrne), Stokes, and Penn state forests soon followed. By World War I, state forests covered tens of thousands of acres of New Jersey. The forests provided places for public fishing (in such places as Swartswood State Park on Swartswood Lake) and historic sites (including Washington Crossing State Park, on the land where Washington made the crucial nighttime crossing of the Delaware during the Revolutionary War, which was acquired in 1913).

In 1892, Newark also began acquiring natural lands, especially a 50,000-acre watershed along the Pequannock River in the Highlands of northern New Jersey. The city's goal was to protect reservoirs, but the Pequannock Watershed was also recognized as a model forest preserve in the middle of the megalopolis. In the 1970s, the cash-strapped city thought of developing houses, hotels, and commercial buildings here, but it never happened. The Pequannock Watershed survives as one of the state's great open spaces.

State parks, as a system, came along after 1923, when the Kuser family donated its 10,500-acre Kittatinny Mountain estate—the highest spot in the state—to the people. It became High Point State Park, one of the first state parks in the nation and the first large tract developed for recreation. The noted landscape architecture group the Olmsted Firm designed the master plan.

That historic donation inspired other gifts. Governor Foster M. Voorhees similarly donated his large farm to the state upon his death in 1927;

it became Voorhees State Park, an oasis in northwestern Jersey, between interstate highways and southeast of Delaware Water Gap. In 1936, the Hewitt family donated its estate, Ringwood Manor, to the public. Before it became a country mansion, the land was an iron-making site. It's a national historic landmark and an exemplar of a grand Victorian country estate. Another boost to New Jersey's state parks and forests occurred when they became federal Civilian Conservation Corps camps during the 1930s. The CCC improved the parks and worked to reforest abandoned farms.

Bond Act Doubles Open Space

The biggest victory in New Jersey's efforts to preserve open space came in 1961, when state legislators passed the first "Green Acres" bond act, designed specifically to generate funds to buy open space. (The television situation comedy was still a few years in the future.) With Green Acres funding, state, county, and local governments could apply for help in buying land. The result was tremendous: within a decade, publicly owned open space doubled. Since 1961, New Jersey voters have approved Green Acres bond issues thirteen times and preserved 1.2 million acres. Green Acres has since been joined by Blue Acres, a program to acquire flood-prone properties for open space. The state funds, along with efforts by nonprofit land acquisition organizations, have also helped land preservation.

Connecting the Dots With Greenways

You're standing on Pinwheel's Vista, a craggy overlook on New Jersey's section of the Appalachian Trail, the most venerable of American long-distance trails and New Jersey's most prominent footpath. This scenic aerie high atop the cliffs of Wawayanda Mountain takes in an expansive vista of mountainside, forest, and the bucolic Vernon valley below. Farms, fields, woods, and waters—the wind whistles through the trees, and a hawk cries high overhead; the traffic on the road far below is unheard; the scent of pine and laurel perfumes the air. You're 39 miles from Times Square as the crow (or hawk) flies, but you wouldn't know it.

The AT has been a critical element in creating a string of open spaces stretching from the Delaware Water Gap all the way up to the Hudson. Yet land preservation efforts along its route began long before it came along. By 1907, with the creation of Stokes State Forest in New Jersey, state officials

expressed interest in creating a greenbelt along the Kittatinnies from the Delaware Water Gap north to the state line. In later years, with the creation of High Point State Park in New Jersey and Bear Mountain State Park in New York, there was further talk of creating a Hudson-to-Delaware greenbelt northwest of the New York–New Jersey megalopolis.

When it first was established in the 1920s, volunteers routed the AT through the north Jersey Highlands and Kittatinnies. Initially, the AT crossed only two state-owned lands: Stokes State Forest and High Point State Park. The remainder traveled through private lands or down long, dusty public roads. But as the years progressed, other pieces of this AT puzzle fell into place. State and federal lands eventually protected much of its route, which included Worthington State Forest, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and Wawayanda State Park. But not until the 1970s were plans made to acquire a full trail corridor and move the AT off public roads. Finally, with the creation of an AT corridor from the Kittatinnies to the Highlands in the 1970s and 1980s, and the creation of Sterling Forest State Park in New York in 1998, the long-imagined greenway of the early 1900s essentially became a reality.

The AT corridor effort was at the time not very popular with some north Jersey landowners—indeed, this chapter of the trail’s history could well be listed under a chapter about battles. But when the AT was moved off public roads about a decade ago, the resulting trail included some exceptionally popular hiking spots. Among these are a mile-long boardwalk and bridge over the Pochuck creek and meadowlands. The Pochuck Boardwalk, designed and built by volunteers for the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, is so popular with locals it has its own Facebook page.

In 1961 came another long-distance trail in south Jersey, the Batona Trail. It snakes through the Pinelands’ Lebanon, Wharton, and Bass River state forests. The brainchild of Philadelphia’s Batona (“Back to Nature”) Hiking Club, it eventually stretched 50 miles, and helped reinforce the idea that trails can join otherwise disconnected blocks of open space. The Batona Trail is now part of the South Jersey Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail.

Among the state’s most-used long-distance trails is Morris County’s Patriots’ Path. Linking a variety of natural, historic, and cultural open space properties, it includes state, county, and local lands. Hikers encounter Revolutionary War sites, arboreta, historic mills, and natural woodlands.

More trails formed on abandoned railways. By the 1960s, New Jersey’s once-extensive system of railroads was withering, as was the case nationwide.



An old furnace at Wawayanda State Park. As the years progressed, this land was part of the puzzle pieces falling into place to protect the Appalachian Trail. NJHIKING.COM

With vacated and abandoned right-of-ways all over the state, the concept of converting them to recreational uses came to the fore in the 1970s. Most of these rails-to-trails efforts did not take off until the 1980s and 1990s, but when they did, the results were dramatic. There are currently 21 rail-trails in New Jersey, and at least another half-dozen have been proposed. Some of the best known include the Paulinskill Valley Trail, the Columbia Trail, and the Sussex Branch Trail.

The Race

The future of open space in New Jersey can best be described by two simple words: the race. During the height of the pre-recession building boom, New Jersey was losing open space to development at the rate of 18,000 acres a year—about 50 acres per day. The recent economic recession has given conservation efforts some breathing room and some land bargains. Development pressures will return and grow in the future. Planning experts believe that

New Jersey will be the first of the United States to reach what land planners call “buildout”—the point at which all available land is either developed or permanently conserved.

When New Jersey will reach buildout, no one can predict for certain: Some authorities say by 2050, some by 2040. At least one person who should know says it will be far sooner—by 2025. That person is Bob Toll of Toll Brothers, one of New Jersey’s (and America’s) biggest developers. If that’s not a prediction to chill the soul of open-space preservationists, nothing is.

In the 1990s, Governor Christine Todd Whitman announced a goal of preserving 1 million acres of land in New Jersey. Although the state has made progress toward that goal, most open-space advocates would argue that 2 million acres more accurately represents what ought to be saved. Public and private support for land conservation has always been high in New Jersey. Green Acres bond issues have seen overwhelming support at the ballot box. It speaks volumes that New Jersey’s last Green Acres bond issue for \$400 million, coming in 2009 during a burgeoning recession, handily won approval. New Jerseyans love their open space and are willing to pay for it.

Open Space Earns Money

New Jersey’s Department of Environmental Protection and its Office of Science took a broad look of the value of open space to the state’s economy several years ago. Initiated by DEP Commissioner Lisa Jackson (now administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in President Barack Obama’s administration), the two-year study calculated that wildlife/open space related economic activity generated \$3 billion annually for New Jersey, and that the total value of the goods and services provided by the state’s “natural capital” (including farm produce, timber, ecotourism, etc.) was some \$20 billion annually.

Indeed, Jersey’s green areas are economically vital, but with buildout coming soon, the state’s leaders must make priorities. What should they conserve? Where should they allow more building? It’s an ongoing and, as usual, contentious process.

Limited funding and prioritization aren’t the only challenges facing New Jersey’s land. In a compact and densely populated state, balancing the competing demands of adventure seekers can be awkward. Hikers, cyclists, hunters, anglers, snowmobilers, horseback riders, and cross-country skiers—all love the land, and sometimes get in each other’s ways. These

conflicts, of course, pale in comparison with those with the motorized off-road vehicle community. All-terrain vehicles are not permitted anywhere on New Jersey state lands, but violators frequently go out. As legislators argue how to outlaw abuses by these vehicles, riders want the state to set aside legal areas for them. So far, this has not happened, leaving almost all interested parties—pro- or anti-off-road vehicles—unhappy.

Such challenges aside, there are many bright spots on the horizon. Most of New Jersey's 21 counties have their own parks that have preserve ecosystems. But the amazing thing is how the trails are still coming along. The Hudson River Waterfront Walkway, when completed, will run from the Bayonne Bridge to the George Washington Bridge. From the George Washington Bridge, hikers can take the Long Path north all the way to upstate New York, and someday, to Canada.

The Hudson River Walkway will connect at its southern end with the Hackensack Riverwalk, through the Hackensack Meadowlands. Another long-distance trail well under way is the Liberty Water Gap Trail, which will connect the Statue of Liberty with the Delaware Water Gap. The Ore Belt Trail, still in the planning stages, will thread through the Jersey Highlands, connecting former iron mines and smelteries. Well under way is the Highlands Trail, heading north-south through the rugged heart of the Jersey Highlands.

River and bay greenways are another up-and-coming trend, using those natural features as the central backbone of a conservation corridor. The proposed Capitol-to-Coast greenway would include the Raritan River from Trenton all the way to the Raritan Bay. Other rivers—the Paulinskil, the Pequest—are also part of actual or proposed greenways. In total, at least fifteen greenways are in the planning stages. Meanwhile, most state parks and forests have seen their boundaries grow (often substantially) in recent decades.

At the same time, preservationists aren't forgetting places that ought to be saved for the habitats, such as swamps and wetlands, those areas that once were considered worthless. The 2,000-acre Bear Swamp Wildlife Management Area and the 400-acre Muckshaw Ponds Preserve in Sussex County are examples of more recent preservation victories in this area.

Under Our Noses

And so, we say to our fellow New Jersey residents, and to anyone who drives through: Wake up. The irony of the long and distinguished history of

open-space conservation in New Jersey is that residents and outsiders remain frequently unaware of the natural riches here. Many has been the AT thru-hiker who anticipated a 70-mile trek past houses, malls, and highways and instead been astonished to see the Kittatinnies and the Highlands.

Consider the equally amazing view from Apple Pie Hill in the Pine Barrens. From atop the fire tower here, the forests stretch in all directions as far as the eye can see—an ocean of pitch pine. It is profoundly isolated, and stunningly wild. On a clear day, the sharp-eyed observer will note distant notches on the horizons both east and west—those would be the towers of Atlantic City and Philadelphia. These are the sole clues that this forest is in New Jersey, and not Middle Earth.

The intrinsic beauty and value of such lands isn't enough to safeguard them. Even when land is preserved, the battle isn't over. In Sussex County, a politically connected ski resort operator and developer leased a portion of Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Multiple violations of his lease led the state DEP to order his eviction from the property; instead, state legislators engineered the sale of the wildlife management land to the developer, an act that enraged the conservation community. A decade later, the state was finally able to buy the land back: what it sold for \$700,000, it bought back for \$7 million.

The ultimate, and never-ending, battle is in the hearts and minds of residents, elected officials, and bureaucrats. Open spaces need regular funding to enhance and preserve them. They need serious efforts to make them known, used, and loved by the people who paid for them. Without this, public natural lands are ever threatened by more subtle and pernicious dangers: indifference and neglect. The moral is simple: Use it or lose it. But first, wake up to it.

RONALD J. DUPONT, JR., AND PAUL E. DECOSTE, former student and teacher, have been hiking and writing partners for years in their home state of New Jersey. Members of the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, they are the authors of *Hiking New Jersey* (Falcon Guides, 2009).

Foolishness? No, It's Not

Sometimes I spend all day trying to count
the leaves on a single tree. To do this
I have to climb branch by branch and write
down the numbers in a little book. So I
suppose, from their point of view, it's
reasonable that my friends say: what
foolishness! She's got her head in the
clouds again.

But it's not. Of course I have to give up,
but by then I'm half crazy with the
wonder of it—the abundance of the leaves,
the quietness of the branches, the hopelessness
of my effort. And I am in that delicious and
important place, roaring with laughter,
full of earth-praise.

Mary Oliver

MARY OLIVER has published twenty volumes of poetry, as well as works of imaginative prose and poetry instruction. *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures* (Beacon) was published in October 2008. *Evidence* (Beacon) was published in April 2009. Her most recent book, *Swan: Poems and Prose Poems* (Beacon), appeared in September 2010. She is also the editor of *The Best American Essays 2009*. Oliver is a frequent contributor to *Appalachia*.

Doing Time in New Jersey

*A Thoreau scholar in Princeton finds
comfort in the nascent Appalachians*

Will Howarth



“What territory do you cover?”

“A place called New Jersey. And I would like to be transferred.”

—*Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, 1941 film

I ARRIVED IN 1966—AND AM STILL AWAITING TRANSFER. NEW JERSEY is an odd state: raucous, crowded, not given to reflection. Jersey folk talk tough and keep tenderness or friendliness for family and friends. When I strike up conversations, in Midwest style, the locals are surprised, gratified by the novelty, and often eager to open up. The landscape here is much the same: Its ugly surface is layered and subtle, if you know how to look. Being a peninsula, almost an island, makes the state insular, particular. I’ve spent most of my life here, on guarded terms, for New Jersey is not an easy place to love. In the last two years, I’ve escaped it often. My passport stamps are from Portugal, Spain, France, England, Amsterdam, Tanzania, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, San Francisco—and Newark, when I returned home.

Benjamin Franklin called this crowded little state “a barrel tapped at both ends,” and he had the right analogy. New Jersey also has twin axes, an eastern slurb along Interstate 95, feeding commuters to New York or Philadelphia, and a western greenbelt from Shore and Pines to the Highlands of the upper Delaware River. Contrasts abound, from urban wastelands to the Appalachian Trail, Ellis Island to the Menlo labs of Thomas Edison. New Jersey is the most densely populated state and the most tainted; more than 23,000 properties are labeled brownfields, many sodden with toxic waste.

Ancient New Jersey emerged in the Appalachian orogeny, rising and breaking off from North Africa. During the late Ice Ages, glaciers slowly advanced and retreated, carving and filling the rivers and wetlands that thread the land. For three millennia, native people lived here, chiefly the Leni Lenape, who migrated from sea to mountains following seasonal game. Then came the Dutch and Swedes, setting deep roots five centuries ago. Streams here are called runs and kills, and old families—Opdyke, Cowenhoven, Cortelyou—manage farms along county highways.

The monument at High Point, one of the author’s favorite peaks. (Another, Mount Lucas, is so low that it’s hard to photograph.) NJHIKING.COM

After the English civil war, nobles loyal to the Crown won a patent to the land between the Hudson and Delaware rivers. The British arrived in numbers, armed and eager to take over. One founder, George Carteret, came from Jersey, the largest English Channel island. He erased New Netherland and New Sweden from the map, naming his colony New Jersey. Despite these royalist origins, New Jersey joined the Revolution early, signing its own constitution on July 2, 1776. After battling from Trenton to Morristown, New Jersey became the third state by ratifying the U.S. Constitution on December 18, 1787.

Trenton today is a fading state capital. Governors don't live there, the town struggles against blight, yet an old bridge sign boasts, "Trenton Makes/ The World Takes." Once that was so: Waterfalls on the Delaware powered saw and grist mills, and in time, the region made steel, wire, carpet, and pottery, key products of the Industrial Revolution.

Eleven miles and a universe away, my hometown of Princeton is two villages, an inner borough of two square miles and an outer township of ten, forming a hole and doughnut. Since 1703, the two municipalities have discussed but never formed a single town. Another invisible boundary divides west from east: The west is a warren of stockbroker estates and McMansions, the east has homes where neighbors mow lawns and wash cars. (University deans live west, the faculty, east.)

Despite a 1990s bloom of malls and office parks, Princeton is still a four-stoplight, two-street town. The main drag is Nassau Street, the last of its many incarnations. First it was a forest track, a Lenni Lenape trail from Atlantic-shore fish camps to winter longhouses in the Ramapo hills. Then a colonial road, the main coach route between New England and the Tidewater. When I came to town, some signs still read "The King's Highway."

Nassau Street also marks the boundary between glacial outwash plain and the first line of Appalachians west of the Jersey shore. The change is easy to see. At the meeting of Prospect Avenue and Washington Road, the land slopes down, down toward the Jersey shore, 40 miles east. A sandy plain begins at the D&R Canal, once a principal freight artery between New York and Philadelphia. The old canal towpath is a mule track that runs 44 miles across New Jersey, linking the Delaware and Raritan rivers.

The towpath is now a greenway, the longest, slimmest state park in the nation. Many an hour I've spent on that trail, running, jogging, or walking. In my life, I have traveled widely yet held one job and lived in one town. Walking the canal now, I go with ghosts: friends gone, places altered. But



A biker rests on a journey from Princeton to Millstone on the D&R Canal towpath, a 44-mile-long former freight artery. MICHAEL SEAN GALLAGHER

from almost anywhere, I can look up and see the nascent Appalachians, a handsome wooded ridge rising over water tower and shopping center, library and lab. The mountains of Princeton are a constant comfort.

And an illusion. When George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Paine rode up Nassau Street to the meetings of Congress, they knew a far different Princeton Ridge. The second-growth forest of ash and tulip tree that now blurs its heights was apple orchard then, and cleared field for a hundred years thereafter. In the humid summer of 1783, George and Martha Washington rented a pleasant upland house, three miles from town. Today the hill where they lived has vanished, dynamited to gravel for its native diabase, or traprock. To walk where they lived, you must tread on air.

But stand at the north edge of campus, and two miles away the next large outcropping is mighty Mount Lucas (all 305 feet), intact though under constant attack from developers. Only a handful of residents live up there in a district still called Herrontown, so named for the wagonloads of sea herring hauled in between Civil War and Depression by Irish farmers hoping to sweeten a thin, stony soil.

Today that land is 300 acres of public open space, home to even more deer, fox, turkey, coon, coyote, and bear than in 1776. (One Lenape clan sign was Turkey, so we treat those visitors well.) Our house diary charts a natural inventory: at last count, more than 80 species of mammals, birds, and reptiles have passed our back door. And yet we live 3 miles from Nassau Street, and less than 40 from Manhattan.

IN THIS SETTING, I'VE SPENT A CAREER TEASING OUT CONNECTIONS between nature and culture, that great American theme. No other nation acquired so much open land nor wrecked it so swiftly. I began my studies with Henry David Thoreau, our first environmental writer, and pursuit of him led to years of living and traveling in New England, from his home village of Concord, Massachusetts, to the far reaches of northern Maine. He lived within view of Appalachian ranges, and his romantic idealism often drew him to higher ground. I came to see him as a literary backpacker, in love with wood smoke and long trails, where he charted the ecology of altitude. The idea and reality of elevation haunts all of his writings, many of them about mountain climbs: Wachusett, Greylock, Monadnock, Washington, Tuckerman Ravine. And, of course, Katahdin, where burned-over slopes yielded the epiphany that marks his transformation from outdoorsman and naturalist to environmental prophet.

Talk of mysteries!—Think of our life in Nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, —rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense*! *Contact! Contact! Who* are we? *where* are we?¹

A philosopher-naturalist in the era that created modern earth science, Thoreau learned geology and evolutionary biology from the writings of Charles Lyell, Louis Agassiz, and Charles Darwin, who exposed a vision of the earth's deep time, millions of years beyond Bible stories. Of the six books I wrote or edited on Thoreau, most deal with his struggle to find a voice and form for natural history. He drew his models from two sources, space and time, the arc of a journey and a calendar year. The shapes came to him from writing a journal for 25 years, some two million words gathered on travels in Concord and elsewhere: Canada, Cape Cod, Maine, Minnesota, and once

¹ From Thoreau's essay, "Ktaadn" (1864), later published in *The Maine Woods* (1848) as the first chapter.

south to Philadelphia. He passed through central New Jersey, but found there no mysteries:

Left at 7:30 am for New York, by boat to Tacony and rail via Bristol, Trenton, Princeton (near by), New Brunswick, Rahway, Newark, etc. Uninteresting, except the boat.²

Watching Thoreau learn the language of his fields led me to work on other nature writers, from the travels of William Bartram, along the Appalachians to Georgia and Florida, to the high Sierra peaks of Clarence King, a geologist and born raconteur. John McPhee, a *New Yorker* writer from Princeton, became a friend who encouraged me to write literary nonfiction. I edited a collection of his early writings and years later wrote an essay assessing his long and still thriving career. He was kind to dedicate one book to me, *In Suspect Terrain*, devoted to Appalachian geology. On my own I wrote stories and reviews for periodicals, chiefly published by the National Geographic Society.

Here, too, Appalachia came to my aid: I wrote literary profiles of its exiled children, from Willa Cather, Virginia-born, to John Steinbeck's Okie diasporas. I also led a double life, teaching at Princeton, then hopping planes to far-off journeys. One crammed weekend, I rafted rivers and rappelled cliffs in Idaho, then flew home to lecture on Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. Some colleagues criticized my bent for practical fieldwork, though one scientist did note that it was appropriate for literary study because the rocks of Appalachia and Britain are geological twins, pulled apart by plate tectonics.

Only once did I doubt my urge to travel in the footsteps of American authors: In northern Maine, not far from where Thoreau also had trouble, my party destroyed its two canoes in a stretch of heavy rapids. I remember standing in icy water, on lacerated feet, trying to calculate the miles to safety—and silently asking why I was not on the trail of Henry James.

But as I created and taught courses on environmental history, nature and travel writing, and evolutionary thought, I always tried to pry students away from the classroom to go to the ground, whether in parks around Princeton or up in Warren County, for walks on the AT. Seated on a rock face

² From Thoreau's journal, October 24–25, 1853.

high above the Delaware Water Gap, undergraduate hikers would murmur, *No way, this can't be New Jersey.*

For me, American and environmental studies are not parallel but coequal fields. Many great American authors took their ideas and themes from Appalachia's intractable problems, Appalachia's irrepressible survival instincts, Appalachia's heartrending beauty. Beside Thoreau, with his absorption in mountain gloom and glory, there stands Herman Melville, who wrote *Moby-Dick* while farming in the Berkshire Hills. On his staircase, he had a large round window, and he wrote that its view of snow-drifted land, below the great curving brow of Saddleback Mountain, recalled his days at sea in the company of whales. Nonfiction and memoir can be no less revealing: Thomas Jefferson wrote his only full-length book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in 1781 to 1783 to refute the European belief that natural forms degenerated in the New World. On the contrary, Jefferson verified, they thrive and multiply, a virtue he linked to their landscapes, Virginia's being the finest of all. In Chapter 4, "Mountains," he presents, with the fine-grained affection of a native son, a highly detailed account of how Virginia mountains and valleys form "the spine of the country" between the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Saint Lawrence waters.

In *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford University Press, 1989), historian David Hackett Fisher argues that distinct waves of settlement created America: New England's Puritan strain, the Cavaliers of Southern colonies, and the sober, practical Quakers of the Mid-Atlantic. But the final, most challenging assimilation lay in the cove-and-hollow borderlands and backcountry of Appalachia, whose settlement befell Scots-Irish and Highland refugees, uprooted by English conquest and eviction. Their ambivalence about the rule of law, like their lust for land (the hillier the better), inspires some of the greatest American narratives of the last century. For James Agee of Tennessee, like William Faulkner of Mississippi, the Appalachians supply a mythic ground of American struggle and despair, where Celtic segregations, Indian removals, and African slavery doom the mountain as well as the plantation South. Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, and John Updike all grew up in the hills of Pennsylvania, and they absorb the same self-sufficient codes, the same taste for spiritual darkness. Harry Caudill catches it too, in his mordant account of coal country, *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s (Little, Brown, 1962). So does Dillard's memoir of the Virginia mountains,

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), half vision, all rhapsody.

Earlier I joked about seeking a transfer from New Jersey. My life here has been a semi-exile, fueled by nostalgia. I grew up in Minnesota and Illinois, where the only hills stood in local parks. On a train trip east, I first saw the Appalachians, big-shouldered peaks that rose against the sky like breaching whales. In graduate school in Virginia, I lived close to the Appalachian Trail. Then came Princeton, where I mostly knew the worlds of town and gown, the hour drive between home and Newark Airport; some places at the Jersey shore, like Spring Lake or Harvey Cedars; and the Delaware Water Gap, where I saw bears feeding in a tamarack swamp. And then Princeton's finest approach, the lovely Hopewell Valley along Route 518, a reach of open, rolling farmland spared by citizen action from not one but two planning disasters: a power plant on the Delaware, and the unbuilt stretch of I-95. I am lucky to have known them all, and also my three favorite peaks: High Point, at the borders of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York; Bald Pate, on the Delaware River near Trenton; and Mount Lucas, beside Herrontown Road in Princeton.

Appalachian New Jersey has been my home, or at least my roosting-place, since Lyndon Johnson was in office. For nearly as long, Appalachian heritage has been a cultural touchstone for me as editor and journalist. I thought we were quit, the mountains and I. But after retiring from full-time teaching in 2008, I joined Anne Matthews, a distinguished writer of literary nonfiction, to work on fiction and films. Our first novel, *Deep Creek*, (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), is set in the remote backcountry of Idaho and Oregon, along the wild Snake River, and depicts a real-life event, the notorious 1887 massacre of more than 30 Chinese gold miners. The killers are caught, tried, and acquitted; our book seeks to answer how and why. Despite its Northwest setting, old lands and themes are still in play. Our hero is a Yankee from New England, very fond of Emerson; his archenemy a charming and violent rebel. From Appalachia, of course.

WILL HOWARTH is professor emeritus at Princeton University, where he has taught literature, history, and environmental studies for more than 40 years. Under his own name, he has written or edited thirteen books, including *The John McPhee Reader*, *Walking With Thoreau*, *The Book of Concord*, and *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*. As Dana Hand, he collaborates on fiction and film with Anne Matthews.

Nowheres

The sheer physiographic intensity of New Jersey

John McPhee



With the permission of the author, who shares a hometown with the editor, this essay is reprinted here. McPhee originally wrote it in 1981. It appears in his new book, Silk Parachute (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010).

THAT AUGUST I RETURNED TO THE TOWN IN NEW JERSEY WHERE I had been born fifty years before. It looked much the same. Any town would, after five weeks.

There was a great deal of waiting mail—08540, 08540, 08540. Not for nothing does that begin and end with a zero, I reflected. Good to be home. Nice to lift up the edges and crawl in under the only zip code I've ever known. A Zip that doesn't flap. A Zip that can be tied down. A Zip with grommets at either end.

I opened a letter from a staff writer at a national travel magazine compiled and edited in Tennessee.

He said, "I would appreciate it very much if you could answer some questions I have about New Jersey. . . . I would like to know why a writer, who could live almost anywhere he wanted to, chooses to live in New Jersey."

Is he kidding? I have just come home from Alaska, from a long drift on the Yukon River, where, virtually under doctor's orders, I must go from time to time to recover from the sheer physiographic intensity of living in New Jersey—must go, to be reminded that there is at least one other state that is physically as varied but is sensibly spread out. New Jersey was bisected in 1664, when a boundary line was drawn from Little Egg Harbor to the Delaware River near the Water Gap so that this earth of majesty, this fortress built by Nature for herself, could be deeded by the Duke of York to Lord Berkeley and George Carteret. If you travel that line—the surveyors' pylons still stand—you traverse the physiographic provinces of New Jersey. You cross the Coastal Plain. You cross the Triassic Lowlands, a successor basin. You cross the Blue Ridge, crystalline hills. Now before you is the centerpiece of a limestone valley that runs south from New Jersey to Alabama and north from New Jersey into Canada—one valley, known to science as the Great Valley of the Appalachians and to local people here and there as Champlain,

Carnegie Lake, dug out from a stream base for crew racing, watches over the eastern side of the land of Zip code 08540. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Shenandoah, Clinch River Valley, but in New Jersey by no well-known name, for in terrain so cornucopian one does not tend to notice a Shenandoah. A limestone valley is a white silo, a white barn, a sweep of ground so beautiful it should never end. You cross the broad valley. You rise now into the folded and faulted mountains, the eastern sinuous welt, the Deformed Appalachians themselves. You are still in New Jersey.

Are they aware of this in Tennessee? When you cross New Jersey, you cover four events: the violent upheaval of two sets of mountains several hundred million years apart; and, long after all that, the creation of the Atlantic Ocean; and, more recently, the laying on of the Coastal Plain by the trowel of the Mason. Do they know that in Tennessee? Tennessee is a one-event country: All you see there, east to west, are the Appalachians slowly going away.

New Jersey has had the genius to build across its narrow center the most concentrated transportation slot in the world—with three or four railroads, seaports, highways, and an international airport all compacted in effect into a tube, a conduit, which has acquired through time an ugliness sufficient to stop a Gorgon in her tracks. Through this supersluice continuously pass hundreds of thousands of people from Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, Iowa, Texas, Tennessee, holding their breath. They are shot like peas to New York. If New Jersey has a secret, that's it.

I remember Fred Brown, who lived in the Pine Barrens of the New Jersey Coastal Plain, remarking years ago outside his shanty, "I never been nowheres where I liked it better than I do here. I like to walk where you can walk on level ground. Outside here, if I stand still, fifteen or twenty quail, a couple of coveys, will come out and go around. The gray fox don't come in no nearer than the swamp there, but I've had the coons come in here, the deer will come up. Muskrats breed right here, and otters sometimes. I was to Tennessee once. They're greedy, hungry, there, to Tennessee. They'll pretty near take the back off your hand when you lay down money. I never been nowheres I liked better than here."

JOHN MCPHEE is a staff writer at *The New Yorker*. He is the author of 28 books. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

Watching

“And perhaps, after all, there is *no* secret” to the universe.

—*Melville to Hawthorne*

Perhaps they are doing something else in addition
to slamming the one-ton pectoral on the dazzle
to de-lice or text a friend through the conducive water.
A million calories, tons of blubber, the celebrated fasting
and birthing in the warm Caribe—and one, a girl, watches us?
The kids run the deck now. We over-stayed.
It’s just belly-flopping and us drawn large in discomfort and obesity.
The flukes crash as they lave for the millionth time.
Even size and mystery and beauty can’t last all afternoon
and we head off in diesel fumes, while a green fin breaches like bait.

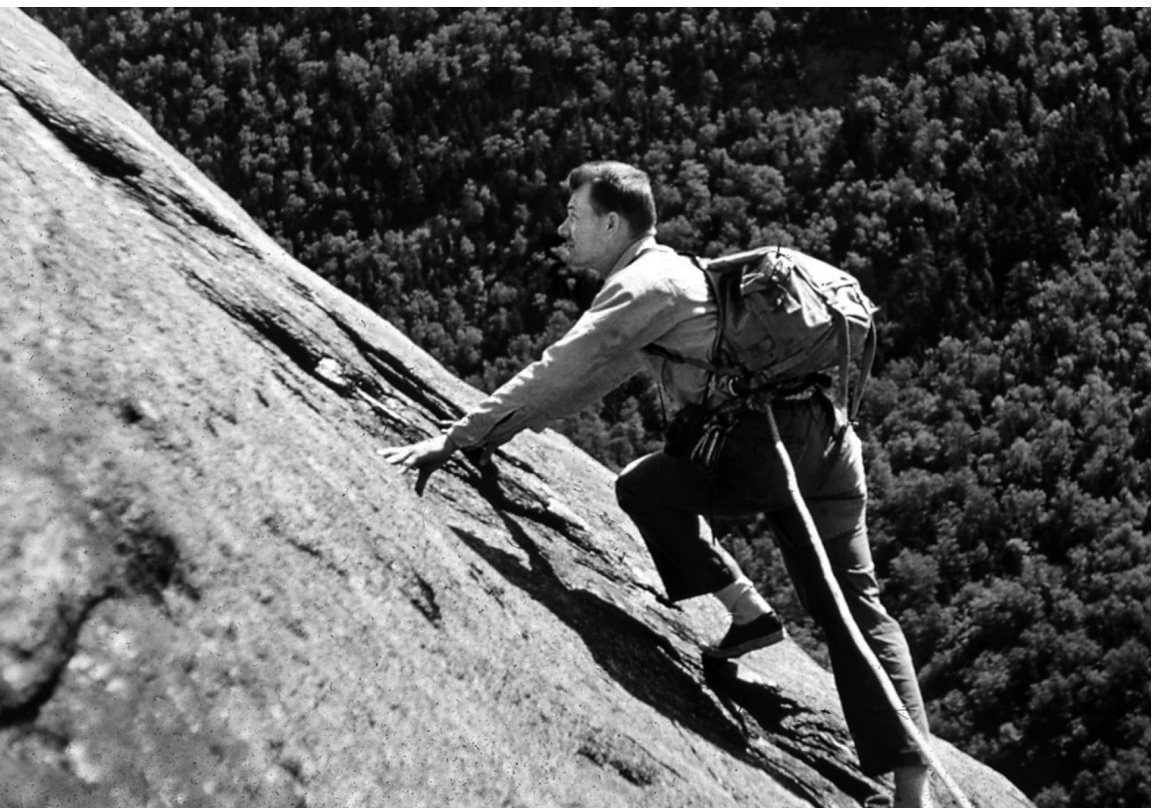
Francis Blessington

FRANCIS BLESSINGTON has published two books of poems, *Wolf Howl* (BkMk Press, University of Missouri–KC, 2000) and *Lantskip* (William Bauhan, 1987). He has published books of criticism and many essays, together with short stories and poems. His latest novel, *The Last Witch of Dogtown*, was published by Curious Traveller Press in 2001. He lives in Woburn, Massachusetts, with his wife, Ann Taylor.

Climbing Detectives on Mount Willard

Unearthing a long-neglected route

Geoff Wilson



I LOVE THE OLD CLIMBING ROUTES OF THE 1920S AND 1930S. In part, this is because I like climbing the big features in a landscape—prominent cliffs, ridges, and mountains—and because I don't tend to climb very difficult grades, at least from the modern perspective. But it's also because I enjoy being a part of the rich history of people climbing mountains. In North America, the 1920s and early 1930s were a very dynamic time for climbing. Many from that first generation of skilled technical climbers in North America lived in New England and they explored and established routes up nearly all of the big cliffs in the White Mountains. For me, as a hiker and nascent climber living in this region, the early routes of the '20s and '30s were perfect for me. They were of modest technical difficulty, yet provided immense satisfaction by ascending big, imposing features of the landscape. Routes like the Whitney Gilman Ridge on Cannon Cliff, the Northeast Ridge of the Pinnacle in Mount Washington's Huntington Ravine, the standard routes on both Cathedral and Whitehorse ledges, and, farther afield, various routes on Katahdin in Maine and Wallface in the Adirondacks were all early milestones as I developed as a climber. Until this past summer, however, one of their peers, the Standard Route on Mount Willard, had always scared me off. It requires eight to ten pitches, is rated a moderate 5.6, and it is one of the major, commonly climbed routes of the pre-World War II era. By that measure, it would be perfect. But it is also a paradox: Although it was one of the most commonly climbed routes of the late 1920s through at least the 1940s—when climbing equipment was rudimentary by today's standards—it now has a bad reputation for its loose rock and difficult route finding. In contrast to most of the other significant pre-World War II climbing routes, very few climbers active today even consider the route.

My first introduction to Mount Willard was through Ed Webster's second edition of *Rock Climbs in the White Mountains of New Hampshire* (Mountain Imagery, 1987), which covered most of the big cliffs in the region. This guidebook instilled in me a strong sense of climbing history and shaped my early years as a climber by aiding my inclinations to visit less-frequented places. Mount Willard was one of those places, yet I climbed a number of routes on the cliff for years before I was willing to try the original line. The Webster guide describes Willard's Standard Route thus: "Today usually only the lower slabs are climbed due to loose rock and poor protection on the upper face."

A climber works his way up the slabs of Mount Willard sometime in the 1950s.

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A recent attempt by an experienced party to repeat the climb was thwarted by just such conditions, so the climb cannot be safely recommended.” That was enough for me. Despite modest successes climbing technically harder climbs on Mount Willard and elsewhere, I steered clear away from that part of the cliff face for more than fifteen years.

The stars seem to have aligned in the summer of 2010, when my long-time climbing partner, Mason, and I decided it would be a fun summer project to figure out the old route and give it a try. We were both returning to rock climbing after a few years away from it, and we were inspired by a drive to taste something we hadn’t done and for a shared affection for this big cliff conveniently located halfway between our homes. I doubt this would have become a project, though, if it weren’t for a chance meeting with Laura Waterman while out for a hike with my son early in the summer.

Laura and Guy’s classic history, *Yankee Rock & Ice* (Stackpole, 1993), came out when I first moved to the White Mountains and was in the thick of exploring its mountains and crags. Their extensive research, old photographs, and storytelling brought to life the old routes I was cutting my teeth on and led me further afield in the Northeast, always with a deep appreciation of the old climbs and climbers. It had a huge impact on me and I was thrilled for the chance to tell this to Laura. We spoke about many of the old routes, including the Standard Route on Mount Willard. I learned that she and Guy had climbed it while researching the book, and this got me thinking that maybe now was finally the time. I’d never spoken with anyone who had climbed it, and doing so with Laura made it seem a bit less intimidating. Piecing together an old route that very rarely gets climbed anymore sounded inspiring, achievable, and fun.

The first step was to gather information. In addition to the description in the Webster guide, we went back to the original source, the 1929 *Appalachia* volume xvii. This contained both a classic article by Ken Henderson, “Some Rock Climbs in the White Mountains,” as well as a shorter route description penned by Robert Underhill. These convinced us of two things: finding the start to the upper pitches was crucial, and if we did, we had a good chance of climbing the route. Henderson’s article, by covering ascents of Pinnacle Buttress and Cannon as well, made the climb seem feasible as no great distinction was made between Mount Willard and the other routes, both of which were on cliffs we were familiar with. Of course, the fact that he describes climbing Cannon right after driving to it in a soaking rain and hail

storm might have been a clue that he was a climber of a different caliber than we'll ever be, but we ignored that.

The lower pitches more or less follow the central watercourse, which is the winter route, Cinema Gully. Apparently the original route, from 1928, stayed mainly to the right of the watercourse, whereas subsequent variations stayed mainly left. We found the watercourse running with water and chose to start right, where we could take advantage of a few new bolts on a different line before we diverged and continued up to a tree ledge just right of the watercourse. I think this would roughly coincide with the first two pitches of the original line, but after that we found ourselves cutting back and forth across the watercourse in a quest for possible belay stances and intermediate protection. That section of the slabs is not steep and there is no obvious line, except the central one, which runs with water. After three pitches we ended up at a belay in bushes to the right of the last pitch of Cinema Gully, faced with an exit pitch up the mostly wet, left-trending exit of the watercourse. It was not a fun lead, but I think it was the original line. Henderson's article mentions "a difficult traverse . . . necessary to climb onto a narrow and precarious ledge, and then out around and over a bulge in the rock. One more quite hard pitch brought us to the band of vegetation and the luncheon place, just as the ginger ale was being broached." This matched our experience, minus the casual confidence and ginger ale. Henderson did this in 1929 carrying a movie camera on his shoulder, with which he was filming the ascent of the party broaching the ginger ale! Again, he and his compatriots were just fantastic climbers, bold and confident. This was a feeling that crossed our minds frequently on the upper cliff as well.

The climb Henderson wrote up was the third ascent of the lower slabs and second of the complete upper pitches, the first being that same month. The previous year, Robert Underhill and Lincoln O'Brien had quite an epic dealing with rotten rock on a direct attempt straight up from the lower pitches.¹ We knew about the rotten rock on the upper cliff from the route descriptions and stories, but the scramble up from the top of the lower Standard Route to the upper tier reiterated them with nothing but steep, unstable, angular blocks that could have only come from the general area we were headed toward. I would never want to be below a party traveling up that mess.

¹ Waterman, Laura, and Guy Waterman. *Yankee Rock & Ice: A History of Climbing in the Northeastern United States*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1993, pp. 28–32.

We expected that the start of the upper pitches of the climb would be difficult to find, based on our own previous experiences on the cliff as well as conversations with others. Webster's guide says to find the upper pitches by walking 100 yards left to reach the bottom of a large, rotten (that is, loose with rock) amphitheater, the route's upper landmark. Similarly, the original description by Underhill in *Appalachia* states that the upper pitches start after a traverse 100 yards left to a large, rotten gully that splits the upper face. I emphasize both because it sounds easy enough, but we still got it wrong the first time, as did another experienced climber I have spoken with since. We went to the base of the cliff and walked left, sticking close to the upper face, but below a complex of buttresses, and found a rotten gully a bit more than 100 yards over which otherwise fit the description. The entire time we felt we were heading too far left, but at the same time didn't feel we missed anything that met the description. Up the gully, we found a rotten amphitheater, with loose rock, and headed up. After two mostly traversing pitches on very unappealing rock (but a pretty location), we convinced ourselves that we were probably not in the right spot, and retreated. This was in the vicinity of the ice climb, Cauliflower Gully, but not quite as far over.

OUR RETREAT GAVE US A CHANCE TO REEVALUATE THE UPPER CLIFF AND determine where we went wrong. It also provided a welcome opportunity to satisfy some more curiosity I had developed about Mount Willard. In my research on the cliff, I reread a fascinating piece by Henry Childs in the December 1945 issue of *Appalachia*, entitled "Mount Willard Ramblings." Childs briefly mentions a still-routine ascent of the Standard Route, but the interest in the article for me lay more in his overall, detailed geography of the mountain. In particular, he mentions and locates two flumes—Butterwort and Hitchcock, both discovered in 1875 by the geologist C.H. Hitchcock, a Dartmouth professor and state geologist who completed a geological survey of New Hampshire from 1868 to 1875.² Butterwort Flume was named that because it contained a population of the small, carnivorous plant, butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), which prefers calcium-rich habitats and for that reason is very uncommon in the generally calcium-poor White Mountain region. I was curious to see if I could find the plant and also curious to confirm my suspicion, based on my reading of the Childs article, that what was once called

² Kilborne, F.W. *Chronicles of the White Mountains*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916, pp. 208–214.

Butterwort Flume is now confusingly called Hitchcock Gully, at least by the climbers that frequent the gully as a winter climb.³ For these reasons, we retreated across the tree ledge to the east face of the mountain and rappelled down what most climbers would know as lower Hitchcock Gully. On the way we realized “walk 100 yards left” to find the upper pitches probably should have been interpreted as “scramble up and left by kicking steps up steep, loose pebbles while pulling on tree branches.” We figured we’d try that next time.

As I suspected, the current Hitchcock Gully is the old Butterwort Flume. On rappel, we found the population of Butterwort growing in a beautiful, moist, and shady spot at the top of the lower gully. This is where, in winter, climbers must leave the gully for twenty feet or so of rock climbing to reach the tree-covered ledge. The original Hitchcock Flume, which I later visited as well, is what winter climbers now refer to as the Cleft,⁴ although some recent editions of the Appalachian Mountain Club *White Mountain Guide* do still refer to it as Hitchcock Flume. In keeping with my “respect for my elders” theme, I should note that we stayed on rappel another 75 feet or so past the Butterwort, which Hitchcock found by scrambling around, almost assuredly unroped, in 1875.

FOR OUR SECOND ATTEMPT ON THE STANDARD ROUTE, WE DECIDED to skip the lower pitches, opting instead to climb a newly equipped line to its right, “Hugo’s Horror,” which we had observed a party enjoying while we wandered around the lower pitches of Standard on our first attempt. The folks who recently equipped this old route with intermediate protection bolts and belays did a wonderful job, and we enjoyed each pitch as much as the last. The contrast in the routes was striking—Standard with its vague line of very little protection, and the modern route where you could always see a bolt to keep you climbing in the right direction. The first was more adventurous, but the second had really fun climbing and got us to the tree ledge efficiently and without much stress.

We were right about the start of the upper pitches. We found them easily after scrambling steeply to the top of the buttress and crossing a low-angled but exposed slab. Henderson’s article has a wonderful description of the party climbing the upper pitches: “The labors of the vanguard were heroic to behold. Gilman valiantly led the way, dancing about lightly from foothold

³ Wilcox, R. *An Ice Climber’s Guide to Northern New England*. North Conway, NH: International Mountain Equipment, Inc., 1992.

⁴ Ibid.

to foothold and ever urging the rest to be brave and follow him. One or two others wielded mighty hammers, driving in pitons where these were needed, while behind came the self-sacrificing soul with the paint-pot and brush to leave a mark that others might follow where we had been.” Unbelievable. The leader is climbing it, THEN the protection is being put in, THEN they’re painting blazes up the route! The contrast in style I thought I perceived between the easy to follow, retro-bolted (protected with bolts long after the first ascent) Hugo’s Horror and Standard Route as it was originally conceived was actually no real contrast at all—the heightened adventurousness of Standard Route was at least in part because the pitons are very old and the painted blazes had worn off!

The upper pitches lived up to their reputation. The first lead up the right side of the rotten gully was loose and intimidating, although not physically hard. I climbed past where I should have and, in an attempt to find something secure, moved left and spotted a newish, two-bolt anchor. It wasn’t quite on the route but close enough to bring my partner up and regroup. From there, we could see where I went wrong and where the belay we were aiming for was, below and across from us. It looked like we could cut diagonally up and right to rejoin the second pitch, and Mason took the lead. The rock was rotten and protection was scant, so this pitch would make or break us. It was a great bit of route finding and Mason soon encountered an old piton right where we expected the route to be. After a few more, all very old and unreliable, he found a belay of a few old pitons. Unfortunately, either the rock, the piton, or both flexed when pulled on, so it was an unreliable, mixed blessing. He added a few pitons of our own, making it one of those anchors that was probably adequate but you’d never want to find out, and I followed. This was the key pitch, as from here, we could see the rest of the route, and it looked manageable. The next pitch took us to the vertically oriented tree ledge just left of the large cave known as the Devil’s Den. The rock was loose and the protection still wasn’t any good, but the climbing was reasonable and I soon reached the tree ledge, where there was a nice stout spruce to belay from. From here, both route descriptions say to scramble to the top of the ledge before climbing, but the ledge was all just steep pebbles and the rock to the side looked good, so we opted for the rock. With a good belay anchor and finally some appealing rock ahead, we felt quite a bit of relief at this point. That final pitch had the best rock of the upper tier and provided very nice climbing, all the while with antique pitons here and there indicating that this variation, rather than the steep, pebbly tree island, was an old one. It even had reliable protection.

All of the stresses from the uncertainty of the upper pitches melted away in the final meters of the climb, which were exposed to the wind and felt like the top of the long, alpine climbs that we both love. We scrambled, roped, a few hundred feet along the very edge of the cliff to the summit, where after a nice break in the sun we had a wonderful walk down the old carriage road. The Standard Route was worth the wait.

I've spoken with a number of climbers about this route since we climbed it and a common theme is the wonder we all share that this was a popular route in the 1930s and 1940s. I suppose when the fixed pitons were new and reliable and they had blazes to keep them on route, it would have been more straightforward, but we placed new pitons (we removed most of them) and they were often in unreliable rock, making me that much happier that I had modern, sticky rubber climbing shoes providing greater security, not to mention a dynamic, strong rope. Underhill stated that, when comparing the route to the original route on Cannon (since destroyed by rock fall) and the Pinnacle in Huntington Ravine, the climbing on Mount Willard is "on the whole more delicate." I agree. While physically easier than many of its peers from that era, I'd recommend almost all of the other prewar routes to new climbers as safer and more straightforward. However, it was a great adventure and certainly worth a visit for climbers curious about the old routes and who are comfortable with loose rock and marginal protection.

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Living With Wind

Gathering impressions of the newest power technology

William T. Smith and Timothy Paul Smith



BY NOW MOST OF US HAVE HEARD AT LEAST A FEW FACTS ABOUT the economic and ecological effects of wind power, and a few stories of the controversies turbines seem to stir up, starting when they are just ideas. We don't hear much about the aesthetic and social aspects of wind turbines. We wondered what people who live near active wind turbines think of them, and what it's like to be near one when it's running. We wondered if there was a whole other world we weren't hearing about, one in which the people who find turbines ugly and disruptive are balanced out by others who find them beautiful. We wondered if most people even care how they look. So we set out to visit some places where people are living with wind power.

Ray's Market is a general store in the postage-stamp-sized town of Irasburg, Vermont, a few miles east of Lowell and Lowell Mountain, the proposed site of Kingdom Community Wind. The cashier there, when asked how the villagers felt about the wind project, shrugged her shoulders and said, "Yeah, I don't really hear much about it now. I guess people don't really care much either way." To her, the debate over Lowell Mountain was yesterday's news, and it was time to move on. That isn't the way a number of people around wind facilities feel, especially when a proposed site is being debated. It can be a divisive issue that fractures communities. We thought this divide would be between progressive "green advocates" and old-time conservatives, but that isn't what we found.

WE VISITED ANDY AND GERT TETREAULT AT THEIR HOME IN LOWELL. They are retired dairy farmers. Andy still works in the fields during hay seasons when neighboring farmers need an extra hand. They live in a well-kept old farmhouse with a steeply pitched roof on the side of Vermont highway 100. Across the road from their house is a sign that says, "Kingdom Community Wind." A garden grows beside the road, and next to it stands a table with the sign "Gert's Farm Stand." They invited us into the kitchen where we sat at the table and we talked over a cup of tea. Andy is a big, strong man in his 70s, with a tanned and weathered face. He probably normally smiles a lot, but to him wind power is a serious subject. Gert stayed on the edge of the conversation but clearly held the same opinions as her husband.

They told us that the family that owned most of Lowell Mountain had been logging it for a number of generations, but that New England lumbering has fallen upon hard times. They were left with the choice of subdividing

Turbines on Lempster Mountain in southwestern New Hampshire. KEN BERGMAN

the mountaintop and selling the view or trying something radical. So they sought out the local power company and are trying to get a wind farm established here.

This is a story we heard repeatedly across New England. A family who has made a living for generations off of a mountain is now turning to wind harvesting in the same way a previous generation harvested timber from that same ridge.

Wind caught the Tetreaults' attention, and they became local spokespersons for the project. We asked them why they would spend their retirement trying to get a facility built on a neighbor's mountain when they would not profit from it. They said that they wanted to do something good for their grandchildren and the generations beyond. So they hosted house parties where locals could meet power company officials and engineers and ask a hundred questions. They then confessed that they had started as volunteers but that recently the power company had hired them to be its local community liaison.

In spring 2010, they attended a town meeting that included a referendum on the project. The turnout was incredible: Of 532 registered voters, 456 (86 percent) were present. Pam Tetreault, the town treasurer (daughter-in-law of Andy and Gert), said, "Typically we have 90 to 120 people at town meeting," so this issue was taken to heart. It passed 342 to 114; 75 percent of those voting supported the wind project. Andy said that if the referendum had come up a few years earlier, he would have predicted that only 25 percent would have supported it, 25 percent would have voted no, and half of the town would have had no opinion at all. But something had changed their attitudes.

We asked Andy why he thought people fought against it. He said that his neighbors were skeptical of the project because they didn't want outsiders exploiting them. He felt that the attitude that carried the day was that the power should stay local. David Hallquist, the CEO of the Vermont Electric Co-Op, later explained that this meant that when you bought electricity in northern Vermont, the check would first be sent to the Kingdom Community Wind project.

Before the town meeting, the wind project sponsored a bus trip to Lempster, New Hampshire, so people could see the turbines there. Gert described the trip to me and as she pictured the tall towers in her mind, she said that they were "majestic." She paused and thought about this and then reaffirmed it. "Yes, they are majestic."

TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE VIEW WIND DEVELOPMENT, it helps to go back a few hundred years. From the beginning of European settlement in the Americas, development has radically altered and re-altered the landscape time and again at our convenience. When William James was traveling in the Carolinas in about 1800, he described the farmsteads as “unmitigated squalor.” The forest, with many great trees standing girdled and dead, was an “ulcer” on the landscape. He could not understand why these frontier pioneers had created such ugliness out of the virgin forest, and so asked a local what he saw in the landscape. The local saw “progress”; a cabin would provide safety and shelter for his family and a farm would feed them.

This scene repeated itself tens of thousands of times across the American landscape: A pioneer arrived in the deep woods, the virgin forest, and cleared the land to make a better life. Clearing the land, however, can be brutal. Pioneers would cut the smaller trees and girdle the large ones so that they could plant a crop that same year. The landscape would become practically infernal, covered with stumps and the ash of burning brush piles. And at the end of a long, hard day of toil, what would the pioneers see? They would not see a Garden of Eden, but rather a covenant, a hint of something better. The American landscape has often been seen as a promise of a better future. In the early days of this country, a great number of European visitors bemoaned the landscape, saying it was “untutored,” and needed the guiding hand of “the parson and the squire.” Fifty years later, even the stumps were gone and New England was a lush agrarian landscape.

Since then, one development in particular has drastically altered the shape of the landscape. Sometimes we try to imagine an evening or night in a great city before the electric light. The place would have been lit with thousands of lamps or candles, giving the city a soft glow—and heat and flames and smoke. It is a scene practically unchanged since ancient times. The lighting of Babylon, Alexandria, and Rome was essentially the same as Boswell’s London or Atlanta during the Civil War. Have you ever tried to read by candlelight during a power outage? The novelty soon wears off.

So the speed of electrification should not shock us. You might say civilization was waiting for this. Electric lights were a laboratory toy from about 1810 until about 1880, when Thomas Edison and others were ready to light up the world. In 1879, Edison created the first long-lasting, inexpensive lightbulb. By 1882, he was wiring the region of Manhattan around his Pearl Street Generating Station. This station on the southern tip of Manhattan could power lights only within about a quarter of a mile of the generator

because the transformer hadn't yet been invented. So at first a city would have numerous power generating stations. The streets were filled with electric lines and the power station rumbled and smoked all night, but in people's houses and apartments and businesses, there was light.

Once an efficient transformer was invented, power companies could "step up" the voltage at the power plant, transport it at a high voltage, and then "step-down" the voltage at transformers in neighborhoods near where it would be used. In 1896, the power of Niagara Falls started to light the factories of Buffalo, 22 miles away. The simplest way to move high-voltage power was to string it up high in the air on great pylons, and in a very few years, a grid of high-voltage power transmission lines laced across the countryside in a way no previous development ever had.

Electricity changed the landscape starting about 120 years ago.

Besides transmission lines, electricity changed the landscape through the building of power plants. Before it began to spread, any harnessing of wind or water occurred on a much smaller scale, providing only the force to drive a mill, not to power an entire city. In the twenty years between 1890 and 1910, this began to change. Officials began to plan very large power plants far from the cities they supplied. California began to dam waterways in the mountains to provide hydroelectric power for Los Angeles and San Francisco. Most people welcomed hydro. Newspapers at the time called the mountain cascades "white gold." The power source was sustainable, renewable, and clean. A city without hydro was covered with a layer of ash and coal dust. Until about 1950, hydro's benefits to society were viewed as vastly outweighing the negative impacts of dams and long-distance transmission lines.

Since the 1960s, the infrastructure of modern life has continued to change, but in the last few decades, people have started to challenge changes to their landscapes they don't see as positive. In response, utilities now reuse sites: They will build new power plants on sites of old plants and run new transmission lines along the same corridors the old ones used. Also, utilities are more apt to rent land from a private owner than to request the state to take it by eminent domain.

A good example of this occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when communications companies laid hundreds of thousands of miles of optical fiber lines. Many people didn't notice these lines, most of which were laid alongside railroad tracks or interstate highways. These transportation corridors were ideally located to connect city centers, and they were simple to use. Usually one cable company per corridor rented the space from a few landowners.

The newest utility that really has changed our landscape is wireless phone service. There are about 200,000 cell towers in the United States, and the number continues to grow at more than 20,000 each year. Some of these are attached to preexisting radio masts, some on tall buildings, but because cell coverage is short ranged, many new towers have been necessary. Ironically, many Americans have pleaded for better coverage while blocking the building of new towers. One of the solutions has been the advent of the hidden tower. Some cell towers look like other things—flagpoles, trees, cacti—or hide in structures such as church steeples. If a steeple is made of wood or fiberglass, it is essentially invisible to the radio waves, so the antenna need not be visible from outside.

This last point is telling: Visibility is an issue. We could ascribe this to the boldness people feel to comment on such changes dating to the 1960s—the upswing in both the resistance to development and the will to challenge authority—but although this makes some sense, it is not the entire story. Another factor in citizens' acceptance or rejection of a new development is the degree to which it will benefit them. The benefit to a settler in the Carolinas of clearing the land by whatever means necessary was obvious: He could farm and build his house and thus survive much more easily than he would have been able in untamed wilderness. The benefit of electrification was obvious: Suddenly people no longer had to depend on flickering and smoking flames for light at night. The benefit of hydropower was obvious: One could power a city without coating it in ash.

Unlike those, more modern utilities bring much less visible benefits. Everyone seems to accept cell service as part of life today, but people still resist the construction of cell towers. Perhaps the benefits of cell service are underappreciated: In early incarnations, at least, cell phones did little more than what land lines did, and that less reliably. It may be this sense that cell towers don't provide an essential service so much as grant some degree of improvement to a preexisting one that makes their benefits seem less dramatic

and thus less worthy of priority. Perhaps this view of historical developments can grant insight into the ways we see wind power.

IT'S THE FIRST DAY OF AUTUMN IN LEMPSTER, A TOWN OF 1,100 PEOPLE in southwestern New Hampshire, near Sunapee. The leaves are just starting to turn. You can clearly see the towers and turbines from downtown Newport, six miles away. As you enter Lempster, there is a sign that proclaims, "First to Produce Clean Green Energy in New Hampshire." This rural settlement, with its old meetinghouse and graveyard at a crossroads, is not a stranger to cutting-edge power. In 1939, the New Hampshire Electric Co-Op started its distribution system here. The rural electric co-ops that were springing up across the country at that time were part of the New Deal, part of the stimulus package of the Great Depression.

Ed Cherian, the project manager for this site, took us on a tour of the wind farm. There are a dozen towers, each with the ability to produce 2 megawatts. There was only a gentle breeze that morning, and Ed estimated that the turbines were running at 30 to 35 percent of their maximum power. We stood under the massive blades and talked. We asked him about the relationship between the wind farm and the town. He told me, "Pride. I think that is how most Lempsters now feel about it. They are proud to be the first in New Hampshire." He was delighted the day he drove into town and saw the sign. He had not expected it.

We asked about the detractors. "There was a warrant article to stop it. There are about 800 [voting] people in Lempster and the vote was about 600 for and 40 against. The opposition was mainly retirees and people with second homes. They saw this as a blight in their slice of paradise."

Leaving the wind facility, we stopped by the side of the road to photograph the turbines. A couple who introduced themselves as Tom and Debra stopped to talk. They said they didn't like wind power and worried the turbines detracted from the landscape. However, the longer we stood there the more they agreed that they really were not very loud. Debra even went so far as to say that they were "graceful."

A FEW DAYS LATER, WE MET KEVIN AND DEBBIE ONNELA IN LEMPSTER. The Onnelas run a logging and lumber business. They also own the land on which part of the wind farm is located. The day was thick with rain and the clouds were low so that we could see only two of the towers on the ridge. The leaves, beeches, and maples, were coming down with the rain. We passed

the equipment shed, a yard stacked with hundreds of logs, and eventually found the office. When we walked in, Debbie was working on the computer with the phone tucked on her shoulder. The office was wood paneled. Fish swam in a tank, and the words "Onnela Lumber" were visible painted on the blade of an old two-man saw mounted on the wall. Kevin joined us a few minutes later.

He is a big man, and when he shook hands, it was obvious that his were working hands, big and beefy and even larger than those of Andy Tetreault, the farmer in Lowell. Kevin's thick, white-blond mustache dripped around his mouth. Debbie is petite in contrast and let Kevin do most of the talking, although later she showed a number of photographs of turbine construction and of their grandchildren.

Kevin told us a similar story to the one in Lowell. His logging business had fallen on hard times with global competition, and his mill had gone from eight employees to only the Onnelas and their son-in-law. They needed to earn a living off their land and had a choice of subdividing the land and selling it, or doing something else. Meanwhile, Bean Mountain had caught the attention of Community Energy Inc. as a windy place.

We asked about the town's reactions. He said that most of the town was proud of the towers and had endorsed them at town meeting. However, he thought that there were going to be some problems in the near future. Presently more than a quarter of the town's taxes are based on the wind facility but that may fall to as little as 10 percent in the post-construction, operational era. The Onnelas' home is on Bean Mountain, among the windmills, which they said they can hear outside. But when it is a windy day, they said there are too many other noises on the ridge for the turbines to be noticeable.

OUR LAST STOP WAS AT THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICE Commission's Site Evaluation Committee's hearing on a new proposed facility. This would be located in the town of Groton, just west of Plymouth. Here we met with Lawrence and Sarah Mazur, who are working very hard to block this new project.

The hearing was in one of the state office buildings in Concord. In these cases, the applicants present evidence that they have completed required site studies. This is the final step for getting state approval. Witnesses and experts for and against are brought in, almost like a court hearing. They make statements, explain their reports, and are examined and cross-examined.

They are questioned by the applicant, the “counsel for the public,” and the “intervenor.” The applicant is defending the project, the public counsel will push the applicant to make sure that all requirements really are being met. The intervenors are citizens who may be affected. They are usually neighbors who want to make their concerns clear to the committee.

Over the lunch break, we asked the Mazurs what their worries were. They said that those opposed to the project have a whole list of complaints that include aesthetics and property values, but that their main concern was “wind turbine syndrome.” *Wind turbine syndrome* is a term created by Dr. Nina Pierpont, author of a book by that name. Some people attribute sleeplessness and stress to being exposed to the sound of turbines. Several studies pinpoint noise as bothering people, but wind turbine noise is not unique among noises. In the medical and psychological fields, this is not a clinical term. Most people who study this have concluded that the background noises usually exceed the turbine sounds. But to the Mazurs, this is still a major cause for concern.

The hearing went on for a week. At the conclusion, the committee members felt that most issues had been adequately addressed. But they requested some more information, especially related to the rerouting of the transmission lines that connect these turbines to the grid.

How do neighbors feel about wind? If you go through the docket of letters filed with the SEC, it is mixed. Many letters said, “Yes, we want this project for our community,” and many also said, “No, we don’t.” But it is hard to tell from these what the general population thinks. Those letters reflect the opinions of those motivated to write.

The oldest operating commercial wind facility in New England is in Searsburg, Vermont. Recently, Deerfield Wind has proposed extending the size and number of windmills to an adjacent ridge in Searsburg, and along the same ridge south into the town of Readsboro. These are towns that have lived within sight of windmills since 1997 and so voted with experience. Early proposals were rejected by the town, but in the end, both Searsburg and Readsboro have overwhelmingly approved resolutions supporting the Deerfield facility. Residents of those towns wanted a fair contract with the wind facility, but also know they can live with turbines on their ridgeline.

The problem with wind power seems to be that its benefits, though important, are not obvious and immediate in the way that many other developments have been, so support for wind projects sometimes flags. It does not change the end product for most people—the television runs just

as well on coal as it does on wind; the lights shine just as brightly; the toaster is just as broken—so people don't see the difference in their everyday lives. Furthermore, there isn't any real, tangible benefit to hosting a wind facility. Even people who believe strongly in green energy might just as well choose to have the wind facility powering their home be on someone else's mountain; the facilities don't really create jobs or change the price of the energy for the locals in any observable way. And because the benefits of wind power are not obvious, because it is hard to see the amount that the globe isn't warming because of a local wind facility, because of this the argument of aesthetics comes into the debate. It is only, as far as we have seen, the people who are opposed to wind power who seem to make any argument of aesthetics. This makes sense. One would not argue that wind facilities should be built because they are beautiful—that would be a lot of time and capital to expend on a matter of personal taste—but one might argue that they shouldn't be built because they are not. That said, Debra, whose concerns were primarily aesthetic, did admit that the turbines were, in their way, graceful. Personally, we tend to think that wind turbines may yet become as invisible as radio masts and utility poles, and while we are still looking at them, they strike us as beautiful.

We visited the wind facility in Searsburg, Vermont, in January 2010. It was snowing when we arrived, and though the air at ground level was clear, the mountain was hidden. We stood near the base station, looking around for windmills, until the site manager arrived with his dog. He showed us where to look, and as we stared, the snow parted some, and we could see a little way up the ridge. Then through the opaque, the first tower emerged white against the white sky. As we watched, the snow parted even further, and we could pick out four or five more in a line behind it. Now and again, one of them would turn its head to better face the wind, like a cow turning toward a fresher patch of grass to graze on. When we came closer, we could hear them lowing.

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Night News

Trailside, hearing of the financial collapse

Sandy Stott



ON THE ELEVENTH EVENING OF A MOUNTAIN WALK TAKEN during the ninth month in 2008, I call home. Nothing unusual there, you might say, but the act of calling is the only usual part of what follows. As I punch in the number, listen to the ringing, and wait for my wife to pick up, I scan my surroundings. Dusk is approaching and a gauzy, yellow light filters sideways through the turning beech and maple leaves; it's windless, and, as if to emphasize this late summer stillness, cicadas and crickets offer up a constant trill. The boulder I've settled back against feels solid and warm. On the fourth ring, Lucille picks up, "Hello?"

"Hey," I say.

"Ah, I'm glad you called," she says, and over the airy distance between us I detect an edginess.

"What's up?" I ask.

"Well, it's hard to figure out where to begin," she says, and the miles between this Vermont mountain and our Massachusetts home seem to grow fat with imagined disasters. "I'm OK," she adds, at the intake of my breath.

The frontcountry summary that follows is hard to take in, perhaps even more so after days of immersion in the backcountry terrain of Vermont's Long Trail. But, after wobbling repeatedly to the edge, the stock market has parapented off a cliff, seemingly without parachute. Lehman Brothers has failed; Merrill Lynch has gone under via fire sale. Insurance "giant" AIG is being bailed out to the tune of billions of government—taxpayer—dollars. Banks aren't lending, even to each other, because no one knows who may fail next. "It's gone," Lucille repeats, anticipating my disbelief. "Wow," I say, sitting back on my ledge. "Wow."

One of my classmates at Amherst College was a Smith scion back when the firm was Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner and Smith; he played right wing to my left on our college soccer team (and, yes, in political leanings too). I conjure a decades-old image of his blond hair swept back by the pace of his running; I recall his erect surety about competition, about life. "Gone?" I say simply because I'm unsure what else to say. "Yep," she says. "Whatever they've been doing with their mortgage investments, it's washed the foundation out and now they're having to fold. Our retirement funds are taking quite a beating too," she adds. I've wondered for some time about the "irrational exuberance" sloshing through our money system and trickling even into

Near the Long Trail's Minerva Hinchey Shelter, a brook goes about its evening's work.

SCOTT LIVINGSTON

our modest accounts. I remember hearing that one of our high school's teachers had married a money-savvy twenty-something, who had emerged from college and within a short time taken over management of a hedge fund. Her teaching seemed a hobby in his world. I've read that the annual pay for hedge fund work dwarfs my lifetime's earnings many times over.

NOTHING CHANGES IN THE EVENING FOREST. THE LIGHT SLANTS IN; the mild air flows upslope from the West; a few birds get used to my still figure and decide it's safe to feed nearby. Twenty minutes below me, the seven other people at this Long Trail shelter have fired up stoves for dinner. Flying Blondie, a recurring character in my walk, has been through on her way to a cadged meal with friends of friends nearby, and people laugh about her light-footing it along in Crocs, the ubiquitous water-shoes that have migrated here from the coast. The Virginians, a 60-something couple who have fallen in with my pattern of shelter stays, are trying some chokecherries from the bumper crop littering their tentsite. "Sweet, but all seed," is their report. "Like eating sugar-coated marbles." A pair of women, walking their dogs from the valley, have stopped to say hello; asked when dinner is, they smile and tell a story of once finding two men here in frigid January, out of fuel and food and yet still trying to do the trail north to south. "We did feed them," says one. "You all seem OK, though, so no dinner from us," the other adds. Clearly, this shelter's not far from "civilization." And yet. There is the suddenly unraveling world of finance. All those hyperactive, supposedly hyperbright people—what have they been doing? Titanic-related imagery rises: the whole brightly lit enterprise seems to list, to tip, even as the lights burn fiercely and music floats across the night water. A few lights wink on now, announcing dusk in the valley.

"So what does all this make you think?" I ask Lucille. "That I'll get up tomorrow and teach," she says. "Beyond that I don't know."

"I guess I'll keep walking north," I say. But the urge to go home, always present when we talk, strengthens. Do I really want to be at distance when shakiness has the frontcountry world agog, when the dollars floating its (and our) future seem to be draining away? But, if I were to go home, what would I do, other than stare helplessly at the news? Lucille and I share some local news in muted voices and then sign off from this call of unsettled silences and odd descriptions. As I wander back down to the shelter, I think I'll keep the "news" to myself. Route 4 and Rutland are only a few days up trail; I can always hop a bus there if I need to.

I am not superstitious, but I am also mindful that this is the year's ninth month and my walk's eleventh day and that those figures have ushered in an altered world before. I think about this as I lie in my tent and wait for sleep. Chased here from the shelter by my urge to complete the night-strangulation of a snoring sleeper, I've written in my trail journal that the twenty minutes of airtime with Lucille were "a gift"; surely her voice was that. But the residue of financial news is a bathtub ring around my mind; there's no rinsing it away. I am in two places at once and that isn't the meditative state I've sought during this trail sojourn. I may admire and want to emulate the deliberate life of this ridge, but my night-and-subject-hopping mind unbalances me again and again.

A FEW YEARS BACK A FRIEND INTRODUCED ME TO A ROBINSON JEFFERS poem about building his stone house by the Pacific. When he finally got it right, Jeffers said he had "hung stones in the sky," and for me, the image works metaphorically whenever I try to construct something beautiful and lasting. Writing well is hanging stones in the sky, the words with their varied surfaces and shapes and gravity floating on the page's white air, rising then, one hopes, in the mind and heart too. So too, I begin to think, is living well.

Not long before I began this walk, I stumbled upon a seagirt hollow near the Giant Stairs on Bailey Island in Maine. The Stairs, carved by nature, descend into a thrashing strait of sea, but in the pocket of rock just to their right, there is an almost eerie calm. There, invisible from above, hundreds of stones balanced on fins and juts of rock, some in improbable combinations, others alone; the shaking sound of the sea filled the space too, but the stones hung serenely. The presence of opposites created a hush, a spirit, a wonder. "Look," such exhibits seem to say, "consider your original relationship with the world, its everyday miracle; don't be distracted or deceived." I hung my stones before leaving.

I have Jeffers and Bailey Island in mind because earlier today in a hushed pine forest along the side of White Rocks Mountain, I was also witness to hundreds of hanging stones. It was a prosaic approach to the extraordinary, though the absence of birdcall and the cathedral light and air might have alerted me had I been paying attention to something other than my footing. Still, when I saw the first stone balanced on a jut of larger rock, my breath rushed out and the quiet pines wrapped me in another world; instinctively, I softened my tread. The needle-dark ground made this quiet walking easy. The constellations of arranged stones surrounded and rested upon a cluster

of erratics, a few more than head high; the whole composition must have been 30 feet across, beyond the measure of one glance or many. I began a slow walk around the rocks. Some of the balanced stones must have weighed upward of twenty pounds; others were dwarfed by my fingernail. A number of micro-cairns rose from flat stone shelves jammed into horizontal cracks in the erratics; some “ropes” of tiny stones wound their way up slanted surfaces like necklaces. On the far side of the site, I found my favorite: a thin-edged flake of stone a foot across floated in a backlit slot between two erratics. The flake glowed around its fringe like a small sun rising between two soaring cliffs, a wonder of light, stone, and air.

“Who made this,” I said aloud, casting my question into the moment’s still water. And into the aftermath of its splash and ripple rushed the possibility of hundreds of walkers here simultaneously, levering up stones from the forest floor, eyeing the glacier-dropped rocks for the right place and right composition. That image faded and I thought next of a former student, now a painter, who has an uncanny ability to bring trees to life on canvas or paper. When Andrew was 17, he used to wander along our school’s perimeter river with its bankside willows and pines. During my own wandering, I’d often find constructs of sticks or stones that bore his mind print and pleased the eye. Somehow, Andrew “saw” the way art came from the random scatter of life. In some way this forest and these stones have summoned the Andrew inside the Appalachian Trail southbounders and northbounders—the SOBOs and NOBOs—inside the many foot-weary hoboes, pulling us from staring at the puzzle beneath our feet or the funhouse mirrors inside our minds to the way, improbably, stone can ride air.

I take out my phone, flip it open, and check the time. Three in the morning, no time for a call, and I settle for a quick scroll through the series of numbers recorded there—a whole community of relatives and friends. I snap the phone shut and in the newly complete darkness lie back and listen to the steady hum of night insects. On Bailey Island, occasional winter gales stir waves that wash out the pocket of balanced rocks; even the Green Mountains shake with tremors sometimes. I’m sure the stones of White Rock Mountain fall. Then, in ones and threes, walkers arrive. Andrew takes a stroll; a cairn rises. We begin again.

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**Turtles On A Log
At The Back Of The View**

I'm tipped off by turtle-wide
black ribbons cleared
through pond scum and duckweed:

brush strokes on pale green
mottled silk, a rune
about the shallow room

inhabited by most species
including ours,
meandering here under the trees:

how much it feels like heaven
to claw up, pull out, lean
into this last sun.

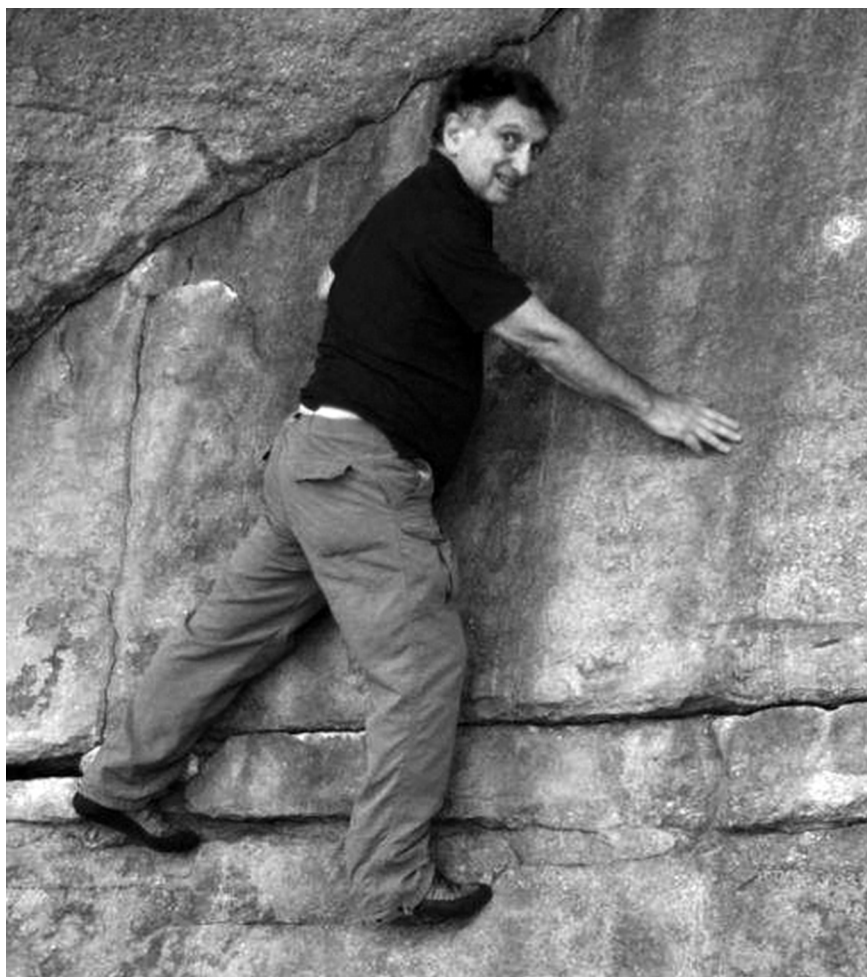
Polly Brown

POLLY BROWN teaches at Touchstone Community School and works with the poetry collaborative, Every Other Thursday, in eastern Massachusetts. Her latest chapbook, *Each Thing Torn From Any Of Us*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Three poems appear with MP3s at www.terrain.org, in its Borders & Bridges issue.

The Shawangunks, Now and Then

A personal history by the only climber from 1952 still out there

Steven Jervis



HIGH CORNER, ONE OF THE POPULAR ROCK-CLIMBING ROUTES in the Shawangunk Mountains of New York State, holds a morbid allure, because two climbers have died trying it. It's rated a 5.4 in difficulty in Art Gran's 1964 guidebook, and the last pitch is an enormous dihedral that is sometimes wet and usually in shadow. But today's climbers consider this quite moderate. I climbed it again in November 2009. It has many Gunks features: solid rock, steepness, exposure, overhangs, and great inward-sloping holds. I first climbed High Corner almost exactly 57 years earlier, when I was a 15-year-old beginner. Everything but the rock itself has changed since then. Ropes are longer, equipment has immeasurably improved, and only a few pitons—ancient and rarely trustworthy—remain in the cliffs.

In 1952, we were a rope of four—common in those leader-scarce days. First, we signed out on the cyclostyled sheet on the clipboard provided by the New York Chapter (later the New York–North Jersey Chapter) of the Appalachian Mountain Club, the only group then active in the Gunks. On this clipboard, we noted the time of departure, so that nobody would follow too close behind. It was nice to know which routes were available, but this was of limited concern when a really busy weekend drew 50 participants.

Back then, our ropes were nylon, which had recently replaced hemp. They were 120 feet long. About ten of those feet were used as tie-ins around the waists of the two climbers attached, and for belays. Thus, the maximum length of a pitch was only about 110 feet. A frequent anxious cry, belayer to leader, was, "Only fifteen feet left!" Often, there was little to spare before we reached a belay ledge.

Another problem was the drag from the rope below you. It sometimes seemed that I was hoisting a 100-pound boulder. There were no runner loops in those days. We ran the ropes right through the carabiners clipped to the pitons. The only way to extend the rig was to add a few more biners. The leader carried no more than ten or twelve, so you had to horde them. The pitons stayed in the rocks (which scandalized some Sierra Club visitors, who thought they should be pounded in and out each time), but we did make sure to test them with hammers. Some of them, rings and horizontals, might have been rusting in their cracks for fifteen years. They functioned also as route markers. Chalk was for writing on blackboards, not for desiccating our hands

A half-century after he started climbing, Steven Jervis boulders in the Gunks. Note the chalk marks on the rock, left by younger climbers. He says, "Chalk was for writing on blackboards, not for desiccating our hands to grasp the next hold." PETER JAVIAN



Gunks pioneer Art Gran climbs the Gunks route he named Thin Slabs. Now, like everything else, this climb is done entirely free. COURTESY OF STEVEN JERVIS

to grasp the next hold. As for our feet: We wore tennis shoes, laced as tight as possible. They weren't much good on edgy holds or in rain, but we could walk in them. This was useful, because the way off the cliff was to follow the trail south along the ridge crest until we could scramble down to the Uberfall on the carriage road, where the clipboard was stored and climbers congregated.

High Corner in 2009 was very different. We approached in our walking shoes; our climbing pairs—Sportivas, Anasazis, or the other kinds of light, flat-rubber-soled pairs in use today—were in our packs, along with racks of climbing hardware and other necessities, like lunch. We had not signed out. Nobody does. There has not been a clipboard at the Uberfall for nearly 50 years. These days we head for our routes and hope they're free. On a weekend, there will likely be a waiting line. This was a Monday late in the season, but this cliff saw as much activity as it would have on a sunny weekend in 1952. High Corner was open, so up we went, three of us. We had two 200-foot ropes, which we attached not to our waists but to our climbing harnesses. (Climbing without a harness is like driving without a seat belt, only more so. Cars had no seat belts in 1952, and climbers had no harnesses.) Around the leader's shoulder hung a hardware rack that 50 years earlier would have been thought science fiction: loops, wired nuts, stoppers, chocks, and especially friends. These intricate retractable camming devices have revolutionized protectability in the Gunks, where they fit perfectly the abundant horizontal cracks. You carry many more carabiners than before, often looped

together, but they are lighter. And then there is a cordelette, a thin but strong cord of many uses. One of them is to equalize the belay tie-in to several points. Don't count on pitons; they are probably all gone. The final belay point on High Corner is full of nasty pin scars.

We used to do the Corner itself in two pitches, which amazed my 2009 partners. "Rope drag," I explained. "Couldn't do it all in one pitch." This meant an intermediate belay atop a footstool-sized chockstone (a rock wedged in a crack to hold the rope), a very uncomfortable position, half in the crack, half out. I hope nobody ever had to hold a leader fall from there.

Once on top in 2009, we rappelled back down. This was one of the biggest changes of all. The path that hundreds of us used to follow every weekend back to the Uberfall is becoming overgrown. Every few hundred feet along the ridge is a rap point, a tree or more likely a pair of expansion bolts. (Bolting for protection is strictly forbidden.) With today's rappel devices and



Steven Jervis on rocks out West in the early years. COURTESY OF STEVEN JERVIS

long ropes, we get down in a jiffy. Although the rappel lines are usually some distance from ascent routes, we may find ourselves zooming right by some folks on their way up. Once on the ground, we're ready for the next climb—that is, if we can find a free one.

I BEGAN CLIMBING WITH THE AMC IN 1952, WHEN I WAS 14. I am still unsure just how this happened. I received an unsolicited phone call from Percy Olton, an AMC veteran whose name I knew from climbing journals: Did I want to join a beginners' weekend in the Gunks that he was leading? He picked me up one April Saturday and drove me and others to the cliffs. Even the driving route from Manhattan was different in those days: there was no New York State Thruway. So we motored up picturesque but slow Route 9W past the jagged peak of High Tor and through Newburgh. New Paltz, now the home of a climbing store and many restaurants, was bypassed to the east. Instead, we went through the village of Gardiner, where we might stop for coffee. Thence to Schlueter's, an inn whose clientele was almost entirely AMC climbers. It was cozy, and a bargain even by the standards of the time: \$11 for Saturday night and three meals (on Sunday, a box lunch). The place had no liquor license but was great for evening conviviality, dinner at long tables, and sometimes a slide show of summer mountaineering. But that April Saturday I spent more time in Schlueter's than I wanted.

Cloudy city weather had given way to a downpour. All 30 or so of us ate our lunches and waited for things to dry off. "It's just a clearing shower," people said. It was rueful joke. The rain did not abate, but by mid-afternoon everyone was restive. Percy sat with a clipboard, while being approached with the plea, "Can you get me on a rope, Percy?" This seemed to be the thing to say, so I tried it myself. Soon I found myself on the carriage road that runs below the cliffs. Our group of four was headed for what I was assured was just a beginner's route, named Minty. George Smith, a fast-developing leader and a very kind man, was in charge. Minty is indeed for beginners, but when wet it can be treacherous, especially if you are wearing tennis shoes. George put me second so he could keep an eye on me. The first step is the hardest: a single layback move to lift your left foot to a receptive ledge. I managed this, but got into trouble on the next pitch. George was keeping my rope a bit snug. I reached a carabiner and found I could not unclip from it. "Well," George called down, "you're going to have to, my boy." I could see his point. I could not climb through the biner. I did finally unclip it, after a damp struggle, with water cascading down my sleeves. At least the clouds hid any

exposure—we could see up only about 50 feet. Soon I reached the top along with George Evans and Harris Tallan, who remained climbing partners of mine for many years after. The handsome George Smith later posed as the “Man with the Hathaway Shirt” in a full-page magazine advertisement. He was clinging to an airy perch, with snow-covered mountains in the background. The perch was a Gunks boulder next to the carriage road; the photographer had supplied the mountains.

Like many a rainy day, Saturday was followed by bright clear weather. The cliffs that had been draped in fog emerged in all their intimidating glory. The first climb of the day was Easy Overhang, favorite of all beginner routes. Our leader was Maria Millar, followed by her husband, Dave. They specialized in fostering starting climbers and took special care of me and the other young neophyte in the party. We did the climb in five pitches. Yes, five (two was normal, even then). This enabled the Millars to monitor our every move, but it made for some crowded belay stances. The overhang was prominent. It was later pried off as loose and therefore hazardous. I know that Easy Overhang is an easy route, but it was quite exposed—and thrilling for a 14-year-old.

It would be a month before I was allowed to climb again, because, under the rules of the New York Chapter, I was a beginner. But I had found a calling. My high school classmates spent the weekend at parties or bowling alleys; I spent mine at the Gunks. I found that there was a fourth category of weekend: the bootleg weekend. The name was redolent of seedy promise. When nothing was scheduled, I could just climb independently, if I could arrange transportation and find an AMC-qualified leader. They were in very short supply. My friend Bob Graef drove me up the third weekend in June. Neither Bob nor I was a qualified leader, but we got lucky. On the carriage road, we found Bill Shockley, all by himself. He was one of only 21 “Appies” (as club members were then called) permitted to lead, a number far smaller in practice. This was Shockley before he established Shockley’s Ceiling, a spectacular and tremendously popular route. It was also before he won the Nobel Prize in Physics and (later) gained notoriety for his strange racial theories. (In Joel Shurkin’s 2006 biography,¹ Shockley’s life reads as a Greek tragedy. Unfortunately, Shurkin botches the narrative of Bill’s climbing career.)

Bill was waiting to climb with his daughter. Fortunately for Bob and me, she had not appeared, so he teamed with us—for the full day, as it turned out.

¹ *Broken Genius: The Rise and Fall of William Shockley, Creator of the Electronic Age* (Macmillan).

He had heard that the Rensselaer Mountain Club had established a nice new route. Because there was no guidebook, Bill had to rely on hearsay about its location. He did find it, but chose a first-pitch belay in an awkward, cramped alcove, never used today. All three of us somehow squeezed in. Then Bill, out of our sight, regained the route, passed the crux on the second pitch. These days the two pitches are done as one—another benefit of longer ropes. The route is known as RMC; it is only a few minutes from the Uberfall. Expect waiting lines, especially on weekends.

Fresh from this triumph, Bill tried Overhanging Layback. He had followed Fritz Wiessner on the first ascent in 1946, but Bill had not done it since. I do not know whether anyone else had. Few climbers had even heard of it. It was one of the hardest routes at the time and as intimidating as its name. Bill started up on two ropes. He went 30 easy feet up an inside corner to an alcove below the crux. Here he rested on tension from the ropes. He must have been there at least ten minutes. The first-ascent pitons were still in the rock. He moved out to the right below the overhang, then retreated. Another rest on tension. Then a few muscley but smooth moves—he was up and over! When I followed, I had the same sense of breathless exultation that Bill must have had. I was sure that cliffs were where I belonged.

In July, most Gunkies were off in the big mountains or dodging the heat elsewhere. No more bootleg weekends. I was heading for the Tetons in August to climb with Exum Guide Service experts, but how could I remain idle for July? “I’ll get out of shape,” I wailed to my skeptical parents. “It would be dangerous for me not to climb.” I wore them out. Soon I was on my way back to the Gunks with Don, the 23-year-old companion who was supposed to calm and amuse my brother and me. I now owned a rope, hammer, and carabiners. I had no instruction on how to use them on the lead, but that didn’t stop me. I led Don up five easy routes in a couple of days. He had never climbed before, so he could not notice whatever I was doing wrong. This was a truly reckless venture, but nobody saw us, so I escaped reprimand from the AMC. (That came later.) In September, back from the Tetons, I returned to the Gunks as an intermediate, for five scheduled weekends.

Soon I was ready to engage the New York Chapter’s complicated qualification system. It now seems antiquated and bizarre, and it certainly did not prepare me for the big mountains, or indeed, for any place except the Shawangunks. But the system had a plausible, tragic background. In October 1940, when the Gunks were scarcely known, the club sponsored a trip to Arden, a small crag just west of where the New York Thruway

now runs. When a fall occurred, two climbers were pulled off the top of the climb. One, Don Babenroth, was killed. It was a heavy blow: He was only in his mid-twenties, a promising geologist, and he had just been named the chairman of the chapter's rock climbing committee.

The December 1940 *Appalachia* reported the accident and promised a full account in June 1941. It never appeared—a pity, because the tragedy carried a crucial lesson: Don't belay unless you are secure. The area is heavily forested, but no one was properly tied in to a tree or to anything else, except to another climber.

The main Gunks climbing areas were the private property of the Quaker family that ran the Mohonk House, the great Victorian sprawl of a hotel nearby. No one had forbidden us to climb, but no one had given us permission either. The first serious accident—never mind a fatality—might mean expulsion. One leader asked in 1953, “How long can the inevitable be retarded?” And so the Mountaineering Committee had devised a demanding qualification process before we could lead even one pitch.

We needed the certification of a qualifying leader who had been designated at the beginning, rather like the first five chess grand masters. In 1952, climbers had to be qualified on each climb individually. That meant we had to lead them to the satisfaction of the qualifying leaders who followed, thus earning “legs” on the routes. We had to pass this test twice (for two legs), with a different leader each time. Our success was recorded in a notebook kept at Schluter's, which was engrossing reading. Of course, we might fail and have to try again. Some qualifiers were casual, others rigorous. One of them had the habit of deliberately falling off to test the other climbers' belaying skills. The process was made more frustrating by the shortage of qualifying leaders, who were often busy with their own climbs. Thus, very, very many times I led the few routes I had qualified for, often followed by beginners. By 1955, I had done Easy Overhang 34 times. One bright September Saturday, I led it twice, as well as two other easy routes: Minty (twice) and Three Pines.

This way you could see every hold and fixed piton in your dreams. It may have been safe, but it didn't prepare me for the big mountains, as I discovered in the Tetons. There, I was astounded to see my guide leading the easier pitches with no belay whatever and often not tying in at belay points. And the leisurely pace of Gunks practice would never work when we had a two-hour approach and more than a thousand feet of climbing to finish before sundown.

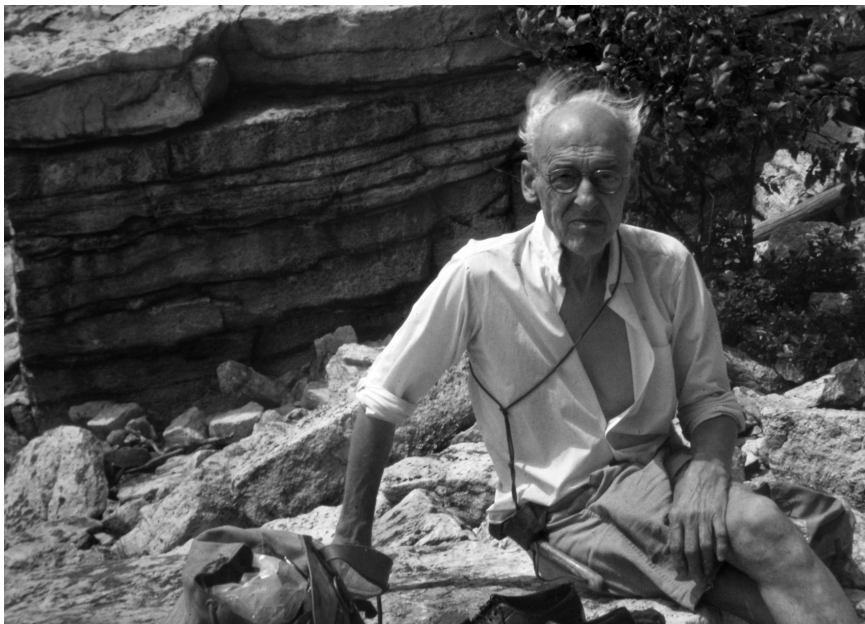
A few Gunkies did defy the New York Chapter guidelines—Ted Church for one, and especially Lester Germer. Lester was 55 when I met him, which made him something of an old man by standards of the day. And he appeared old, especially to me: He had the wiry, gray-haired look of a patriarch. I had no idea that he was a physicist of international repute, but I sensed that he was regarded as a bit of an outlaw. The chapter thought him reckless in his disregard of regulations. One Appie leader declared him “past reforming.” Lester developed no new routes, but loved taking people up familiar ones. During my high school years, I followed him 33 times. Despite his renegade’s reputation, Lester was very careful on the rocks. I will never forget his reprimand of my loose waist-loop. “There’s no excuse for that,” he said, in the voice of an Old Testament prophet. Not until late 1956 did the climbing committee designate Lester an unlimited leader.

INCREASING AGE SEEMED ONLY TO FUEL LESTER’S ENTHUSIASM. When he was in his late 60s, I was able to show him routes he had not known. He followed them eagerly. One fall afternoon in 1971, I heard that Lester had taken a leader fall. I rushed over with my partner, Nick Pott. Nick is a doctor, but there was nothing he could do. Lester was dead, not from the fall, perhaps his first ever on the lead, but from an apparent heart attack. He was a week short of his 75th birthday. (Now that I am over 70 myself, I more than ever admire Lester’s tenacity then.)

I had long since had my own brush with chapter regulations. Little more than a year after I had started, I was leading the top pitch of Frog’s Head. The steep sun-drenched rock had small, sharp holds. I ventured up, checked my balance, retreated a step. Then a stern voice from the carriage road 200 feet below: “Steve, I don’t think you should be up there.” It was an older Appie. We did not have a long dialogue. This very public rebuke might have made me more rebellious; instead, it had the opposite effect. I followed the rules henceforward. More than 50 years later, I still wonder whether this mid-climb chastisement was the right instrument of reform.

Despite this episode, I was invited to join the club in 1953. I solicited the required (at the time) letters from two members who had known me at least one year. (AMC membership no longer requires recommendations and can be arranged online.)

In addition to the law-abiding Appies and their fringe, the scene featured Hans Kraus—later famed as John F. Kennedy’s back doctor—and his small group: Ken Prestrud, Bonnie Prudden and her husband, Dick Hirschland,



Lester Germer, a physicist, was in his 50s when Jervis met him. He climbed until he was 74, dying of an apparent heart attack on the rocks soon after this photo was taken.

STEVEN JERVIS

and Lucien Warner. These folks were mysterious to the rest of us, with whom they rarely teamed up. Hans, along with Fritz Wiessner, had pioneered almost all the early routes in the hemp-rope days. By 1952, Fritz had left for Vermont, and Hans's presence dominated the cliffs. He was a distinctive figure, short and powerful; he had a strong European (mainly German) accent and wore a helmet of cloth. He and his group stayed at Schlueter's but rather remotely. (Eventually Hans had his own annex built at the inn.) We rarely knew what they were up to. Unlike Fritz, Hans was an eager practitioner of direct aid. Photographs of him often feature the three-step stirrups that he and his partners improvised. All his climbs are now done without such aid, but they were daring and advanced at the time. Sometimes he would be off to Millbrook, the highest and least-frequented cliff in the area. Almost nobody else ventured there. I tried a few years later with Craig Merrihue, a very strong partner from Harvard, but we didn't get up anything. Hans and company struggled with a new Millbrook route, frighteningly called "Never Again." "There is an overhang," he reported. "Then another one. Then a third one." This was another world to me, as it must have to most of my peers. The route went free in 1968,

thanks to the visionary John Stannard. The guidebook calls the top pitch “extremely loose and scary.”

Hans was very bold. He took a number of leader falls, some of them with injuries, but they never deterred him, not even broken ribs. One evening Bonnie and Dick played Tom Lehrer’s first record of satirical songs. Some were mildly ribald, others left-critical of the Cold War in Eisenhower’s years. Nobody laughed. I didn’t because I had heard the record many times already. The others didn’t because they thought it vulgar, or didn’t get it, or just didn’t find it amusing. Even I, as a callow teenager, could sense a gaping sensibility gap between Hans’s group and the AMC establishment. Some viewed Hans as dictatorial. His reputation intimidated me, but I found him a most generous man. A few years later, when he was unable to come to Harvard to give a lecture, he sponsored American Alpine Club leader Jim McCarthy to take his place. If climbers were injured, they went to the office of Dr. Kraus on Park Avenue. We were his preferred patients; he rarely, if ever, charged us.

A FEW YEARS LATER, THE LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS WERE RELAXED a little. We could now lead any beginners’ climb even if we had legs on only a few. Same for intermediate routes. This loosened things up a bit, but the leader-to-follower ratio remained low. There was a continued emphasis on safety. The 1952 American Alpine Club accident report quotes Norton Smithe, a very active member of the chapter: “We . . . are particularly proud of our safety program. . . . We lay much more stress on judgment than on spectacular climbing when selecting leaders, and have adopted a rather rigid qualification procedure.”

A Sierra Club article on the “dynamic belay” was a hot topic at Schlueter’s. The theory was that if the belayer let the rope pass through her or his hands in a leader fall, then the system, including the hands, would endure less stress. The criticism was that the belay might be dynamic whether you wanted it or not, and that extra falling distance increased the chances of landing on a ledge and breaking something. The club set up a belay-testing device: a heavy weight hung from a beam secured to the cliff 50 feet up. The weight was hauled up a way and then dropped, while the belayer on the ground tried to hold it. It gave quite a jolt and was a good lesson in the limitations of waist belays. Then the Connecticut Chapter held a safety training weekend at Sleeping Giant State Park. A young climber was killed.

The Gunks did see accidents, some of which were reported in the American Alpine Club reports, but they all were minor. That reputation of safety changed on April 5, 1959. The event is said to have occurred on High Corner; more accurately, it was off High Corner. The young climber from Yale University (not an AMC member) had deviated to the right soon after starting up. The rock is much harder there; it now hosts a couple of 5.8 routes. The first guidebook was still five years in the future. The victim pulled out his piton as he fell. His death did not end climbing in the Gunks, but it came at a time of significant change. The AMC hegemony was waning. Visitors came from Montreal; Pittsburgh; Washington, D.C.; and even farther away. Who could resist those miles of solid quartz conglomerate? Historians of the area emphasize the advent of the “Vulgarians,” who in their unruly demeanor and disrespect for regulations were the opposite of the Appies.

And then in 1963 a whole new arrangement erased the old ambiguities. Large sections of the cliffs were incorporated into what is now the Mohonk Preserve. Suddenly we were all signing liability agreements and paying a small fee for the right to wear permission buttons and climb. Anybody could sign up, and many did. The number of climbers, not to mention walkers and bikers, has exploded since then.

I remember my early AMC weekends walking the three miles to Skytop. I think this crag, a horseshoe-shaped extent looming above a great boulder field, to be the finest in the region. The best climbs are spectacularly exposed. But it is private property, not part of the Mohonk Preserve. You can’t climb there now unless you are staying at the Mohonk House and pay one of the outsourced guides. (Rates start at \$324 per person for a day.)

Just before I left for college, I myself was made an unlimited leader. I was amazed but pleased. My transition from naughty kid to authority figure was complete. I was the 24th to be so named. It saddens but does not surprise me to see how many of the preceding 23 are not only no longer climbing but no longer alive. Of those 23, only one to my knowledge died in a climbing accident. That was my friend George Evans, who had been with me on that rainy ascent of Minty so long before. George was a very careful climber, and a skilled one. He fell on the East Face of Mount Whitney, on an airy but fairly easy traverse. The American Alpine Club accidents report commented patronizingly: “Altitude, weather, and endurance lead to difficulties not experienced at places like Stoney Point or the Shawangunks.” George had done plenty of routes in the big mountains, among them the East Ridge

of the Grand Teton with me nearly 30 years before. The mountains are a hazardous environment, even for the most cautious among us.

Although many of their procedures now seem outdated to the point of quaintness, I will always be grateful to the New York Appies for getting me started and keeping an eye on me. It is now almost 60 years since I did my first route in the Gunks. I am the only climber from 1952 still active there. Somehow the routes have become harder. I lament the possible loss of history. Who now remembers to pronounce MARia Millar and her climb correctly? Or that Norton Smithe's last name sounds like Smith, not Smythe or Smithy? And what about those splendid angle pitons that he used to make himself and sell for 40 cents? They used to be everywhere on the cliffs. Who recalls when the first pitch crack on the route called Baby really had a baby? It was a split chockstone. Both pieces came out, at least once with a lead climber attached. And that foothold below the crux on Frog's Head? Its disappearance pushed the rating up a grade. And the splendid jammed block on the first pitch of Pink Laurel? Too many climbers must have pulled and stood on it. It now lies shattered at the bottom of the route.

My advanced age prompts me to note, crankily, contrasts with the past. The crowds, of course. Too many people enjoy climbing, that's all. And all those kids with their crash pads going bouldering. The boulders even have their own guidebook. Even worse is the young climbers' habit of rappelling down once they have passed the hard part of the climb. What happened to climbing entire routes? Then there are those ubiquitous indoor climbing walls. Someone told me she now rarely does "outdoor climbing." I had thought there was no other kind.

I struggle to follow routes I once led with ease. I cannot even plead age, because my frequent partner, John Thackray, is four years older and still leading 5.9. I often think I should retire, but climbing is living, so I cannot. A big climbing wall has opened near my Brooklyn home. It's called Brooklyn Boulders, but its routes measure 30 feet high. It is frequented by teenagers with tattooed arms who hang horizontally from plastic holds. They hold bouldering competitions there. Rock music bounces off the walls. I find the place a deplorable travesty of real climbing and go there as often as I can.

STEVE JERVIS is a retired professor of English at Brooklyn College. He has climbed in the Andes and Hindu Kush, and lived and taught in Nepal for the better part of a year. Read his travel accounts at www.stevenjervis.com.

Lay-Over Day

We watch the Green River, only road here, rise three feet—it covers the rock that caught and held our friend Anka yesterday, as the water swept her away from shore—only a dip in the brown waves now, a spill of eddies below. Rolland and Will tossed her a rope, river mermaid, pulled her back to shore. Only afterward she saw how there would be no going back in the spring flood.

Fire-blackened logs, sticks, debris churn past, bobbing, rocking in the current's race. The honey-salt scent of tamarisk, its pink-white fronds of blossom wind-whisked, drifts. Wasps crawl through the Gambel oaks. Spiders string silk along all their rough bark. Swarms of gnats eddy about the deep-lobed green leaves. Brown river foam sparkles in the river's wake.

Across the river and behind our tents, Wingate sandstone towers for hundreds of feet, the lower talus slopes and scree in gray-green Chinle. All day, under the oaks, we read. Sound bounces back: the raven's croak, the scrape of a canoer's paddle against a gunwale long before he comes in sight. Joyce turns a page in the heat. Sand scatters as a spotted lizard, beige and rust, runs past the water can.

A hundred and five degrees in the shade. The lizard runs up the trunk of the oak, stares at our friend Jim as he waves a dry twig to catch its eye, slips his other hand behind the trunk to catch its tail. Working hardest is the parasitic wasp, digging sand trails, a hole, hauling black flies to its mouth, another generation to feed now. Wind rustles the leaves of the Gambel oaks.

A hiss, as John opens the lunch bucket, releases the sharp spice scent of sausage, our mouths suddenly wet. Descending trill of a canyon wren. Constant bee hum. Dry slither of a yellow-striped garter snake. Someone rises, moves a canvas camp chair back into the moving shade. On the walls of rock, deep red desert varnish traces the path of rain, spalls, and flakes to pink-orange face.

Evening; red and blue enter the river, repeat the rock and the sky.

Robin Chapman

ROBIN CHAPMAN is the author of six poetry books, most recently *Abundance* (2009), which won the Cider Press Review Book Award. She is recipient of *Appalachia's* 2010 Poetry Prize.

White Mountains, 1964

25 impressions

Guy Waterman | Photos by George Bellerose



THESE 25 IMPRESSIONS GIVE A PAINTERLY VIEW OF GUY WATERMAN'S White Mountain trip made with his son, Bill, and nephew, Tim Carney, in 1964. They traveled from Stamford, Connecticut, by train and bus, spending the first night at the Indian Head Motel in Franconia Notch. Then the trio traversed the Whites through the Appalachian Mountain Club's huts system, from Lonesome Lake Hut (August 28) to Carter Notch Hut (September 7).

This was Guy's first encounter with the White Mountains. The contact was electrifying, as we can see from the freshness of his writing and his eagerness to climb everything in sight: a romp up Hale from Zealand Hut; tracing back over Adams and Jefferson, which they'd had to bypass in a storm; eschewing the Crawford Path for the much longer but more exciting Webster Cliffs Trail to reach Lakes of the Clouds Hut. Though Guy could not have known in 1964 how these mountains were to shape his life, by the early 1970s he had extricated himself from New York City to live closer to the range without which he found he could not exist.

He went on to write books with me about their history (*Forest and Crag* [Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 1989], *Yankee Rock & Ice* [Stackpole Books, 1993]) and the importance of keeping them wild (*Wilderness Ethics* and *Backwoods Ethics* [Countryman Press, 1993]). He ended his life on Mount Lafayette on a cold day in February 2000.

George Bellerose's photographs, taken a decade later, capture the spirit of what Guy found there with Bill and Tim on their landmark adventure. Guy wrote the notes that follow in a pocket-sized spiral notebook.

—Laura Waterman

... superb views down on Lonesome Lake.

1. Friday night. The sky full of stars, seen on arriving at Notch in the undiluted night air, an incredible number of individual stars seemed visible, some bright, some faint. The sky background was pure black, not dark blue. The whole canopy very near above us. An entirely different sky from that seen around cities.

2. Saturday morning. The first sight of the mountains. From where we were, the whole chain of the Franconia Range rose in succeeding summits—Flume nearby; the knotted [sic] top of Liberty; then, beyond, the three upsweeping cones of Little Haystack, Lincoln, and farthest away in remote isolation, Lafayette.

3. Saturday afternoon. An icy swim in Cascade Brook. After tramping 6½ miles, we were on a trail which climbed alongside a cascading brook, with falls and pools alternating repeatedly. The water was cold but bearable. The feeling exhilarating, revitalizing, a rebirth of energy and enthusiasm for the final 2½ miles. The White Mountains have many such brooks, which produce a chain of possible swimming holes as they descend the sides of the hills. The big obstacle is the water temperature, but under 3,000 feet this is generally bearable.



... a cascading brook, with falls and pools alternating repeatedly. NINETEEN-MILE BROOK

4. Sunday morning. The Franconia Range, seen from across the Notch. Climbing the Hi-Cannon Trail from Lonesome Lake, the morning view across the Notch revealed the main summits in full glory, especially Lincoln. Their long sweeping flanks, gleaming where the sun hit wet rock slabs. Also from this trail were superb views down on Lonesome Lake. This is clearly the best route up Cannon.

5. Sunday morning. Our first taste of being the object of tourist attention. On the summit of Cannon Mtn., crowded with Sunday tourists brought up by the Aerial Tramway, we were smugly aware of tourist parents pointing us out to tourist children, with our heavy packs and all-business airs.

6. Sunday afternoon. Bill's hitting his stride. Came on the 2,100-foot climb to Greenleaf Hut. Our first major climb. After having already climbed 1,200 feet up Cannon and descended 2,000 feet to the Notch. Up along-side Eagle Cliff, through Eagle Pass, then on up the great western shoulder of Lafayette, Bill repeatedly pulled far in front of Tim and I, showing wholly unexpected up-hill going power, which he continued to exhibit in succeeding days.

7. Sunday evening. Lafayette from Greenleaf. Unquestionably one of the most awe-inspiring scenes in the White Mtns. From the western shoulder of Lafayette, 4,000 feet up, the entire wall—Lafayette's north peak, Lafayette itself, Lincoln, Little Haystack—towers above, the long flanks plunging 3,000 feet everywhere but on the narrow col connecting the Western shoulder with Lafayette. The four summits connected by a wildly broken knife-edge ridge. Especially dramatic at sunset of a near-cloudless evening, gaunt against a darkening sky, brooding in awesome power over a tiny inconsequential shack-full of people sitting on its side.

8. Monday morning. Lafayette's summit in storm. A storm of rain hit the whole Franconia region, so that the hut cautioned against venturing up on the wild ridge of Lafayette. We decided to move, and crawled through the fog from one barely visible cairn to the next (above tree line at this point). On the summit, rain, wind, and cold drove us on quickly, with little time to savor our first 5,000 footer & no view at all. On the knife-edge leading to Lafayette's North Peak, the storm reached its worst. But as we descended the eastern side, we emerged from the storm and into sunshine eventually, tho the top of Lafayette remained shrouded by a storm cloud all day as we looked back.



... we emerged from the storm and into sunshine....

9. Monday night. Sleeping out at Galehead. Since Galehead Hut was overcrowded with an unexpected gang of Boy Scouts, we dragged mattresses out on the front steps. A thunderstorm, with lightning flashing over South Twin, got the blankets somewhat wet, but we stayed relatively dry, if cold toward morning.

10. Tuesday morning. Timmy's hitting his stride. The morning before, Tim had demonstrated a surprising second wind near the top of Lafayette under the most forbidding climbing conditions. Today, after dragging up South Twin, he took over the lead on a very fast 2 miles from South Twin along the ridge to Mt. Guyot. From now on, all of us were in fine shape and moving fast. While Bill is the faster uphill, Tim sets our pace downhill.

11. Tuesday morning. The summit of Mt. Guyot swept by wind and fog. Another forbidding morning, to be followed by clearing and a gorgeous afternoon. As we reached the rocky summit pyramid of Guyot, the wind reached terrific force, literally making it hard to keep our feet. With the fog clouds racing by us, rock outcrops would appear then be enveloped in cloud, then reappear. As dramatic a scene, almost ghostlike, as any yet met.

12. Tuesday noon. Carrigan [sic] Mtn., seen from the North. Descending along the rim of Zealand ridge, with the clouds finally dispersed in most directions, fine views were seen. Almost due south of us lay Carrigan [sic] Mtn., an almost ideally shaped mountain for, say, an artist's concept of what a mountain should be like. On the east it swoops up from a precipitous notch dividing it from the next range, rising first to a large subpeak (Vose Spur), then another swoop up to the summit. On the West it drops back, but not nearly so far down. The North Face appears to plunge in one long, wide slope to the valley below.

13. Tuesday afternoon. The surprise view from Hale Mtn. Having arrived early at Zealand Falls, we dumped our packs and took a 5-mile walk up Hale Mtn. & back, mainly to take in another 4,000 footer. We did not expect much of the peak itself. Our prize was all the more rewarding, therefore, because it was not expected. The views from Hale were one great panorama of the mountains on the horizon, rolling wooded rises and valleys nearby, the latter appearing soft and rich in every shade of green. To the East, our first view of the Mt. Washington uplift, now maybe 15 miles off—a massive bulk, grey-white (being above tree line), dominated by Washington itself.

14. Tuesday evening. Swimming at Zealand Falls. Not having any swims (or baths) at Greenleaf or Galehead, we rushed up to the pools under Zealand Falls for both recreational & hygienic purposes. The water turned out to be



Since Galehead Hut was overcrowded... we dragged mattresses out on the front steps.

VIEW OF GALEHEAD HUT FROM GALEHEAD MOUNTAIN

so cold that we barely could get in without turning numb. We all got in by various degrees, though the boys never fully submerged.

15. Tuesday night – Wednesday morning. Zealand Falls Hut, without crowds. This was the first hut where we had been in a small group, the others all having one large party or another. Wonderful company. Included were a couple of guitar-carrying types who led singing for a while. The hut has an organ (!) carried up piece by piece and assembled there, which I fooled around with. One of our party is a 72-year-old hiker, who looks 50, and who takes a daily morning swim in water which we were barely able to endure in mid-afternoon. The best crowd (or lack of crowd) hit yet.

16. Wednesday evening – Thursday morning. The contrast of Crawford House. After the happy, informal hospitality of the huts, Crawford House was an even more unpleasant contrast than anticipated. A millionaire's rest home, staffed by aging and wilted employees, and not really situated in an especially scenic spot (tho a few miles in any direction the views are fine). Everyone here looked sad and alone. A relief to be off on the trail again on Thursday morning.

17. Thursday morning. Webster Cliff Trail. This trail climbs 2,600 feet up the long side of Webster Mountain, along the edge of the cliffs over Crawford



... rolling wooded rises ... appearing soft and rich in every shade of green. THE TWINWAY



Spectacular views at all points MOUNTS CHERRY AND MARTHA

Notch. Spectacular views at all points, both long (south toward Carrigan [sic], across the notch toward Willey, Field, and Tom) and short (out across the cliffs, then later down them). A challenging climb too: 2,600 feet up from the notch to the summit.

18. Thursday afternoon. Above tree line. The first long climb above tree line came this afternoon as we crossed the subpeaks southwest of Washington, heading for Lakes of the Clouds hut. The afternoon was clear and bright, but the wind was very high and blustery. We had our first taste of what the Presidential Range supplies that the lesser ranges cannot—the continuous sense of high altitude with great drops of thousands of feet into the ravines on all sides, and the views ever present, because of being above tree line.

19. Friday morning. Sunrise from Monroe. The 5th highest summit, Mt. Monroe is a friendly peak, a half mile and 400 feet above the Lakes Hut. Easily climbed before breakfast, at which time the sun is coming up behind Washington. This morning, to the right (south) of the huge Washington pyramid, a cloud bank down to just above the horizon kept the sky dark to that point. Below this bank, however, a brilliant band of color stretched south, starting with a golden orange in the east and fading as it swept southward, ultimately tailing off in a soft rose glow turning to faint grey by the time it reached due south.



... the continuous sense of high altitude MOUNT CHOCORUA

20. Friday morning and afternoon. Gulfside Trail in storm. A true taste of “White Mountain weather.” After we had climbed Washington through a harmless cloud, the wind came up suddenly and, crossing Mt. Clay, a full-dress hail-storm hit us hard. Then after a brief respite, the wind came up again, this time with driving rain, and the visibility sunk to less than 50 feet, sometimes much less. For the first day, I was forced to take over the lead. We abandoned any attempt to go over Jefferson or Adams that day, simply pushing through to Madison Spring Hut. Because of the weather, there were only 7 others at the Hut.

21. Saturday morning. Madison at sunrise. The summit of Madison is a turning-point. Looking back, the full splendor of the top Presidentials stands in review. Looking on north, the ground drops swiftly to gentle hills and valleys thousands of feet lower down. This morning all the valleys were blanketed

with low fleecy clouds. Higher, less friendly clouds moved above the horizon. The summit of Washington remained veiled for over half an hour I was up. The sun intruded on this scene slowly, coming out of a cloud bank first as a red tip, then gradually filling out into a full sphere turning into a blinding orange by the time it finally appeared.

22. Saturday morning. Adams in wind and fog. With the weather so thick that cairn-finding presented a real problem, plus wind so high that holding one's footing was precarious (and nearly impossible right at the summit), we made it over Mt. Adams, 2nd only to Washington in height and to none in grandeur. An enormous cone of rough boulders. Of course, we had no views beyond 50 feet at best, but the feeling of great height was present, even huddled in the lea [sic] of the summit rock.

23. Saturday morning. The weather lifting, as seen from Jefferson. As suddenly as "White Mountain Weather" can attack the unsuspecting, just as swiftly can it release its victims and reveal the mountains' grandeur, equally unsuspected a moment before. As we approached Jefferson from Adams, we began to get sudden brief partings of the clouds with gigantic views down into the ravines. When we reached the top of Jefferson, tho the wind was still wild, visibility was greatly improved. Then as we went out on Jefferson's knee, the whole panorama from that spot, perhaps the best single vantage point in the Presidentials, was laid out before us—the Great Gulf leading toward Clay & Washington to the south, Jefferson's Ravine & the half-mile high wall of Adams incredibly close to the north, Jefferson behind us, and the broad valley leading to the Carters before us.

24. Saturday noon. The "Six Husbands" Trail. Why would the most interesting trail of the trip have such a peculiar name? Tho we came down, it would be best to do this from the bottom up. Rising straight up Jefferson's knee from the Great Gulf, it passes first thru beautiful evergreen-dominated woods; then through a fascinating labyrinth of boulders and rock slabs, actually tunneling through caves in the process; then suddenly emerges on the top of the knee, with the Presidentials' Big Three laid out before it—Washington seen across the Great Gulf, Adams in lofty majesty across the terrific drop of Jefferson Ravine, Jefferson on up ahead. From there, the trail goes straight on to the summit of Jefferson, 3rd highest summit of the Northeast.



Two small lakes are somehow wedged into this same notch CARTER LAKE

25. Saturday night – Sunday morning. Carter Notch. Along with Greenleaf, this hut has the most striking mountain scenery. Cut deep between Wildcat and Carter Dome, with steep sides rising 1000 feet on both sides. Two small lakes are somehow wedged into this same notch—beautiful settings. To the south, the valley sweeps down, mile on mile. Both Wildcat and Carter are interesting climbs, short but steep. At the southwestern foot of Carter, at the Notch, is a large field strewn with boulders, which have formed endless tunnels and whole caves to explore.

GUY WATERMAN was a writer, musician, climber, and homesteader, who lived for three decades in East Corinth, Vermont, before his death in 2000. Writer and former climber LAURA WATERMAN continues to live near their homestead. She is the author of a memoir, *Losing the Garden* (Shoemaker & Hoard, 2005), and is at work on a novel.

In Big Pine Basin

Cassiopeia hitches her way over the mountain ridge.
I lie in my down bag in the moon's shadow,
behind Two Eagle Peak, watching meteors

die across the evening sky, some so close
I can almost hear their passage. Earlier, at dusk,
when I stopped to share my trout catch,

the young artists across the lake
wanted to know why I wasn't afraid—
a woman alone in the backcountry.

I keep my own timetable: packing and moving
when I want; following cairns to the glacier; identifying
flowers along the trail; skinny-dipping in a hidden

spring. Tonight from my camp, a profound quiet, the only
sounds, the rush of the melting glacier a quarter mile away,
and from my neighbors far across the dark water—muted snores.

Marcyn Del Clements

MARCYN DEL CLEMENTS and her husband, Richard, live in Claremont, California. Marcy's work has appeared periodically in *Appalachia* since 1994. Her trip to Big Pine Basin, in California's Sierras, was her first extended solo backpack; she visited a loop of six lakes in an extinct glacial cirque.

The Stones of Rome

A walk along Hadrian's Wall

Parkman Howe



ON MARCH 13, 2010, AT 6 P.M., VOLUNTEERS IGNITED A GAS-powered beacon in Segedunum Roman Fort in Wallsend, near Newcastle in northern England. This set off a “line of light,” a fiery beacon every 250 meters that traveled west along the course of Hadrian’s Wall, the most visible sign of the roughly 400-year Roman occupation of Britain. An hour later and some 84 miles to the west, the 500th beacon was lighted in the deepening darkness at Bowness-on-Solway, on the Cumbrian coast.

Four months later, in late June, our party of four takes a train north from London to celebrate the 1,600th anniversary of the departure of the Romans from Britain with a three-day hike along the central section of Hadrian’s Wall. At Carlisle, in the northwest corner of England, we hire a cab and head for Birdoswald, one of the Roman forts along the wall, twenty miles to the east. Much of the wall has disappeared at the ends where it runs through the major towns of Carlisle in the west and Newcastle in the east. Over the centuries, the stones have been scavenged for farm buildings, houses, and even churches. The best-preserved remains in the center of the wall survive in the windswept uplands known as the Whin Sill.

Our narrow road rises into rolling hills and verdant farmland above the loops of the River Irthing. Suddenly, beside the road, we catch our first sight of the wall. A row of dark stones like articulated dinosaur vertebrae rises out of the green turf. Along the 80 Roman miles of the wall (approximately 73.5 modern miles), the Romans constructed a series of sixteen or so fortifications of which this, originally named *Banna* in Latin, remains one of the best preserved. *Banna* means *spur* or *tongue*, an apt designation for this commanding site, with cliffs to the east and south that overlook the lush valley and serpentine river. The modern name, Birdoswald, derives from a fortified farm on the site in continuous occupation since 1211.

We tour the exposed stone foundations and walls of Roman and medieval construction, then shoulder our day packs for the afternoon hike to Greenhead, five or six miles to the east. Under a gray-white sky we follow the gray stone wall, covered with greenish lichen, here anywhere from six to ten courses of stone (three to five feet in height), and four or five feet in width. It leads straight across a green pasture, in which a scatter of sheep grazes, and disappears into a wooded draw. A worn track indicates the hiking path on the

Hiking along the wall the Roman Emperor Hadrian ordered built in 122 to protect the empire from the rebelling Picts on the northern border of Britannia, in what is now Scotland. PARKMAN HOWE

southern side of the wall. Straight ahead to the east an escarpment rises, then drops off precipitously in a wavy line to the north. This, as we later discover, constitutes the Whin Sill, the most formidable defensive section of the wall.

Once beyond the field, we descend into a small, steep valley, cross a shallow watercourse, and pass through meadows, the backyards of houses, and along the edges of pastures. We climb up and down the contours of the land, heading due east all the while. We cross train tracks and switch over to the north side of the wall where we stroll along the bottom of the pronounced ditch paralleling the monument. We view a stone in the wall that announces (translated from the Latin): "From The Fifth Cohort, The Century of Gellius, Philippus (Built This)." We pass stone houses and outbuildings with gray slate roofs and flowering rose bushes in the courtyards. Uncurious sheep eye us from the vivid, close-cropped grass in the wall's shadow. A single pink foxglove bursts from a mortared fissure. We step over fences using a style: wooden or stone steps, sometimes built into the barrier itself, to allow public access through private lands. In the higher elevations, we view upland meadows dotted with dark shade trees. In the bottomlands, the pale straw of wheat (or corn as the English say) colors the fields. As we rise into the exposed swells of pastureland a constant, chill wind reminds us of the sea's proximity. At every turn, the wall accosts us and leads the way across the swells of hills, then dips and twists into the draws of streams that slice the terrain north and south.

We rest in a sheltered nook of the wall, our backs propped against its stones, and read about the wall's history. Emperor from 117 to 138, Hadrian ruled in part by traveling to virtually all corners of his far-flung empire. A rebellion by the Picts in what is now Scotland sometime between 119 and 121 brought Hadrian to the northernmost frontier of the Empire. In 122, he ordered a defensive wall across the northern frontier of Britannia, the northernmost boundary of the empire itself, in what are now the counties of Cumbria in the west and Northumberland in the east. As a result, the three legions at his disposal in Britannia—the second, sixth, and twentieth—began construction of the wall.

The Romans approached the construction with their accustomed precision, diligence, and method. They selected the narrowest and most defensible region of the British mainland across which to build a barrier. On the east, the River Tyne provides a natural deterrent; on the west the River Irthing likewise presents an inherent boundary as it flows into the Solway Firth. Between the two rivers rises a central escarpment of igneous rock, the



The foundations of Milecastle 39, also called "Castle Nick." PARKMAN HOWE

result of tectonic plate movement: the sheer cliffs we had seen earlier in the day. Roman engineers used the rivers on either coast as defensive anchors, and followed the natural course of the running line of cliffs and steep slopes that more or less connects the opposing coasts.

Not only elite fighting forces, the legions evolved into master builders, accustomed to constructing roads, bridges, and public projects. They commenced in the east and worked their way west. One construction team laid the foundations and built fortifications at mile intervals, together with smaller turrets in between. A second unit followed, building the wall itself. They fashioned the wall's core from rubble cemented with lime, or sometimes puddled clay. The outer walls consisted of cut stone carefully cemented. One can still see today, at varying intervals on either side of the edifice, the local quarries from which they harvested the wall stone. The legionnaires also cemented the top of the wall to form a walkway; the northern face of the wall featured a six-foot crenellated parapet behind which soldiers could patrol. A defensive V-shaped ditch, separated from the wall by a level space, or berm, nearly 20 feet wide, ran along the length of the wall on the north side. The wall required six years to complete.

As we approach the Greenhead area after an extended hike across treeless uplands, we pass the broken but still looming fourteenth-century walls of Thirlwall Castle, one of the many beneficiaries of Hadrian's Wall stone.

Shortly after the castle, we reach our first B&B, Walltown Lodge, overlooking the pastoral valley of the South Tyne River. Across a single-lane road lies the parking lot of the Roman Army Museum that houses a collection of reproduction Roman weapons and chariots, together with a reconstructed barrack and storeroom. The museum also features *The Eagle's Eye*, a film about a bird's-eye journey from Magna, the name of the fort near the museum, to Vindolanda, a Roman settlement some four miles to the east, which the film recreates through animation. We walk the steep mile down into Greenhead, a small village nestled in a gorge, where we dine on local trout at the Greenhead Hotel. After dinner, we face the mile climb in the chilly, darkening midsummer air back to Walltown Lodge.

After breakfast, we pack a lunch for our second day on the wall. A uniform gray shield of clouds covers the sky. We follow our trail up to Walltown Crag, our first encounter with the dramatic Whin Sill ridge. An upthrust of volcanic dolerite rock that stretches for miles across this region's midsection, the Whin Sill rises from the south, a massive, tilted plateau of turf that terminates abruptly along its northern edge in sheer, angular cliffs of dark, broken rock columns that plunge vertically hundreds of feet in places. Along the top edge of the cliff, Hadrian's Wall marches into the distances east and west. To the south, we view expanses of vast agricultural lands, fields rolling in one or two immense swells to the horizon. To the north, a level plain stretches far away below: a few lush green fields nearby, then patches of dark green forest, a low wave of brown sheep pasture, another green valley beyond, then more grazing land rolling into forest and blue uplands. At our feet, we find scatterings of bluebells, purple vetch, heather, thistle, wild strawberry, gorse, and knapweed. This will be our scenery for the next dozen or so miles.

The wall crests the ridge for hundreds of yards, then drops steeply into a sharp cut, or "nick," only to mount quickly to another crest. Our path rises and falls a dozen times over the course of the day. On one of the crests, we hear the sonic blast of jet engines and locate a pair of aircraft crossing low over the wall half a mile to the west. The dark fighter jets swing wide over the broad fields to the south, turn north, and pass directly overhead within a couple of hundred feet, the shock waves of torn air shattering the muted sigh of wind over rock. A military still patrols the wall.

In the afternoon, we reach the highest point on the wall, Winshields Crag, 345 meters (1,132 feet) above sea level. The view draws the eye north. The Romans made a number of incursions into the highlands, none of lasting consequence. Refusing to meet the Romans on the battlefield, local

tribes conducted guerrilla raids and retreats. In 142, the emperor Antoninus constructed another structure, now referred to as the Antonine Wall, farther north, between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. When Antoninus failed to subdue the northern tribes, the new emperor withdrew the legions, around 160, once again to Hadrian's Wall. In approximately 180 the tribes overran the wall, initiating 30 years of warfare. When the emperor Septimius Severus arrived in Britain in 208, he repaired Hadrian's Wall and led various expeditions into modern-day Scotland, penetrating as far north as the Moray Firth. In 210, he managed to negotiate a peace with the Picts, which lasted almost to the end of Roman rule in Britain, in 410. Nevertheless, one source claims that Severus lost as many as 50,000 troops during his campaign. He died of exhaustion at York in 211.

We descend south to the B6318, the modern road that parallels the wall for a number of miles at this point. Our next B&B lies just up the road. In the backyard, we stand in the old Vallum. This monumental earthwork consisted of a 10-foot deep trench, with a flat bottom 10 feet wide, and steep sides sloping upward to form a gap 20 feet across at the top. Thirty-foot wide level berms ran on either side of the trench. Finally, two mounds, each 20 feet wide and 10 feet high, bordered the flanking berms. The entire construct stretched some 120 feet from side to side. The Vallum eventually ran the entire length of the wall itself. Among other concerns, the Romans feared the Celtic Brigantes tribe just to the south. Had the Romans built only the Vallum, it would have represented a significant defensive monument in and of itself.

We take a short bus ride from the nearby visitor's center south to a pleasant knoll above the steep slopes of a wooded stream, with gentle, rolling hills beyond. On one side, behind temporary fencing, a group of archaeologists and volunteers removes wet soil from a ditch. An exhibit informs us that archaeologists expect to be digging here for another 200 years. The fort originally guarded the Stanegate (Old English for "Stone Road"), the first Roman road cutting across this portion of northern England. Hadrian's Wall parallels its path, more or less, just to the north. The site also includes a reconstruction of a wooden wall with a guard tower, as well as a section of wall with a stone turret, such as those once found on Hadrian's Wall. These 12-foot walls make an impressive show in wood and stone. We linger on the turret parapet and gaze across the valley. Although it is late June, we feel the damp in the cold wind.

In 2006, archaeologists found the remains of a girl between the ages of 8 and 10 buried under a barracks floor, her hands tied, almost certainly the

victim of a murder, since bodies were never buried inside Roman settlements. Two other corpses, unearthed in the 1930s, are also thought to have been murdered. Still, the dominant mood of the site remains serene, pastoral. Lush trees rise from the river glen; beyond the small valley, gentle fields ascend to hills crowned with rock outcropping. The Roman name *Vindolanda* derives from the name of the Celtic settlement that predated the Roman fort, meaning white lawns or land. The name speaks to the tranquility of the site.

A path takes us down into the shaded glade and the recreation of a Roman temple. Nearby, a museum displays artifacts recovered at the fort: Roman clothing, shoes, weapons, and the ubiquitous coins. Here, we also read about the famous Vindolanda tablets: thin wafers of wood about the size of our postcards found in a waterlogged dump beside the commander's house, dating from the 90s to the 120s. The Romans built over old sites by layering their building materials. This method, along with clay in the earth and the consequent lack of oxygen, preserved the delicate Latin scripts that list stores, garrison military reports, and private letters of soldiers and their families. Among them researchers found the following invitation to a birthday party, from Claudia Severa to her friend, Sulpicia Lepidina:

On 11 September, sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present. . . . I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail.

Several days later, we view the fragile tablet itself, written between 97 and 103, in the British Museum where climate controls prevent deterioration. It represents quite possibly the earliest sample in existence of writing by a woman.

The next day's walk takes us by more sheer cliffs, through pastures of sheep and cattle, across farmyards and fields, past the foundations of milecastles and the ever-present wall. Gradually, the landscape flattens out as we leave the drama of the Whin Sill behind us. Along the open pastureland of one hillside, a modern shepherd in his red ATV herds his flock, giving a lift to his sheepdog across the lush meadow. A helicopter passes overhead. A broad field of bright red poppies, like a lava flow, ignites the distance. We stroll along an avenue of oaks beside a motorway. The dark stones of the wall disappear into the green turf like the ancient scales of a reptile. Outside Chesters Roman Fort at Chollerford, yet another Roman garrison on the wall, we see two signs pointing in opposite directions: "Carlisle B6318" and "Newcastle B63189."

AT FULL STRENGTH, BETWEEN NINE AND TEN THOUSAND TROOPS garrisoned Hadrian's Wall. Thus, it became the most heavily fortified border in the Roman Empire. Still, it could not withstand the vagaries of political, economic, and social fluctuations. The local tribes continued to revolt; the Roman Empire declined and fell. Now, despite two centuries of preservation efforts, wind and rain continue to plow down the faces of its stones.

People generally do not love a wall, as the poet says; they want it down, no matter what it walls in or walls out. Seventeenth-century Dutch settlers put up a stockade wall along the northern boundary of New Amsterdam at the foot of Manhattan Island to fend off English settlers and later Indian warriors. The wall eventually turned into a street. The Berlin Wall, 87 miles long and 12 feet high, lasted a mere 28 years. China's Great Wall remains the world's longest, at more than 5,000 miles. Still, where it does not cross tourist routes, the wall continues to erode and disappear. The world's second-longest wall, the Great Wall of Gorgan in northeastern Iran, failed to stop Alexander the Great, among many others; it too crumbles. Farther back in the mists of time, Troy's walls stood and famously fell. Jericho's walls remain the oldest ever discovered, going all the way back to the ninth millennium. Every one of the world's walls has or will come a-tumblin' down.

Despite their histories, walls continue to be debated and built—in Israel, in North America. Proponents might spend a few days walking along Hadrian's Wall. What wars and barriers could not settle, the diplomacies of populations, commerce, time, and gravity have resolved. Good fences don't really make good neighbors; good neighbors make good neighbors.

Still, uncontested fences, walls, and borders take on an aesthetic beauty unmatched by any other structure. In 1976, Christo constructed his Running Fence in northern California: 40 kilometers of white nylon 18 feet high, rippled and bellied by coastal winds, lit by sunsets and sunrises, sailing across the landscape into the sea. It stood for fourteen days. Or Hadrian's Wall, that dark snake gliding along the rim of the Whin Sill's broken rock and green turf, through the empty Northumbrian landscapes of cloud shadow and light, making its bid to last 2,000 years.

PARKMAN HOWE is the poetry editor of *Appalachia*.

Ice House Cabin

A bittersweet return to beautiful memories

Marcyn Del Clements



I SLIP MY GOLDEN AGE PASSPORT ONTO THE DASH, POP OPEN THE tailgate of my new blue Honda Fit, and sit down to lace up my boots. Throwing my arms through the straps of my blue day pack, which holds my Camelbak (NO! Not cigarettes . . . a nifty hydration system consisting of a bag for water and a hose and nozzle with which to suck it in), I grab my trekking poles and start walking into Ice House Canyon to visit the site of our cousin's cabin.

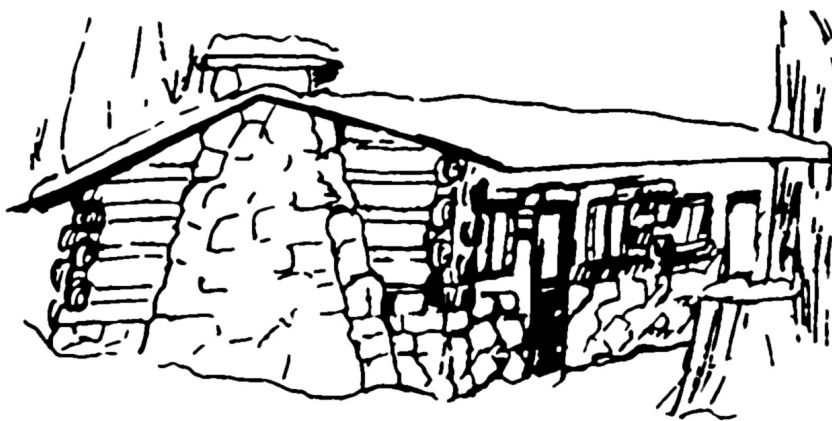
I am slower these days. But it's a bright, lovely day in the mountains and there's no hurry. I take a long pull from my Camel, walking off the blacktop onto the dirt access road.

There are fewer butterflies now that the season's advanced, but I do see the admiral floating up around the oak limbs at the trailhead. I hear a woodpecker and follow the call around and around a copse of small oaks before I see him, the fiery head and striped back of the Nuttall's.

Farther up the path, I find the wallflowers mostly shot, but a sturdy stand of penstemon waves its scarlet faces in a slight breeze. A tiger swallowtail floats slowly above me; I only see its shadow on the ground. Before I know it, I've reached the cutoff trail that takes off straight down to the creek and the cabin site beyond. It's been more than 30 years since I took my girls here one summer, but starting down this thin trail brings back memories:

The girls are 10 and 12 this year. They can carry their own backpacks, sleeping bags, and jammies. They also have a leash in hand with Molly and Eby, who are behaving fairly well for two rambunctious black labs. Molly is Ebenezer's mother, and he always stays close to her. He's been her constant companion since we sold all the other puppies and kept him. He was the odd one, with a missing bone in one toe, and a bump on his head. The girls named him Ebenezer Scrooge, or Eby for short, as the litter was born in December. He is a purebred as is his champion mother, Molly's Black Gold. But right now they act like two hybrid ratters and the sounds and smells of the woods excite them. At the cutoff trail, the girls take the dogs off their leashes and they springbok down the cut to the streambed. By the time we reach them, Molly is standing in the middle of the stream, biting the water plume as it rooster tails off the rocks, and Eby is lying belly down in the pool drinking.

Rock foundation walls and the chimney are the only parts of the beloved Ice House Cabin that still stand. Ice House Creek is just behind it. MARCYN DEL CLEMENTS



The cabin as it looked in 1973, sketched by the author's cousin. ALISON FULLER

I'M GLAD I BROUGHT THE TREKKING POLES. THEY HELP EASE THE stress on my knees as I descend the cutoff trail. At the stream, I balance myself with the poles over the log crossing. On the other side, there is no longer a stone stairway, but the cabin ruins are through the trees. I stand on the cement platform that had been the patio and look around. The rock walls, as well as the rock chimney, still stand on what had been the cabin's foundation. All else has vanished. The Thunder Mountain Fire in 1980 destroyed most of the cabins in Ice House. There is blue graffiti scrawled across the boulders and trash everywhere. I put down my pack, pull out a plastic bag and start to fill it: broken bottles, plastic containers, pop tops, a perfectly good T-shirt tie-died by the sun, Styrofoam cups, Trojan wrappers, soup packets, empty tuna cans. Plastic water bottles litter the duff, one half full. I empty the water on a sapling cedar and crush the bottle with my boot. Many cedars survived the fire, which is good for the Nelson's hairstreak, a diminutive butterfly associated with them. Some glass pieces are flat, and thinking they may have been from the windows, I leave them, tucked under old pine needles.

There is a fire ring inside the foundation, where the kitchen had been. My gorge rises. Putting the trash bag aside, I snatch blackened branches out of the pit and fling them in every direction into the woods. Then, one by one, bending my knees to protect my back, I haul out the rocks of the fire pit that had been taken from the cabin walls. Carefully, I place them back. Soon they ring the waist-high walls, which are now one rock higher. There is a red rock, heart-shaped; I place it on the side of the chimney, where the mantle would have been. My hands are black so I squeeze a little water from my Camelbak

over them to rinse as a young Anna's hummer buzzes up to me and checks out my flowered shorts before deciding the rest of me is not nectar-able.

The girls and I splash through the stream in our zorries, and squish on up the stone steps to the cabin. Putting down our packs, I fish out the key to the door. Our cousins had brought us an extra key when we moved into our new house in the foothills and asked us if we would please go up as often as we could and stay at their cabin as long as we could. Vandals plagued them, and our presence might deter that activity. They had even installed a steel entry door to discourage vandalism.

When the dogs realize we abandoned them, they run up the path to find us, shaking a waterfall all over our packs and us.

It is the summer of ladybugs, I remember. They are everywhere along the streambed, clumped on ash leaves and columbine, crowded onto willow branches and ferns. When the girls and I get home, we tell Dad, and he goes back with us to see it, too. We take a jar with us and collect some for our roses.

Now there is a straggling columbine leaning over the creek, and the only bugs are the pesky gnats that hover in front of my face and try to get into my



At the base of an ancient cedar tree, a seedling sprouts. Many of these huge incense cedars (Calocedrus decurrens) survived the fire that destroyed the cabins. MARCYN DEL CLEMENTS

eyes, ears, or mouth. I swish them away and blot the sweat on my forehead. It is time to go back.

Tying the trash bags to the bottom of my day pack, I shimmy into the straps and take another long pull of water, grateful that I remembered to put ice cubes into the bag before I left the house this morning. I do miss not being able to drink the cold water right from the creek. In the 1970s, we never had to worry about drinking untreated water. Not anywhere in the Transverse Range, certainly not in the High Sierras where my husband and I backpacked early in our marriage. We would clip a Sierra cup to our belts and when we climbed past one of those deliciously cold springs that cascaded down the mountain and splashed across the trail, we could just dip our cups into the rill and drink all we wanted.

Snapping the hip strap of my small pack, I cross the stream a little lower down from the logs, across a couple of dry boulders, watching to avoid the nettles and poison oak. Up canyon, the dipper calls. They have done well this year, nesting under a waterfall in June. With the bulging trash bags flapping me in the butt, I climb back up to the main trail.

When their daughter was young, our cousins had gone to France for a year. They brought us back a small blue and white pitcher from the Alsace-Lorraine region where they had lived. But they also brought back something else, leaving it in the cabin for summer days like this. After we go to the creek to get water for dinner, after we watch the dipper drop into the pool and “swim” underwater, we climb back up the slate steps and, inside the cabin now, the girls reach into the cubby beside the fireplace and bring out Monopoly, in French. They set out the game pieces and parcel out the francs, and we settle down to play as the light filters through the windows on this pine-scented lazy afternoon. The game goes on for hours, and this day seems never to end.

MARCYN DEL CLEMENTS lives in Claremont, California, with her husband, Richard. Sometimes, she hikes up into Ice House Canyon and sleeps at the cabin site, remembering. She is a frequent contributor to *Appalachia*.

In the Duck Marsh

A thousand wings above me, all invisible.
I will take the next train south, meet
them there. I suppose the dog will want
to go along too. We are concentric circles
widening out from a splash we have
been waiting for year after year.

The cry of clouds on a gray morning,
the sky crouched over in its own
duck blind, the water idling through
the reeds. We are notching time
to make it go away. The chill wind
reminds us we have nothing to lose

by giving up. The corners of the dog's
eyes start to close. I tell him
he will drown if he falls asleep.
The cold scaling my legs ripples
out from me as if I were a stone
dropped in the water's center to stir

the nutrients around their slow
microscopic pirouettes. The dog and I
are adjuncts to the algae, the water,
the ducks. The wind from the north
breaks into thousands of arrows, so
quickly through the target's center
my eyes crack across the sky.

James Doyle

JAMES DOYLE's latest book is *Bending Under the Yellow Police Tapes* (Steel Toe Books, 2007). He has published poems in many journals, including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Poetry*.

Ice and Ashes

A young sled driver takes on a moral imperative

Blair Braverman

THE SUMMER I TURNED 18, I LIVED ON A GLACIER. IT WAS A BROAD, slanted finger of snow, a home I shared with 200 huskies and a dozen people. From above, the camp was smudges on the white, pressed against the base of a black mountain: canvas tents, ordered doghouses, trails that stretched into the fields beyond. I was working as a dogsled guide in Alaska, leading tourists through a wilderness nicknamed “the moon”: Juneau’s ice field, which covers an area the size of Connecticut with ice up to a mile deep. Each morning I would pull myself from my sleeping bag, slip on my raincoat and boots, and step from my tent into the pale light of the northern summer, the glacier luminous beneath me in the rising sun.

After chores—feeding the dogs, cleaning trails—a distant purr would echo over the mountains, and a line of helicopters would grow in the sky until they were right above us, the air throbbing with the beat of their rotors. I waited by the sled while the birds landed, the handlebar jerking under my hand as the dogs jumped in excitement, and for one hour I would escort passengers on a tour, skimming across the ice field in gentle silence. Over the summer, I gave almost 700 tours, so that the season’s runs melt into a single memory; of these, one alone stands out.

On that tour, I had a single passenger, an older woman with a southern accent and a creased face. As we left the kennel she told me her story: how she and her husband had always longed to visit Alaska’s glaciers; how they had finally made it up, last year, only to be forced down in a sudden storm; how he had fallen ill—cancer—and passed away that winter. I listened, kicking snow with one foot as we slid along the trail.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” I said.

She smiled. “Don’t be. I’m glad to be here today.”

Two miles in, I paused to give my dogs a rest, a chance to bite snow and cool down. When the sled stopped, the woman pulled something from the

folds of her coat: a sandwich bag filled with earthy powder. She pressed it to her heart for a moment, then leaned over the side of the sled basket, scooping at the snow with her free hand. Hurriedly, she emptied the ashes into the hole, patted a handful of snow on top, and returned both hands to her lap like an attentive child. Her papery skin stretched tight across the knuckles of her clasped hands.

“Are the dogs ready yet?” she asked. “Let’s keep going.”

For the rest of the run, neither of us spoke. I doubt I could have. When the tour ended, I touched the woman’s hand, then watched as she climbed into a helicopter and lifted into the sky. I wondered if I wasn’t the only one watching her go.

Throughout the evening, I was troubled. I realized that the next morning, when we cleaned the trails, the ashes would be collected with the other dirt, then packed into a barrel and flown to the Juneau sewage treatment center. This, after the woman had come such a long way. I went to my boss and told him of a plan I was forming, but he only shook his head. “This isn’t your responsibility,” he said. “It would be much too dangerous. One dead body is enough for today—we don’t want you hurt, too.”

That night as I tried to sleep, the day’s events whirled and eddied in my thoughts. He’s right, I told myself. It’s not my responsibility. But the longer I lay awake, the more I was certain of what had to be done. And so in the young hours of the morning, deeply uneasy, I stepped from my tent.

We kept three snowmobiles in camp and I started the smallest, wincing as its engine cut the night’s silence. After a few minutes’ driving, I found the ashes, a gray-brown patch that seemed to pulse against the white trail. What had seemed so simple in the tent—to dig up the ashes and move them—seemed, suddenly, very difficult. And no one was allowed beyond the outermost path, which was where I planned to go; it was the only place where the ashes wouldn’t be disturbed.

I closed my eyes and took a slow breath, feeling my lungs expand and cool with the night air, and as I exhaled, I reached down and dug my naked hands into the snow. The ashes were buried more deeply than I had expected, and I pulled them up in handfuls, gathering a dirty mound. My fingers stiffened with the cold and I breathed on them, trying to ignore the dark crescents jammed under my nails, trying to forget that they were part of a human body.

When I could move my hands again I began packing the pile together, carefully pressing the growing snowball into a perfect sphere, stained gray like frozen smoke. Then, lifting the ball to my chest, I stepped off the trail. Out

here, crevasses waited blue and veiled under the surface, plunging like cracks to the center of the earth, and I walked cautiously, expecting to fall through with every step. When the burn of the snow in my palms forced me to stop, I looked back. I could no longer see the trail or the snowmobile; only my footprints broke the billowing expanse, a dotted line shrinking into the horizon.

I crouched down and placed the ball on the snow, wondering, reflecting. A man lives his life, falls in love and marries and dies, only to be carried by a stranger across a barren glacier in the Alaskan wilderness. His ashes would melt into the ice with the next rainfall, then creep downhill for a decade or more before calving into the sea in great white boulders. It struck me that I had never before felt this alone, here on an empty ice field under dark mountains, with the burden of leaving a man behind. It was as if I were packing part of myself into the snowball, as if I would emerge less than whole.

It seemed disrespectful not to provide some sort of ceremony, and I felt a sudden anger at the man's wife, his nameless loved ones, for leaving me—a stranger!—with the tremendous responsibility of the final goodbye. What could I possibly say that could do justice to an entire life lived, that could show compassion, kindness, understanding? I knew nothing, nothing at all about the man in my hands. I bit my lip until it ached, trying to think clearly. And then, cautiously, I began to speak.

"I never met you," I said, "but I think you were probably a good man. You were probably just like any of us, good sometimes but not always, just trying to be a better person. I bet you did things you were proud of and things you regretted, and you learned from your mistakes. There are people today whose lives are better because you were part of them. If you have kids, I'm sure they love you very much. I know your wife does." I swallowed. "She's in Juneau right now, thinking you're where she left you, and maybe that brings her peace."

I stood long in the clouded moonlight, thinking. I thought about what makes us human, our shared truths, our deepest hopes, the peace that comes from understanding that we are not alone. In the distance, a soft howl rose and fell, trailing off so gradually that I couldn't tell when it ended, and after a moment I turned. As I walked toward the trail I felt the weight of tears on my cheeks, but when I reached up to brush them away, it was only snowflakes.

BLAIR BRAVERMAN graduated in May from Colby College.

Accidents

We should come home from adventures, and perils, and discoveries every day with new experience and character.—*Henry David Thoreau*

The weather from April through September 2010 in the White Mountains of New Hampshire was just about perfect, from an adventurer's standpoint. Temperatures were slightly above normal for five out of the six months and rainfall was low in all but October. The philosophy of resting when it rains no longer seemed to work. Beautiful weather drew crowds and provided a forgiving environment for their mistakes and accidents, and so it was a busy six months for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Its conservation officers managed more than 90 calls, two-thirds of them from hikers, the rest dealing with kayakers, climbers, missing children, and suicide victims.

Last summer's accidents included familiar problems of heat exhaustion and hypothermia, slick rocks, and twisted knees. They also involved cell phones, helicopters, Google Earth, and Mylar blankets. Technology can actually cause accidents, but more and more it helps people. NHFG reports show that hikers are more likely to carry cell phones than even the necessary headlamps or flashlights. More than half of the incidents are reported via cell phone these days. Rescuers can talk the lost back onto trails or out to roads. Also, a cell phone is always communicating with towers near it, and search-and-rescue managers have located many lost people by "pinging" a cell phone—that is, using the tower's communication record to locate the phone. When you call 911, the system automatically begins to lock in the phone's coordinates. The accuracy of the coordinates varies, but this tool is becoming more refined and of greater value with each passing season.

One example of cell phones' place in rescues took place on a Saturday last October. A large group from the Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston splintered into smaller groups while combing Gilford's Belknap Mountain. At 4:45 P.M., the first 911 call came in, from nine hikers, one of whom had fallen and hurt a wrist. The municipal fire and rescue department used the 911 system to locate the phone, and a crew drove to a trailhead on Wood Road

to begin walking in. When crew members arrived, they found a dozen hikers warming up inside a local house; that group reported that 29 people in all were unaccounted for.

As crews proceeded up the blue-blazed trail, a second 911 cell phone call went in to the command post, this time from seven hikers disoriented along the trail's boulder field (as the cell coordinates revealed). Despite the searchers' instructions that they wait for the rescuers (who were headed that way), for some reason that second group decided to head back to the fire tower on the summit. The rescuers searched the boulders, wondering where they had gone. Meanwhile, *another* group, this time of ten, called 911 after reaching an unfamiliar trailhead on the other side of the mountain. Yet one more call came in from nine who were on the summit. Each call came through with coordinates, and the incident commander confirmed where the lost parties were before developing a plan of action. The last member of the group was escorted off the mountain at 7:45 P.M.

Global positioning systems and their associated technology also have become pillars of searches and rescues. Cell phones have GPS tools, and searchers in the field carry small GPS units to record exactly which areas they have passed. During the lengthy August 2010 search for a missing woman in the Waterville Valley, incident commanders reviewed hundreds of searchers' GPS tracks on a single map.

Hikers are also using satellite-based personal messengers, known as SPOT beacons, more often around the White Mountains. Last July, a lost man used one to prevent a rescue—almost. While hiking from Madison Spring Hut to Pinkham Notch, he sprained his knee and had to spend the night on the Osgood Trail. He sent a message to his wife that said, essentially, "I'm fine but will be delayed." He had some emergency gear, but that night a bear found his trailside camp and ate all his food—and his bottle of sunblock, his bottle of ibuprofen, and his prescription medication. He was shaken up but otherwise fine. In the morning he sent a message to his wife on his SPOT saying he was OK.

The problem was that no one had relayed the bear story to the man's hiking partner, who had expected him to arrive at Pinkham the night before! Score one point for effective use of technology but take away two for forsaking basic communication.

For years now, the public has debated the problem of expensive searches and rescues. Hikers require them the most and don't pay for them, whereas the owners of snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, and power boats pay registration fees

that fund the searches and rescues, even though these groups account for only 10 percent of the rescues. Legislators have responded with the now infamous law that allows the state to bill a hiker whom they find was reckless or negligent. Although New Hampshire exercises its right to collect more often than do the handful of other states with similar laws, the collections barely make a dent in the costs. The state recovered the costs of only five incidents in 2010, a total of only \$10,000, though many others appear to have involved negligent behavior. The annual cost of the state's search-and-rescue program is \$260,000. New Hampshire legislators have so far not budgeted general funds for search and rescue. They continue to try to find a way to bill hikers. In early 2011, a bill was being considered in the state legislature to form a committee that would study sources of funding for searches and rescues.

Two Fall on the Mount Washington Headwall Trails

On Sunday, July 18, 2010, five friends geared up for their hike to the summit of Mount Washington. Heavy thunderstorms had pounded the mountain the night before, and a warm fog enveloped the summit. At 5 A.M., the Mount Washington Observatory was already recording 51 degrees Fahrenheit and forecasted the temperature to hold steady without much clearing. The day ended better than expected, and the group made the summit without problems. They went down the Tuckerman Ravine Trail, which, as it winds its way down through the ravine's steep headwall, crosses the Cutler River. At this point, the Cutler is only a small stream, but below the trail, it pours over a short cascade and flows across a smooth ledge. Below this ledge, the river pours over what is called Schiller's Rock in the main waterfall. (In the last issue of *Appalachia*, I described a climber's early winter death in this location. The victim probably fell from the area around Schiller's Rock, but the rock itself was not his final resting place as one might have inferred from the analysis.)

When the group reached the headwall area, it was approximately 5 P.M., and Christopher B., age 24, decided to go off trail for a closer look at the waterfall. While he skirted around the first cascade and pushed through the subalpine vegetation, his companions took pictures and recorded the scene on video. As Christopher tried to make his way toward the top of the waterfall, he slipped on the polished rock and landed feet-first facing the sloping ledge. The rushing water immediately washed him 20 feet down over Schiller's Rock and out of view of his friends.

The panicked group heard a scream from below but were unsure of its origin. One member of the group began running up the trail in hopes of acquiring a cell signal so that he could call for rescue. The others began to descend and quickly encountered another hiker who had seen the fall from below. He had immediately approached Christopher to assess his condition and quickly realized that the victim had not survived the 100-foot-plus fall. He told Christopher's friends that they should continue descending and report the accident. They did, and with the assistance of volunteer rescuers, Christopher's body reached the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center at 11 P.M.

A month later in the adjacent ravine, Sean M., 17, suffered a serious fall despite his extensive hiking abilities. He was just ahead of his father, Greg M., following the Huntington Ravine Trail up through the talus field known as the Fan. His younger brother, Aaron, was back with the father. They were experienced hikers, excited about tackling what many consider the most difficult trail in the Whites, and prepared with the correct equipment. Shortly after 11 A.M., they reached the base of the rock slab where the trail breaks away from Central Gully and heads diagonally up and to the right. The spot is a great vantage point, and Greg and Aaron decided to take a quick rest while Sean continued on.

Sean climbed up the slab and moved comfortably along the exposed trail, but then one small misstep caused him to slip and fall. Greg watched helplessly as Sean fell and tumbled 150 to 200 feet into the rocks below. Greg immediately grabbed his cell phone and dialed 911 as he searched for his son in the talus. After being connected to an emergency dispatcher, he finally found Sean, who was alive but with many significant injuries. Greg called down to a couple of hikers lower on the Fan, and they responded to his plea for assistance. A litter was obtained from the Albert Dow Rescue Cache a half-mile down the steep boulder-strewn descent trail.

The NHFG officers looked into using the New Hampshire Army National Guard to extract Sean with a helicopter, but the guard wasn't available. They next tried the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART), but its helicopter lacks a hoist, making the ravine an impossible landing place without snow to level the floor. A long and arduous rescue ensued that involved more than 40 people from organized rescue teams. Sean was badly banged up, but he had no major injuries and he remained stable on the trip out. Rescuers carried him to the Sherburne Ski Trail, where a six-wheel all-terrain vehicle assisted with the remaining stretch to Pinkham Notch. At 6:30 P.M., the DHART helicopter airlifted him to the hospital in Lebanon,

where he was initially listed in fair condition. He was discharged a few days later and was expected to fully recover.

Comment: Nowhere on Earth but the White Mountains can you find such an expansive network of well-visited hiking paths that take the most direct routes up with little regard for leg muscles. These historic trails that tackle the fall line were constructed before erosion was a consideration and before the switchback came into vogue. These trails often weave through steep and complex terrain where off-trail travel is either impossible or dangerous. Hikers who thrive on exposure actually seek out these trails.

Sticking to the established trail is usually the best policy in steep terrain, but we've all gone off-trail to relieve ourselves, retrieve the falling water bottle cap, or see a better view. Christopher, the hiker who died, knew that a large waterfall tumbled below him and still chose to make his way out across the Tuckerman headwall. He should have understood how to calculate risks; he was training to be a skydive instructor. But he underestimated how slick the footing was, and he probably did not know how many have fallen and died at Schiller's Rock.

Sean, meanwhile, was an experienced hiker and had done some rock climbing. He knew that small slips could have drastic consequences.

The falls that the two young men took were similar in height and their individual outcomes could have easily been reversed. Whether on trail or off, we need to constantly assess the hazards around us and decide what level of risk we want to assume.

Stranded

The Tuckerman Ravine and Huntington Ravine trails are far from the only White Mountain paths that come within spitting distance of serious natural hazards. Within the Presidential Range alone, the Madison Gulf, Six Husbands, and Great Gully trails are all paths that thread the needle through steep areas with considerable exposure. On July 30, three young men decided to drop down the Great Gully Trail to cut miles off their original itinerary. Joseph G. and Christopher L., both age 28, and their friend Joel K., age 27, made it most of the way down the headwall of King Ravine before finding themselves stranded off-trail in a ledgy area not far above Mossy Fall. Feeling that they had run out of options, they called 911 on a cell phone. Two crew members from the Appalachian Mountain Club's Madison Spring Hut responded, as did two from the Randolph Mountain Club's Gray Knob

cabin. The volunteer rescuers found the three, helped them approximately 50 yards back to the trail, and then escorted them to Madison Spring Hut to spend the evening.

In a similar mishap in mid-September, another party of three young men got into trouble on the Tripyramid loop. Gregory C. and Paul N., both age 25, and Alexander R., age 24, left their vehicle on the Kancamagus Highway and began hiking at 10:30 A.M.. Their plan was to follow the Pine Bend Brook Trail to its end and then traverse the three summits of the Tripyramids. Unfortunately, they left their map in the car. After summiting the three peaks, they dropped down the opposite side of the mountain, where they eventually hit the Livermore Trail. They realized their mistake, and passing hikers suggested they follow the north leg of the Mount Tripyramid Trail over the northern summit. Although this route was shorter than retracing their steps, a better option would have been to follow the Scaur Ridge Trail, which would have avoided unnecessary elevation gain and difficult terrain. But the group followed the hikers' advice and before long found themselves on the famed North Slide. The group explored options up the edges of the steep rock slabs, but before they knew it the entire party of three had gotten themselves stuck. To make matters worse, Gregory was having back pain related to surgery he'd had three years earlier. The group had cellular service at their location and decided to call 911 to request assistance. NHFG conservation officers and volunteer rescuers responded and began their hike to the scene. They found the stranded party, assisted them off the slide using ropes, and accompanied them on the hike out.

Comment: These hikers could have avoided becoming stranded by following the first principle of the hikeSafe hiker responsibility code—be prepared with knowledge and gear. Without a map or an understanding of the area trails, they ventured into hazardous terrain they did not know. They had not adequately researched the options for hiking out.

Take short notes on your options, and carry this information with you. It can easily be kept with your map in a waterproof bag or written in a pocket-size waterproof notebook such as the one I have tucked in my first-aid kit. The AMC *White Mountain Guide* provides detailed warnings about the routes that have historically been the most challenging for hikers. Many of the other trails can still give you trouble in the wrong conditions, but if there's a known, constant, and pronounced hazard, key into it ahead of time. The guidebook warns against taking the challenging routes when they're wet, you

have a large pack, are hiking with dogs, have a fear of heights or exposure, or are descending.

A second way to keep from getting yourself stranded is to pay close attention to trail markers. Paint blazes are designed to be targets for hikers to see and walk toward. But realize that blazes are not maintained within the six Wilderness Areas of the White Mountain National Forest. Mount Tripyramid's North Slide is within the Sandwich Range Wilderness and old paint blazes have faded or been removed. Rock cairns mark routes, but realize that wandering hikers build cairns wherever the urge strikes them. Trail crews and backcountry rangers spend a portion of their field time dismantling cairns that could lead hikers off the trail. Following trails is essentially following the tracks of those who have passed before us. Watch for trail markers but also for pruned branches and constructed features such as water bars or scree walls. You can also look for footprints and signs of soil compaction, but if you're confused in an area, there's a good possibility that the last person through also fumbled around trying to figure it out.

When I first began rock climbing, my friend Mash told me that when there was no rope to prevent a fall, I must follow an important rule: Never climb up anything that you can't climb back down, awkward though it may be. Though I will openly admit I have not followed this rule as gospel, I always consider it before committing to a difficult move. Before my daughter could walk, she climbed couches and curtains, and she learned this same rule—to down-climb—so well that by age 5 she had no trouble climbing a couple hundred feet up Whitehorse Ledge. She knew she could scamper right back down if necessary.

Cardiac Emergencies

Robert M., age 52, was hiking the Cave Mountain Trail in Bartlett with his wife on Friday, October 8, 2010, when he sat down, saying he felt tired and dizzy and felt pain in his chest. Resting didn't make him feel any better, so his wife wisely hiked back to the car and called 911. Rescuers got to Robert fairly quickly and loaded him into a rescue litter for immediate evacuation. They wheeled the litter back to the trailhead where he was transported by ambulance to the hospital.

A September incident on Mount Adams required a different approach. Ernie R., age 63, experienced severe chest pain as he was hiking with his son

on Lowe's Path toward Gray Knob cabin, which is just below treeline on the north side of Mount Adams. When they got to the cabin, the caretaker placed a 911 cell phone call. It was 4:30 P.M. Rescue teams were called to standby, and NHFG began calling about helicopter availability. As luck would have it, the New Hampshire State Police helicopter and crew were at the Lancaster State Fair just west of the cabin. NHFG Conservation Officer Matthew Holmes was picked up by the helicopter on its way to assess landing options. (Like the Dartmouth helicopter, the police ship has no mechanical hoist.) Clouds moved in just 200 feet higher than Gray Knob, but the pilot found a spot 100 yards from the cabin where he could hover close to the ground while Holmes and another crew member jumped out. They loaded Ernie into the hovering helicopter, jumped back in and took the short ride down to Route 2 to meet an ambulance.

Three hikers died of heart attacks on White Mountain trails. One particularly sad story unfolded on Mount Lafayette's Old Bridle Path. On Wednesday, September 22, 2010, Terrance F., age 71, climbed up to spread the ashes of a deceased friend. Terrance's wife and the friend's widow waited below. At 1:35 P.M., a descending hiker who happened to be a doctor came across Terrance sitting down against a rock wall at the base of the steep section of trail known as the Agonies. The doctor checked for signs of life and then called 911 to report that he was dead. While he waited for the authorities, Terrance's cell phone rang; the doctor answered it and had to tell Terrance's wife the bad news. Volunteers carried the body 1.5 miles to the trailhead. He had spread his friend's ashes before dying.

Comment: According to the American Heart Association, about every 34 seconds, someone in the United States has a heart attack. It's likely that other heart problems went unreported in the mountains. Understand the signs and symptoms of heart attacks even if you aren't in a high-risk category. Most attacks come on slowly, and victims are slow to understand what might be wrong. They suffer shortness of breath and don't feel better after resting. Many feel chest pain, a classic sign of an attack, but the pain can also be located in other areas of the upper body, especially the jaw and arms. Nausea and dizziness are also common, and some victims describe unusual heartbeats (rapid, strong, or skipping beats). Early recognition of signs is important to save lives, and this is especially true in the backcountry. The quick response by the caretaker at Gray Knob may have saved Ernie's life. Had he resisted the urge to call, the cloud ceiling could have easily lowered a few hundred feet and shut out the option of helicopter rescue.

Dunk Your Head in the Moats!

On Monday, May 24, 2010, Mary H., age 58, began her attempt at traversing the Moat Range. It was supposed to be a splendid, warm day. She and her daughter enjoyed the rolling granite mountains' open views. As the day wore on, Mary began to feel poorly. Her legs were shaky, she was having trouble talking, and she seemed to be losing feeling in her face and arms. A nurse herself, Mary recognized that she was exhibiting signs of heat exhaustion and she lay down in a small stream to cool off. Her daughter's cell phone had a signal, and she used it to call 911 and request assistance. Rescuers hiked in to their location on South Moat and with some additional rest and a cold beverage, Mary was able to walk out under her own power.

In midsummer, a 20-year-old female collapsed from heat exhaustion on the Twinway near Mount Guyot. The AMC's Guyot Campsite caretaker responded with volunteers, and after some rest and water, the victim was able to hike out without help. DHART returned to the Twinway ridge-line later in the month to evacuate a woman who was suffering from severe dehydration. Numerous other incidents involving dehydration and heat exhaustion occurred during the summer both with and without involvement from NHFG.

Comment: The summer of 2010 was warm and dry—not hot enough to dissuade hikers from going out, but perfect for heat injuries. The enjoyment hikers find on the trails often shrinks when they lack water and suffer exposure. Although you want to try to save weight on longer hikes, water is usually worth its weight in gold. Because of its scarcity in the alpine areas, you should recognize and capitalize on opportunities to use water. Dunk your head in the stream you step over. Wet a bandanna to drape over your neck; this feels good and helps to keep your body temperature down. Nutrition, hydration, and adequate rest are the real keys to avoiding heat injuries, but nothing feels better than a splash of cold mountain water when it's hotter than a firecracker.

The Mighty, Stubborn Thor

On Saturday, June 26, 2010, Elizabeth R., age 47, and her boyfriend Brian H., age 49, set out with plans to climb Mount Liberty. It was about 9:30 A.M. when they left their vehicle and started up the trail with their dog, Thor. They made it to the summit but by 12:30 P.M. decided to descend because the weather was deteriorating. Thor had been on numerous hikes before, but that

day the 130-pound Akita decided he had had enough. Thor refused to budge. Feeling she had no other options, Elizabeth used her cell phone to call 911 and ask for assistance. As is the agency policy, the NHFG conservation officer told her that they do not organize pet rescues. She was advised to descend to the Flume Visitor Center, ask to use the rescue litter and then organize volunteers to retrieve the dog. She did exactly that and at 6:30 P.M., Thor began his ride down the mountain in a Stokes litter. It was extremely slow going with a small crew of rescuers and at 8 P.M., one hiker went down to the visitor center to summon additional help. The weather was poor with light drizzle and cooler than average temperatures. Help was nowhere to be found. At 10 P.M., Elizabeth made another 911 call on her cell phone, this time asking for medical help for herself. She said she had been vomiting and was cold, tired, and wet from all the rain.

Volunteers from the Pemi Valley Search and Rescue Team hiked in three quarters of a mile to the location of the group and provided Elizabeth with food, water, and extra clothing. They found her to be mildly hypothermic, but she seemed to be improving. Despite their best efforts, she refused to leave the dog. Conservation officers hiked in to the scene, and as dawn approached, they finally convinced her to walk out to her car to get some rest. Brian stayed with the dog for the rest of the night. After two hours of resting in the car, Elizabeth headed back up the trail and waited with Brian and Thor until a group of Boy Scouts came along in the morning. They helped carry Thor to the parking lot, which they reached at 9 A.M., almost 24 hours after Elizabeth, Brian, and Thor started out. A veterinarian told Elizabeth that Thor had been dehydrated and exhausted but suffered no major illness or injury.

Comment: Dogs were made for the outdoors. These animals evolved in outdoor environments where they ranged great distances in search of food and companionship. Even after domestication, these animals lived outside for thousands of years before dog beds and sweater jackets and “designer dog” breeding (emphasizing traits that are easy to care for) became commonplace. A 130-pound Akita is hardly a designer dog. The breed originated in a mountainous climate in northern Japan. Why, then, couldn’t Thor live up to his namesake, the hammer-wielding Norse god of thunder, lightning, and strength?

Dogs, like people, need water for nearly all bodily functions, and when their bodies try to operate in the red, things start to shut down. Muscle strength and coordination are some of the first things to go, just as they are in

humans. Prevent dehydration by finding ways to push water when they don't naturally guzzle it down. Sled dog racers have known this for decades. They mix dry food with water and add beef broth to water. These tricks help dogs that aren't active drinkers. A few beef bouillon cubes and a collapsible water dish can go a long way.

Consider also: Is Scruffy fit for this type of undertaking? Does he have a medical condition or ailment? Does he enjoy hiking? Second are all the things that responsible dog owners consider on a regular basis. Is Rex good around other people and dogs? Is he obedient enough to be off leash, or do I need to keep him under control at all times? In the Whites, dogs often suffer lower-leg injuries. Cut pads are the most common ailment and usually result from hiking above treeline on sharp metamorphic rock such as what dominates the Presidential Range.

Off-leash hiking is allowed in the White Mountain National Forest, as long as dogs are under voice control. But dogs get separated from their owners all too often in the mountains, often because dogs chase wildlife. Does your pooch chase squirrels at home? You must watch him closely so that you don't lose him when he's in pursuit of a fleeing snowshoe hare. Obedience is as critical in the mountains to avoid your dog getting lost as it is at a dog park in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A Space Blanket and a Spot to Lay His Head

At 10 A.M. on Friday, August 27, 2010, three women were hiking up the Benton Trail on Mount Moosilauke. They came upon a severely hypothermic man 0.6 miles below the summit. Howard F., age 83, had little gear with him and was lying in the middle of the trail, his skin an ashen gray. While one of the hikers called 911 on her cell phone, the others set about trying to get Howard warmed up. An Appalachian Trail thru-hiker happened by, and together the group got him into dry clothes and then into a sleeping bag. They provided Howard with food and used a stove to make some hot beverages. His condition improved, but he still couldn't walk and continued to show the signs of hypothermia.

Howard had left the trailhead the prior day at 11:15 A.M. with a forecast for poor weather. A cold front was expected to pass through the area, touching off rain showers and possible lightning before temperatures dropped into the evening hours. He summited the mountain, but going down injured his knee, the same knee that had given him trouble before.

Howard was more than three miles from the trailhead when he got hurt, and he decided that his best bet was to wait for someone to come along. When no one did, he spent the night out in the open with little more than a thin emergency blanket.

After the hikers called 911, NHFG quickly initiated a rescue mission. A helicopter evacuation seemed logical with DHART so close by, but as the ship approached, the pilot recognized that clouds were going to prevent him from landing on the relatively flat summit area. Rescue crews were already on the trail and NHFG conservation officer Bradley Morse reached the victim shortly before 1 P.M. As rescuers provided Howard with more warm clothes and fluids there was a break in the clouds, and DHART agreed to give it another try. The clearing held and the helicopter successfully landed on the summit. The rescuers then carried Howard more than a half mile uphill to the flying ambulance, which in turn transported him to the hospital for evaluation.

Comment: Howard's space blanket may have saved his life. One of these Mylar sheets is a lightweight piece of insurance that is well worth tossing in your pack. Not only does it retain heat, it's waterproof; both will help during an unplanned bivouac such as the one Howard endured. When you purchase a blanket, it's compressed into a little brick, and I guarantee you once you open it, it will never get that small again. Some are simply rectangular blankets, and others are bivy sacks, the latter being superior but more costly. You can greatly improve the efficiency of the standard blanket by taping the seams with duct tape or medical tape after wrapping the patient. In either situation, it's important that people are wearing dry insulation layers in this "emergency burrito" because the blanket only reflects the body's radiating heat and increases the humidity levels. In a pinch, a simple trash bag does a reasonably effective job as well. Carrying additional emergency gear such as warm, dry clothes would have made Howard's experience a little less miserable.

At a White Mountain Search and Rescue Working Group meeting in fall 2010, a rescuer commented on the number of recent incidents that involved older people. Looking at the search and rescue numbers for NHFG's first quarter (July, August, September), I found that of the 39 hiker-related incidents (out of a total of 54), 8 of the victims were 70 or older. These numbers are in line with a national trend that shows that the segment of our population eligible for retirement is more active. Life expectancy continues to rise, and it's not uncommon to have someone twice your age pass you on the trail.

A simple slip or trip can have more severe consequences when your joints and bones have been exploring the planet for three-quarters of a century. Of all the older people who suffered mishaps in these mountains in 2010, most of them were exhausted. Trips and falls were often a direct result. To reduce their likelihood of an incident, older hikers should formulate itineraries that are based on their current fitness and not on what they've done before, even if that was recently. It may be wise to strongly consider a policy of not hiking alone. A companion could have easily gone for help when Howard twisted his knee the first day, and he never would have had to endure an open bivouac.

Howard was found by hikers who happened upon him. It is unclear if he had left his itinerary with anyone, but no one had reported him missing. If the women hadn't found him, it is unclear how long he would have survived on this little-used section of the Benton Trail. Not far above his location was the Benton Trail's junction with the Beaver Brook Trail, which is also the Appalachian Trail and a much more trodden path. Although he was unable to walk, Howard could have considered other options besides waiting for someone to pass by. He could have crawled his way up to the junction with the Beaver Brook Trail with the idea that it would be more likely for someone to come hiking along. Another option was to crawl his way down the Benton Trail. Yes, that would mean three miles of slow and painful travel, but at very least he would have been generating heat and fighting the icy grip of hypothermia. When I shattered my ankle in Yosemite a number of years ago, I had to crawl, do the crab walk, and basically drag my own butt back down to the closest road. It wasn't a three-mile adventure, but it was an adventure nonetheless, especially when I realized I was skitching across a nest of ground wasps!

Who Turned Out the Lights?

On Sunday, June 13, 2010, Ronald F., 37, parked on the Sandwich Notch Road with the intent of hiking a loop that included a visit to Black Mountain Pond. The route checked in as more than nine miles long, but when Ronald set off, he had nothing more than a light jacket, a cell phone, and his keys. His dog accompanied him, and together they successfully made it through the first part of the hike before Ronald became disoriented on the Guinea Pond Trail. He tried to backtrack but eventually lost the trail. Darkness settled in, and without a light, Ronald had little chance of finding his way out of the woods.

He then used his cell phone to call for a rescue. NHFG conservation officers hiked in and used whistles to locate Ronald soon after midnight.

The following Friday, Mady D., age 51, set out to climb Mount Washington from the west with two companions. They didn't start until 11:30 A.M., and when they were coming down late in the day, Mady injured a knee that had given her trouble in the past. She could still hobble, but the group quickly realized that they were going to be benighted, and none of them had a headlamp. Mady kept hobbling down the trail while one of her partners called 911. They were more than three miles up the Jewell Trail, above treeline and not prepared to self-rescue. Some of the crew from the Lakes of the Clouds Hut came to help and they escorted Mady down the trail. Conservation officers also began hiking up the Jewell Trail, and they met the group about a mile above the Cog Railway's base station. Mady hiked out herself with the help of the light-bearing escorts.

On Columbus Day weekend, a group of students from Brown University traveled to the White Mountains with plans to go hiking. Their weekend started with poor weather and a thick glaze of ice covered the higher summits. Sunday was sunny but cold and windy, and the group headed for a popular nine-mile loop on the Franconia Ridge. The group started up the Old Bridle Path and made it to the summit of Mount Lafayette without incident. From there, things began to fall apart as the big group spread out and then split up, three physics graduate students separating from the rest. Mingming J., Xu Luo, and Xu Liu missed their turn onto the Falling Waters Trail and continued south toward Mount Liberty. They knew that something was wrong but had no map to reference. One of the men used a cell phone to look at Google Earth, and the three then agreed that they would take a shortcut through the woods to return to the trailhead. There was no trail to follow and they set off on a bushwhacking adventure high on the slopes of the Franconia Ridge. They thrashed through the woods until it became dark and then called 911. Searchers found them at 2 A.M. and walked them out. The group had no lights, map, food, extra clothes, or matches.

Comment: This was another of many incidents each year that would not have happened had the people taken the necessary equipment. As a starting point, these are ten essential items outlined by hikeSafe: map, compass, warm clothing (wool or synthetic, NOT cotton), extra food and water, flashlight or headlamp, matches/fire starters, first-aid kit and repair kit, whistle, rain/wind jacket and pants, and pocket knife. These items should form the base

of equipment for any hike. Depending on the weather and length of your trip, you might need other items, but these are the starting point. Darkness is rather predictable and easy to manage if you bring the right gear.

It's likely that both Ronald and Mady would have been able to save themselves if they had carried lights or started earlier to use the full amount of daylight to their advantage. The entire escapade on the Franconia Ridge might never have occurred had they taken flashlights and a good map.

Know How to Use It

The ten essentials are only as good as your understanding of how to use them. On August 20, 2011, Phyllis R., age 52, completed most of her intended loop up the Gale River Trail, across the Garfield Ridge Trail and then down the Garfield Trail. She began her hike at 9 A.M. and planned to be done by 4 P.M. At the first intersection that she encountered, she went the wrong way and didn't realize it until she ended up at Galehead Hut. After being sent in the right direction by the hut crew, she missed another turn and wasted more valuable time. Before she knew it, she was hiking in the dark. At 10:15 P.M., she called the AMC's Highland Center where she had spent the previous evening. She was at an unsigned junction and needed directions. Every time that she tried to move forward with resolution, she second guessed herself and backtracked. Eventually she was connected to a NHFG conservation officer who helped talk her down the trail. In their conversation, she mentioned that she had all of the hikeSafe ten essentials. Only later did it come out that her compass was actually just an application on her iPhone. She admitted that she didn't trust it, and her experience navigating with topographical maps was also limited. The gear is only as good as what you possess in associated knowledge, skill, and ability. Be prepared with knowledge and gear. Become self-reliant by learning about the terrain, conditions, local weather, and your equipment before you start.

—Justin J. Preisendorfer
Accidents Editor

Alpina

A semi-annual review of mountaineering in the greater ranges



In 2009, exploratory mountaineering and significant first ascents continued in this huge region. The apparent paranoia of the Chinese authorities and the fact that fewer 6,000- and 7,000-meter peaks remain unclimbed hindered the activity. The year saw two major anniversaries that authorities believed would lead to unrest among the indigenous peoples of Tibet and Western China: In March came the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Tibet Autonomous Region (the formal annexation of Tibet to China), and on October 1, “China Day,” the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. In anticipation of demonstrations and other anti-government activities, the state imposed strict controls and travel limitations on Tibetans and foreigners and, to a lesser degree, on Chinese nationals. These controls varied in application but were particularly strict in the remote areas of undeveloped mountains. Many foreign expeditions were delayed, prevented from reaching “approved” destinations, or detained and fined.

Physical access to backcountry Tibet and other portions of western China continued to improve as the extensive travel infrastructure investments began to take effect and were accelerated as an anti-recession measure. Improved access destroys the romantic remoteness that mountaineers prize, and the associated increase in wealth among backcountry residents may raise their costs. Some local people—for example, collectors of the matsutake mushroom or of the famous caterpillar fungus that brings as much as \$10,000 per kilo—may refuse to act as porters at almost any price. Some of the newly rich have invested in heavy-duty motorized trail bikes, and the traditional pony or yak caravan now finds itself replaced by trail bike caravans costing \$40 per day for bike, gas, and rider. Even the remotest of small villages may now have concrete walled structures with glaring red metal roofs instead of the traditional chimney-less Tibetan hovels.

The distinguished mountain explorer and unveiler of the region he calls East of the Himalaya, Tamotsu (Tom) Nakamura, because of his long relationship with the Chinese authorities (and perhaps superior negotiating skills) was able to lead an extensive journey to “least-known” valleys in autumn of 2009. He explored the following: the Aigagong Glacier and Niwu Qu in the upper Yi’gon Tsangpo, Maraipo Glacier and Lake Jambo Tso in Jingling, the Dongchu

Nenang, 6,870 m, an unclimbed mountain seen from the Niwu Qu, Nyanchentanglha East. TAMOTSU NAKAMURA

Tsangpo in Kangri Garpo, and the Yuri North Glacier in Botoi Tsangpo. He returned from these little-explored areas with his usual harvest of remarkable mountain photographs, interesting views of the changing backcountry, and remarkable images of the rarely pictured north sides of Gyala Peri and Namcha Barwa, the two high 7,000ers defining the great loop of the Tsangpo.

Poles Janusz Majer and Grzegorz Chwola made a shorter exploratory foray into the high and bleak Chang Tang—the Tibetan Plateau—to examine the **Mayer Kangri** massif NW of Lhasa and the nearby Jomo Ri group. Even in the Chang Tang, there has been much recent road construction, and where good roads end, four-wheel-drive vehicles can often traverse the great plateau. Majer and Chwola did most of their approach march in Toyota Land Cruisers—and in one case on “motor bikes with nomads.” Mayer Kangri (6,286 m), the highest point, for years was known as Bonvalot peak after Gabriel Bonvalot, who saw the mountain in 1890 and estimated its height at about 26,000 ft (nearly 8,000 m). Sven Hedin also saw the massif around the start of the twentieth century, but he thought the elevation guess too generous. The reduced elevation given earlier is from Polish cartographer Jerzy Wala’s recent map; the Soviet maps of the 1970s gave 6,266 m, probably derived from Chinese surveys of that period. Higher estimates persisted for years and generated much interest. Jill Neate in *High Asia* (Mountaineers, 1989) gave Mayer Kangri a height of 7,011 m, and the 1986 Royal Geographical Society map, “The Mountains of Central Asia,” also shows 7,011 m. It now appears that, although the Chang Tang northwest of Lhasa has a number of high 6,000ers, no summits reach 7,000 meters.

No known climbers summited anything in the Mayer Kangri massif until October 5, 2009, when Chwola and Majer made the first ascent of **Mayer Kangri I East** (6,065 m) from the east. The entire massif is unspectacular with gently rounded peaks and a very high snow line because of the dry climate. The pair then looked at the somewhat more rugged and handsome Jomo Ri Group (highest peak, Jomo Ri I is 6,015 m according to Jerzy Wala and Soviet maps) and then returned to Lhasa.

Unclimbed 7,000-meter independent peaks are now rare throughout central Asia, although there are many subsidiary summits that no one has climbed or recorded. Even unclimbed independent 6,000ers are running out. Nakamura counts 255 unclimbed 6,000ers in the east of the Himalaya region as of March 2010. These include 200 in Nyanchentanglha East; 30 in Kangri Garpo; 20 in the Hengduan–Three Gorges; and only 5 in Sichuan. He softens

the bad news with a portfolio of attractive 5,000er images in *Japanese Alpine News*, Volume 11 (2010).

During the Joint Scientific and Mountaineering Expedition organized by the alpine clubs of Kobe University and the University of Geosciences in Wuhan led by Tatsuo Inoue and Dong Fan, four members made the first and second ascents of **Lopchin Feng** (6,805 m), the first recorded 6,000 m climb in the Kangri Garpo East group. From an advanced base camp on the Ata Glacier manned on October 24, 2009, the seventeen-member expedition prepared two camps leading up toward the col between Lopchin Feng and Ruoni (6,882 m). On November 5, five members from Wuhan left Camp 4 at 4:00 A.M. Three turned back in soft snow, but Dequin Ouzhu and Ciren Danda (both Tibetans) went on along the SE Ridge to reach the summit at 1:18 P.M. On November 7, two members of the less experienced Kobe group, Masanori Yazaki and Koichiro Kondo, reached the summit at 3:36 P.M. for the second ascent. The pair was tired, had difficulty in the descent on the soft snow, and spent the night in a crowded tent at 5,910 m. The expedition also examined the growth of glacier lakes, and explored and photographed many 6,000 m peaks of the Kangri Garpo Group.

As reported previously in *Appalachia*,¹ in Sichuan near Minya Konka (7,566 m), the recently unveiled Ren Zhong Feng (ca 6,000 m) saw both the loss of four Hungarian climbers in the first attempt and the successful first ascent by Danes Kristoffer Szilas and Martin Ploug on November 28, 2009, via the E Face and N Ridge.

Mount Edgar (6,618 m), also known as Gongga-E, one of the major subsidiary peaks in the Minya Konka massif, may have been climbed by a Korean group in 2001, but no one has ever climbed the impressive SE Face. Russians Alexander Ruchkin and Mikhail Mikalov approached Edgar in April 2009 via the Yanze-Gou valley, but never saw the mountain in heavy mists and snow. They switched goals to **Pt. 6,134 m**, a subsidiary peak to the west and made the first ascent via the SW Pillar May 8 to 13, 2009. The climb, a remarkable feat in pure alpine style, was granted the Russian award, the Piolet d'Or, in Moscow on December 5, 2010. (Note that the Russians apparently have recently switched the material of the symbolic ice-ax trophy from titanium to the nobler metal.) American alpine climbers Jonathan Copp and Micah Dash with photographer Wade Johnson were also in the Yanze-Gou valley with

¹ The 2009 tragedy was reported in the article by Jeffery Parrette, "Ren Zhong Feng and the 1932 American Sikong Expedition," *Appalachia* 230 (vol. LXI No. 2), pp. 80–85.



Pilgrims on the way to Lhasa, Tibet, measure their progress by successive prostrations on the Sichuan–Tibet Highway near Bomi in far eastern Tibet. TAMOTSU NAKAMURA

designs on Edgar SE Face. They left their 3,000-m base camp on May 20 and made no further radio contact. Chinese searchers in June located the bodies of Copp and Johnson and some of Dash's gear in avalanche debris at about 4,000 m.

With an unusual degree of unanimity, 2009's outstanding alpine-style exploit in China was said to be three Americans' and a Scot's comprehensive attack from the north on the Xuelian Feng massif. Jed Brown, Kyle Dempster, and Jared Vilhauer were led by the very experienced Bruce Normand of Scotland. The massif boasts the main summit Xuelian Feng Main (6,627 m), climbed from the south by Japanese in 1990, four geographically named 6,000er subsidiary peaks, a high outlier called Yanamax (6,322 m), and an abundance of unclimbed 5,000ers. Despite the present ease of physical access, few have explored the range. Normand with two New Zealanders visited it from the north in 2008, making the first reconnaissance from that side; they climbed nothing but did identify possible routes.

Normand's 2009 team split into pairs and acclimatized with a series of first ascents and first attempts on the satellites and on Yanamax. The teams racked up an impressive score between August 8 and August 29, 2009: a first ascent of **Xuelian Feng North** (6,427 m) via the W Ridge, Brown and Normand; first ascent of **Xuelian Feng East** (6,380 m) via the N Face, Dempster and Vilhauer, August 11–14, and via the E Ridge, Brown and Normand, August 13–14; and first ascent of **Yaamax II** (6,180 m) via its NW buttress, Dempster and Vilhauer, August 18–20. All were done in

alpine style. Brown and Normand also made a first attempt on **Xuelian Feng North East** (6,231 m), retiring at 5,400 m in bad conditions on rotten rock.

This left as the final flourish the first attempt on **Xuelian Feng West** (6,422 m), more romantically known as Baiyu Feng (White Jade Peak). Normand does not consider this a true mountain “but rather a top on the west ridge of Xuelian Main.” Vilhauer had suffered frostnip on Yanamax and decided against another big route, so Normand, Brown, and Dempster started up an avalanche cone at the foot of the N Face on August 25. The ascent was an epic with four cold and snowy bivouacs on the steep face, the last just short of the summit ridge on the night of August 28. The next day, the four climbed 200 m further to reach the top in about an hour at sunrise, when clouds and snow already obscured it. The descent by the SW Face and W Ridge took the entire day, the three reaching their advanced base camp two hours after dark.

Following its near-death in 2008, the original Piolet d’Or has been reincarnated in a substantially less prestigious form. The eighteenth version held in Chamonix, France, and Courmayeur, Italy, April 7 to 10, 2010, had some of the more risible features of the United States Academy Awards. For example, a lifetime achievement award went to—who else?—Reinhold Messner. From a strong list of nominations for outstanding climbs (including the Ruchkin-Mikalov effort on Pt. 6,134 m, which already had garnered the Russian Piolet d’Or), the jury chose the Urubko-Dedeshko first ascent of Cho Oyu SE Face (described in *Alpina*, Winter/Spring 2010) and (in a very popular choice) the first ascent of Xuelian Feng West by Normand, Dempster, and Brown as exemplifying the highest standards of modern alpinism.

Nepal Himalaya

Pre-monsoon 2010. Despite the continuing worldwide recession and a degree of political instability in Nepal, mountaineering activity in spring 2010 was similar to that of spring 2009. Of the 196 expeditions to mountains in Nepal and on its boundaries, 112 of them—57.1 percent—succeeded, 774 members went above base camps, and 12 people died. (These statistics are similar to those of spring 2009: 195 expeditions, 105 of them—53.8 percent—succeeded, 818 went higher than base camps, and 14 people died.) Weather in 2010 was generally cold and snowy in the pre-monsoon season, disrupting plans and increasing the difficulties of many attempts.

Typical of the effects was the tragic story of a large Chinese expedition to **Dhaulagiri** (8,167 m) led by Yang Chun Feng and composed of nine members and nine Sherpas. Eight members and eight Sherpas reached the summit via the usual NE Ridge route at 12:30 P.M. on May 13, 2010. After about 30 minutes on the top, snow and whiteout conditions forced a rapid and difficult descent to Camp 3. The Sherpas worked devotedly to help the less experienced members, but the team eventually requested an evacuation by helicopter, which bad weather postponed until May 16 and 17. Three died: Han Xin in a fall at 7,400 m, Li Bin of exhaustion at 7,600 m, and Zhao Liang, who fell at 7,400 m. Four seriously injured climbers went to the hospital by helicopter: Rao Jiang Feng and Lou Guo Long, both with frost-bitten feet; Zhang Wei, with snow blindness; and Dawa Tshering Sherpa, with exposure effects from a night at 7,000 m without shelter.

Climbers in spring 2010 on **Annapurna** (8,091 m) were mostly dedicated to collecting this peak for their goal of climbing all fourteen 8,000-meter peaks. All but one of the successful expeditions changed the lists. João Garcia finished his fourteen atop Annapurna on April 17, and Oh Eun-sun and Piotr Pustelnik did the same on April 27. Edurne Pasaban racked up thirteen on April 17. On April 27, Bartolome Calafat Marcus of a Spanish expedition was descending behind Oh's group late in the day when he became lost in the dark and then exhausted at about 7,600 m. Early the next morning he could not stand, and his Sherpa went down to organize help. That day was snowy, so helicopters could not fly. Rescuer Ang Dawa Sherpa reached and passed Calafat's location without seeing him on the afternoon of the 28th—his body was perhaps snow covered by then. Nor could a helicopter crew locate his body while flying over the area on April 29.

The poor weather also probably ended the reign of the so-called **Manaslu** effect, the use of the rather more difficult Manaslu (8,163 m) as a surrogate for Cho Oyu. Eleven expeditions tried the mountain in pre-monsoon 2010, and ten failed because of bad weather. The saddest story is that of an eight-member Korean expedition led by Kim Joo-hyung, which reached a high point on the Normal Route of 8,100 m in bad weather and whiteout on April 23. On the very difficult descent, the members became exhausted and frostbitten. Park Haeng-su had turned back the previous day and bivouacked at 7,600 m. When other members reached him on the evening of August 23, he had frostbitten hands and feet and could not walk. In their weakened state, they could not help him. Yun Chi-won radioed for help and

went on down—he was not seen again. Conditions prevented a helicopter rescue until April 26. Two died, Park Haeng-su of frostbite and exhaustion at 7,600 m, and Yun Chi-won, who disappeared below 7,600 m. Injured were Kang Yeong-ryong, who suffered frostbite on both hands, and Kim Mi-gon, afflicted with frostbite and exhaustion.

The pre-monsoon season on **Everest** (8,848 m) was quite typical of recent years. Climbers mounted 95 expeditions with a success rate of 77.9 percent; 253 team members and 274 hired climbers made the top for a total of 527 individual ascents. Three died.

On just one day, May 23, 169 persons reached the summit. Among the ascents in the season were 34 by women and 16 without the use of supplementary oxygen. There was little novelty. Only one pair departed from the two standard routes from the north and south, and that attempt failed.

Their struggle illustrates the weather difficulties of spring 2010 and the amazing persistence and skill of contemporary high-standard, alpine-style climbers. Austrian Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner and her German husband, Ralf Dujmovits, had planned a showy effort for Kaltenbrunner's thirteenth 8,000er—up the N Face and to the top by the Japanese and Hornbein couloirs—alpine style, no Sherpas, no supplemental oxygen. They established a bivouac camp below the N Face on April 20, acclimatized, then had to retreat from the face multiple times in cold and stormy weather. They reached their high point of only 6,500 m on May 16, and on May 17, continuing bad conditions and weather on the face caused them to drop the plan and shift to the usual N Col Route. They traversed to the N Col on May 20 and set up a bivouac at Camp 3 on that route on May 23. May 24 was to be summit day, but Dujmovits was ill, so only Kaltenbrunner left for the summit at 3:50 A.M. in the snow and dark. One is rarely alone for long on Everest these days, and she joined other climbers at the First Step. With them, she reached the summit at 12:20 P.M. for her thirteenth 8,000er. Kaltenbrunner then returned to Camp 3, picked up Dujmovits, and the pair reached Advanced Base Camp on the Normal Route by 9:00 P.M. that same day.

The three who died on Everest all succumbed on the north side. On April 26, a two-man Hungarian team turned back in wind above the N Col at 7,200 m. At about noon, a serac collapsed and the resulting snow and icefall hit both men at about 6,800 m. Nearby Sherpas rescued one but were unable to locate Laszlo Varkonyi, who was probably buried by ice blocks. On May 24, Hiroshi Ogasawara, a 62-year-old physician, reached the

summit with three Sherpas at 10:30 A.M. He complained of slight heart pain on the top and exhaustion on the descent but got down as far as the Second Step before Sherpas had to drag him down further. They eventually took him to the 8,400-m point, where he sat down, collapsed, and died at 1:30 A.M. on May 25—of possible heart attack and exhaustion.

The third climber who died was Peter Kinloch of the United Kingdom, a member of Don Mazur's large (27 climbers and Sherpas) commercial expedition. Kinloch reached the summit at 11:00 A.M. on May 25. Descending, he suddenly lost vision. Another UK member, David O'Brien, and Jangbu Sherpa spent twelve hours helping him to just above the First Step at about 8,600 m, where Kinloch sat down and refused to move. He later became abusive, discarded his equipment, resisted medication, and fought off Sherpas trying to get him to his feet. By this time, O'Brien and Jangbu were very cold and had been without oxygen for hours. At 2:00 A.M. on May 26, O'Brien called expedition leader Mazur, who told them to descend. Kinloch died about then, probably of exhaustion, cerebral edema, and hypothermia.

Climbers in spring 2010 made two first ascents, both of recently opened peaks near Tibet. Joe Puryear and David Gottlieb ascended **Takargo** (6,771 m) in the Rolwaling via the E Face-S Ridge. They approached from the Drolamba Glacier and established two bivouacs on the face. They left from the top bivouac for the summit at 7:30 A.M. on March 12. They made the top along the S Ridge at 2:30 P.M. in a "gentle" snowfall, then descended to their base camp by 7:00 P.M. (Seven and a half months later, on October 27, 2010, Joe Puryear died in a cornice fall accident during an attempt on Lubuche Kang in Tibet.)

A four-man Polish group led by Malgozata Jurewicz attempted the second ascent of Takargo via the E Face-N Ridge, but retreated from 6,100 m on May 5 in fog and whiteout.

Michihiro Honda led a five-member team to make the first ascent of **Kojichuwa Chuli** (6,439 m) on the Tibet border in the Kanti Himal, NNW of Kanjiroba. The peak was opened in 2003 and had no previous attempts. The team flew into a new airstrip at Tolcha and trekked up the Mugu Khola to a base camp SSW of the mountain. They ascended via the E Face of the S Ridge to the border ridge with Tibet. From a camp on the Tibetan side at 5,300 m, Ken Fujikawa, Yutu Kawamura, and Satoshi Kimoto left at 8:00 A.M. on May 25 and followed the border ridge to reach the summit at 7:00 P.M. that day. They descended to 6,200 m and bivouacked, then returned to the 5,300 m camp the next day.

The 2009 Season. Harish Kapadia's summary of the season for the Himalayan Club shows some increase in activity despite the general adverse effect of the economic recession on mountaineering tourism, exploration, and climbing seen elsewhere in Asia. He reports 101 expeditions in the Indian Himalaya, 64 Indian and 37 foreign, more than in the recent past, but he deplores the facts that many of the Indian expeditions were to often-climbed peaks and that many foreign commercial expeditions chose similarly well-known peaks. On the bright side, he notes that the Indian government is in the process of opening more than 100 new peaks in Zaskar and Ladak for climbing.

A British group made the first exploration in more than 75 years to the northwest tip of Sikkim, retracing the steps of the British explorations of the border area with Tibet in the first half of the twentieth century. Briton Jeremy Windsor led an eight-man team into the area in autumn 2009 to make the first attempt on **Kellas Peak** (6,680 m) on the border north of Jongsang. As recorded in F.S. Smythe's *Kangchenjunga Adventure* (Gollancz, 1931), the mountain was named for the pioneer mountaineer and explorer Alexander Kellas and photographed by the 1930 Kanchenjunga expedition led by Gunter Dyhrenfurth. The 1930 expedition approached Jongsang from the Kellas Col and made extensive use of his previous explorations of the area. The 2009 expedition moved from Lachen into the Lhonak valley and eventually reached the 6,380 m Kellas Col south of Kellas Peak. Frequent avalanches and difficult crevasses led them to abandon the attempt on Kellas, but they made a probable first ascent of **Pt. 6,252 m** and identified a number of attractive unclimbed peaks in the area.

Also in Sikkim, five Indian mountaineers led by Mangesh Deshpande made a repeat ascent of Tingchen Khang (6,010 m), first ascended in 1988. On October 19, the leader, one team member, and two Sherpas reached the top at 1:30 P.M. As they left the summit, they slipped and fell about 50 m. The two team members died, while the Sherpas, Mingma and Ang Dorje, were seriously hurt. The rescue was at first hampered by the remoteness of the area and bad weather, but Indian Air Force helicopters evacuated both Sherpas to a hospital. They survived.

The premier first ascent of the year was that of **Changuch** (6,322 m) by a six-man British team led by Martin Moran. Changuch lies NW of Nanda Kot opposite the SE Face of Nanda Devi East. Previous attempts from the Pindar Glacier side had failed, so Moran approached from the Lawan valley and

followed the NW Ridge. On June 9, Moran, Robin Jarvis, Paul Guest, and their liaison officer Ludar Singh left a 5,850-m col on the ridge at 12:30 A.M. and reached the summit at 9:00 A.M. The expedition later made the first crossing in fifteen years of Trail's Pass (5,312 m) between the Lawan and Pindar valleys, only the sixth repeat crossing since 1830. Two Indian teams failed to repeat the ascent of Changuch from the Lawan valley in the autumn.

For some climbers, finding new unclimbed 7,000-meter peaks requires more scholarship than classical exploration skills. A good example is the effort of American Mark Richey and Indian Motup Goba and their expedition in the Saser Kangri group of the Eastern Karakoram. The group consists of a number of 7,000ers, most of them identified and measured by the Survey of India years ago. The highest point, Saser Kangri I (7,672 m), was ascended in 1973. An Indo-Japanese team climbed the second highest, Saser Kangri II (7,518 m), in 1985. But, as noted by Neate in *High Asia*, "The peak has two summits [east and west] for which the same altitude is given and they are separated by an almost level ridge about one kilometre long." The 1985 team climbed the west summit.

But, with time, surveyed elevations are reviewed and changed and to quote Richey, writing in an article for the Wild Things Gear blog, "According to all our maps and information, the east summit is higher and therefore should be referred to as **Saser Kangri II Main** and [that] would make it the second highest unclimbed peak in the world." Acting on this thought, Goba and Richey led a nine-member international expedition into the area below the S Face of Saser Kangri II in August of 2009. Acclimatization climbs and repeated periods of bad weather delayed a real attempt on the summit via the S Face until September 19. The expedition took three bivouacs to reach about 7,000 m on the face, and on September 22 decided to give up the climb in snow, cold, and wind. They remain convinced that they have attempted the second highest unclimbed peak in the world.

Mukut Parbat (7,242 m) lies directly on the India–Tibet border near Kamet. It was first climbed by a New Zealand expedition incorporating Edmund Hillary in 1951 from the Dakhhini Chamrho Glacier via the NW Ridge. The expedition had considered the approach from the West Kamet Glacier but rejected it as too dangerous. Hillary's good performance on this effort was one of the factors in his choice for the 1953 Everest expedition. Because of the sensitive location on the troubled border, few subsequent attempts and ascents have been permitted. That is, none have started from

the West Kamet Glacier. It is unusual that in 2009 a foreign expedition—sponsored by a foreign military organization at that—was allowed to base its attempt there.

Lionel Albrieux led an eight-member group from the *Groupe Militaire de Haute Montagne* (GMHM, the French army alpine squad) to a base camp at 4,800 m on the West Kamet Glacier. They then established an advanced base camp at 5,300 m and a summit camp at 6,500 m on the S Ridge. Climbing in alpine style, Albrieux, Damien Cabane, Sébastien Giacobi, Didier Jourdain, Marion Poitevin, and Sébastien Bohin reached the top at 11:00 A.M. on October 2, 2009—the first ascent of Mukut Parbat from the south.

The Karakoram and Pakistan

The 2008 Season. The public obsession with the 2008 K2 disaster obscured an outstanding first ascent of **Beka Brakai Chhok South** (6,850 m, but see later) in the Batura Glacier region by Italians Simone Moro and Hervé Barmasse via the SW Ridge. Further obscuring their achievement were misleading reports and geographical confusion. The climb was a 43-hour epic with one bivouac on the ridge. The climbers had no tent, sleeping bag, or stove, and they bivouacked in a crevasse. The climb began at 5:00 A.M. on July 31, 2008, and the pair reached a point just below the summit cornice at 2:30 P.M. August 1. That much was not disputed. Unfortunately, it was erroneously reported that New Zealander Pat Deavoll and Briton Malcolm Bass had climbed it before Moro and Barmasse. Deavoll and Bass attempted the peak by a similar route and reached the S Ridge, but they abandoned the climb in unsafe snow conditions on July 2.

Still more confusing was an apparent error in mountain heights. Both teams believed they were ascending the highest point of the Beka Brakai Chhok group with an elevation of 6,940 m. Beka Brakai Chhok South is striking in aspect and has been called “the Hunza Matterhorn,” but Eberhard Jurgalski of 8,000ers.com has shown in a careful analysis that the 6,940-m elevation should be 6,850 m. Further, he has noted that the actual highest point is Beka Brakai Chhok Central (6,882 m), a less spectacular peak and more difficult to see on close approach to the massif. The 6,882-m elevation is an accurate surveyed value, but was established from distant points.

The 2009 Season. The effects of the worldwide recession and the continuing political unrest and dissension led to greatly reduced mountain

tourism and mountaineering in Pakistan. After cancellations and no-shows, only 43 expeditions took to the field. Some groups had permission to attempt more than one peak, so 343 climbers made 49 attempts. The Pakistan mountaineering authorities continue to offer reduced fees and lax permit regulations, but without significant favorable effect. Because of the same factors, the 2008 season attracted fewer adventurers relative to prior years. Still, 2008 saw many more climbers than 2009: in 76 expeditions, 634 climbers made 92 attempts.

As usual, peakbaggers dominated the Pakistan high-mountain activity. Here too the season was disappointing. No one summited K2 (8,611 m) or Broad Peak (8,047 m). Michele Fait of Italy died on K2 on June 29. On **Nanga Parbat (8,125 m)**, 22 climbers claimed the summit, but two died on the way down. Korean Go Mi-sun, who reached the top by the Kinshofer variant route on July 20, 2009, for her eleventh 8,000er, fell to her death on the descent in an unroped area at about 6,200 m. On the same day and route, Austrian Wolfgang Koelblinger, climbing alone, wandered off route and fell over a steep drop-off at 8,060 m. On Gasherbrum I (8,068 m), eighteen reported successes, and no one died. On Gasherbrum II (8,035 m), only Swiss Ueli Steck and Spaniard Sechu Lopez are known to have reached the top. Luis Maria Barbero of Spain did not return from his attempt on July 20, but he may have reached the summit before his death.

On the lesser peaks, no outstanding climbs or new ascents have been reported so far. Spaniard Oscar Perez Javierre was lost on August 12 in an unsuccessful attempt on Latok I (7,215 m).

Correction. In *Alpina* for Winter/Spring 2011, the late Joe Puryear's last name is misspelled several times in the note on Jobo Rijang. We regret the error.

—Jeffery Parrette
Alpina Editor

Acknowledgments. These notes are based in part on accounts in Japanese Alpine News and The American Alpine Journal. The use of the valuable reference sources The Himalayan Database and 8,000ers.com is also gratefully acknowledged.

Yellow-Yellow

Bugs dug from bark aren't salty enough,
and the storm-toughened pith found beneath
is hardly sweet. The black bear called Yellow-Yellow
has learned to crave the refined treats backpackers haul.
Snickers bars hilariously sweet, and Ruffles chips
stiff with starch and salt, are secured in special
canisters labeled "bear proof" on store shelves.
In the field, bears hunch over these puzzles
like Neanderthal addicts trying to solve childproof vials.
They test the intricate locking systems—holding down tabs
with teeth while rotating cylinders with feet—trying to pry
away a prize—the treats inside a strong reward for fast learners.
Product development gurus use the Adirondacks
as their testing ground—Yellow-Yellow's habitat—
because of her knack at conquering every container,
and proving our nomenclature "bear-proof" in error.

Dave Seter

DAVE SETER's first collection of poems, the chapbook *Night Duty*, was published in 2010 by Main Street Rag Publishing Company. He has lived on both coasts of the United States; he currently resides in Sonoma County, California.

News and Notes

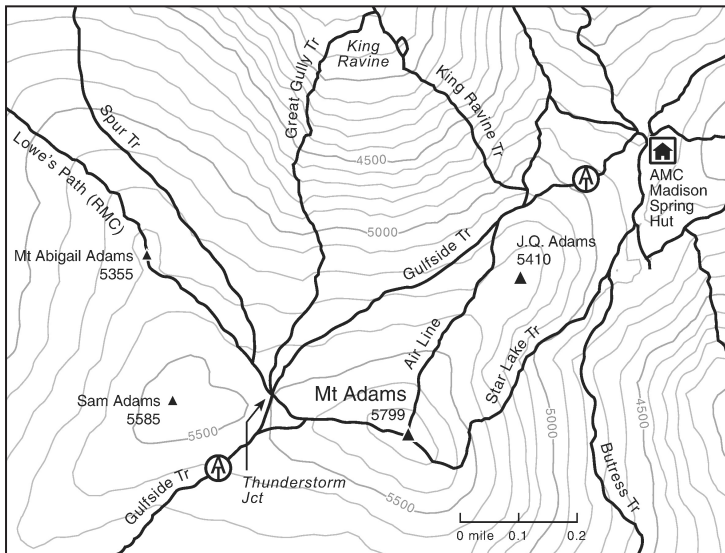
Abigail Adams Joins the Presidential Range

My mother mentioned once the inanity of a mountain being called Adams 4, when Abigail Adams was a deserving member of the family. My mother was the first to say it, but that sentiment has come out often over the years I've lived and worked in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Respect and common sense bypassed Abigail when the Adams family of peaks was named. Although no one I've talked to was burning bras, they thought it'd be nice to have a lady up there.

In 2009, I went to the U.S. Geological Survey website to investigate how to change the name of Adams 4 in honor of Abigail. In fairness, it's a stretch to call the lump of rocks in question a mountain at all. This is a significant bump along Lowe's Path. Rallying friends and family, I gathered about 40 supporters, completed the official USGS form, and wrote a letter explaining why Abigail was more deserving of a mountain than the number 4. Conveniently, a new biography of Abigail Adams came out during the process, and its author, Woody Holton, supported my idea. I solicited support from the New Hampshire congressional delegation, the governor, the Abigail Adams Historical Society, David McCullough, the Randolph Mountain Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. For a variety of reasons, I was either ignored or denied official support—"it's the *Presidential Range*; Abigail was never president," was one response.

The USGS leans heavily on local support for name changes, and I noted that supporters had worked at the nearby AMC and RMC facilities, and despite their mailing addresses, it's hard to find closer human neighbors for Abigail than these people. Many of the friends from whom I solicited support submitted their own letters, and, even though neither the AMC nor the RMC officially backed the proposal, the president of the RMC, the AMC huts manager, and the AMC director of conservation submitted their support as individuals.

The official proposal to change the name was completed in late 2009, and Jennifer Runyon at the USGS kept me abreast of its progress. The proposal first had to pass the New Hampshire Geographic Names Authority, which it did. As the USGS tried to further evaluate the local support for the name,



The former Adams 4, renamed for Abigail Adams, with the other Adams peaks.

LARRY GARLAND

the proposal came before and passed the Coös County commissioners in summer 2010. A few weeks later, the city council of Berlin, New Hampshire, submitted a letter of support amid coverage of the proposal by Barbara Tetreault of the *Berlin Daily Sun* and Edith Tucker of the *Coos County Democrat*.

In October 2010, Runyon emailed me that the proposal had passed and the name had officially been changed. Mount Abigail Adams, all 5,348 feet of her, now perches in a talus wave on Lowe's Path just below Thunderstorm Junction, near her husband, President John Adams; their son, John Quincy Adams; and their second cousin, Sam Adams. Though the mountains don't know or care what the short-lived biped ants (that is, we humans) crawling around call them, and Abigail is long dead, I'm moved by this change. I drove Route 2 recently, and the snowy little rock pile of Abigail stood out against the sunset and clouds. Something seemed right and resolved. My thanks to everyone for their support—common sense is worth the effort.

—Bethany Taylor

High-Voltage Electricity Line Proposed from Canada through White Mountains

The Northern Pass Transmission project is proposed to clear a swath of forest for 140 miles and transmit electric power from the rivers of Quebec, Canada, to southern New England. It has generated controversy in northern New Hampshire because the North Country's scenic land would be interrupted for the goal of carrying electricity to distant states, not New Hampshire. Northeast Utilities and NSTAR propose a route for the 1,200-megawatt lines through Stewartstown, the Rocks Estate in Bethlehem, Easton, and across the Appalachian Trail as it crosses the Kinsman Range in the White Mountain National Forest.

The line, carrying electricity to renewable-power-hungry Massachusetts and Connecticut, is proposed to hug New Hampshire's western border until the Littleton area, then swing east to the White Mountains, with direct-current lines on towers as high as 135 feet. Because it will carry hydroelectric power, the line would fulfill goals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as it carries electricity to service more than a million homes. The line is a joint venture of Northeast Utilities, Hydro-Quebec, and the Massachusetts utility NSTAR. The project, proposed in 2008, could start construction as early as 2013, with completion in 2015.

The proposal, like many renewable energy industry proposals, has potential pros that resonate in New Hampshire's industry-starved North Country: construction jobs in the \$1.1 billion project, and tax revenues. Some conservationists support the project because it carries renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions. But residents of Coös, Carroll, and Grafton counties at public meetings have expressed dismay at the route. It requires federal permits that include the crossing of an international boundary.

The Appalachian Mountain Club has filed as an intervenor, opposing the project as submitted. The AMC's concerns include the wide utility line's effect on the hiking experience, its potential damage to natural areas, and the need for resource mitigation plans. The AMC wants environmental and public needs to dictate the corridor selection. Also filing as intervenors were many individuals and more than 30 groups, including the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), the Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust, the town of Colebrook.

Negative impacts raised by opponents range from reducing tourism, damaging harvestable timber, negative effects on New Hampshire's renewable energy projects, and damage to water quality. Where the corridor crosses

the White Mountain National Forest and the Appalachian Trail, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and AMC emphasized the negative impact of utility corridors on the hiking experience.

Landowners fear the power of eminent domain and the loss of their forested land; the preferred corridor cuts through one Stewartstown family sugar orchard. SPNHF's motion to intervene mentioned that the line would conflict with the terms of 89 conservation easements SPNHF holds in the corridor.

Visible public protest has sprung up along the proposed route, with a series of homemade signs ("Northern Pass, Kiss My A__"). Although Internet service is spotty in rural northern New Hampshire, worried residents are expressing their views through social networking such as Facebook sites ("Stop the Northern Pass"), blogs, listservs ("Bury the Northern Pass"), and a YouTube video simulation of what the route would look like.

Northeast Utilities has said it is willing to consider a route with the least negative impact on the economy and land. Critics wait and watch the most complex renewable energy project proposed in northern New Hampshire.

—Sally Manikian
News and Notes Editor

Sources: "Power Line Project Nets Intervenors," by Tara Ballenger, Concord Monitor. "Northern Pass Sign Bares Local Anger," by Lorna Colquhoun, New Hampshire Union Leader. "250 Northern Pass Opponents Gather to Shape Strategies" and "Key Step Taken Toward 1200 MW Hydro-Quebec Line Project," by Edith Tucker, Coös County Democrat. AMC.

In Connecticut, No More Putrid Smells

The Connecticut Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club reached a significant milestone with the completion of its plan to upgrade a dozen old-style pit toilets to the low-impact contemporary waste disposal technique of the moldering privy. Members chose sites with higher use, thin soil, and higher groundwater elevation. The chapter estimated that 2,600 volunteer hours went into the decade-long project. Often, they spent days just packing in construction materials. One exception was in 2008, when the chapter received a generous donation from the Durr family: a helicopter accomplished in 30 minutes what it took a crew a week to do, delivering materials to the remote Riga shelter. The chapter also used club funds, funding from the Appalachian

Trail Conservancy/National Park Service capital project funds, and from the L.L. Bean Grants to Clubs fund of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

The moldering privy, used first by the Green Mountain Club in Vermont, operates on the principle of continuous composting. The outhouse hopper sits on top of two bins, and when one bin fills with waste, the hopper is moved over to the next bin allowing the first bin to decompose. The AMC has moldering privies in the Grafton Loop Trail campsites. They work well at sites with low use; it can be up to a decade before some sites need their hoppers moved to the next tank. The moldering privy is also extremely low-maintenance, requiring only annual inspections.

Source: AMC Connecticut Chapter Fall newsletter 2010.

Renovated Madison Spring Hut to Open

Madison Spring Hut, last rebuilt in 1940–1941 after a fire, was renovated over the winter of 2010–2011 and is slated to be open for the summer 2011 season. The hut sits on the site of the Appalachian Mountain Club's oldest hut, first built in 1888. This new renovation preserves the 1929 core of the building and replaces the flush toilets with a waterless system. There will be no change in the sleeping capacity of the hut, but a new floor plan will offer a more comfortable dining room and sitting area that will allow guests to enjoy views of Mount Quincy Adams, Mount Adams, the Durand Ridge, and the town of Randolph in the valley.

Also improved were the bunkrooms and alternative energy systems, including new solar photovoltaic panels and solar thermal collectors.

Lumber, native white cedar shingles, and other construction materials were purchased from local suppliers. In addition, the AMC hired eight additional crew members from the local community to help complete the work.

Madison Spring Hut is one of eight huts operated by the AMC, each a day's hike apart along a 56-mile-long stretch of the Appalachian Trail in New Hampshire's White Mountains. AMC's huts in the White Mountain National Forest are operated under special-use permits from the U.S. Forest Service.

—Rob Burbank for the AMC

AMC's Gorman Chairback Lodge and Cabins Open in Maine

The Appalachian Mountain Club's new "green" destination for outdoor recreation in Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness region opened in January. The Gorman Chairback Lodge and Cabins are on Long Pond, between Greenville and Brownville. The camp, which the AMC acquired from private owners (a commercial sporting camp there closed in 1990), lies along a 37-mile cross-country ski trail network that connects to three other sporting camps, including two owned and operated for the public by the AMC—Medawisla Wilderness Lodge and Cabins in Kokadjo and Little Lyford Lodge and Cabins east of Greenville. Also on the route is the family-owned West Branch Pond Camps.

The camp is near the Appalachian Trail as it crosses the Barren-Chairback range and passes Gulf Hags. Guests can go boating and fishing for trout or landlocked salmon on the pond. The AMC's guided programs there include a five-day family adventure camp and a "50+" adventure camp.

Gorman Chairback's lodge building is registered in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system, the top sustainable-building standard set by the U.S. Green Building Council; certification is anticipated later in 2011. Gorman Chairback is the first sporting camp lodge in Maine, and one of only a handful of backcountry facilities in the nation, to be LEED-registered. The insulated, off-grid lodge, designed by LDa Architecture and Design, uses radiant heat and a biomass heating system. Its dining room overlooks Long Pond, and it includes a hearth, sitting and reading areas, and wood-fired sauna. The lodge and cabins' opening is the latest milestone in AMC's Maine Woods Initiative in Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness region. The initiative supports local forest products, jobs, and multiday recreation.

Dining room tables were milled from lumber from the lodge site by Maine House Furniture in Abbot, and dining room chairs were crafted by Maine Made Furniture in Rumford. L.L. Bean donated the linens and other furnishings. Home-cooked meals are served in the lodge, and people stay in the refurbished private cabins, which are heated by woodstoves and lit by gas lights.

The lodge and cabins are named in honor of longtime AMC supporters and outdoor enthusiasts, Leon and Lisa Gorman. Building of the new lodge and cabin remodeling was funded through contributions to the AMC's Campaign for the Maine Woods. For reservations, call (603) 466-2727 or visit www.outdoors.org/mainelodges.

—AMC



Former U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, second from right, holds his award with AMC Senior Vice President Walter Graff, left; Laurie Gabriel, chair of the AMC Board of Directors; and AMC President Andrew Falender, right. MEGAN BEGLEY

Appalachian Mountain Club Honors Senator Gregg

At its 135th Annual Meeting January 29, the Appalachian Mountain Club honored former U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) with a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his lifetime dedication to land conservation and stewardship of New Hampshire's natural resources throughout his political career, including his years as a U.S. congressman, the governor of New Hampshire, and U.S. senator.

Randolph Mountain Club Celebrates 100 Years and Trail Miles

The Randolph Mountain Club, rooted in the enjoyment and stewardship of the high peaks of the Northern Presidentials and tied to the town of Randolph, New Hampshire, turned 100 in 2010. The club celebrated with its trademark gusto and historical acumen, hiking with a centennial banner, hiking in "rendez-vous" style (meeting up via different paths), recording oral histories, and holding a massive caretaker and trail crew reunion and party. There was cake and lots of it.

The same year the club received national recognition, in October, by becoming an official maintaining club for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, joining 309 other clubs. The RMC took on 2.2 miles of the Appalachian Trail in the White Mountain National Forest (the Gulfside Trail from Edmands Col to Madison Hut).

For some enthusiasts, a unique way to celebrate the RMC's centennial was by hiking the "RMC 100," or the 104 miles of trails the club maintains. Hikers and trail runners kept tally of their mileage in a pamphlet designed by Randolph Meiklejohn, a Randolph summer resident and club board member. The trail miles range from the 100 feet of the Quay Path to the nearly eight miles of the Link, which meanders from the Appalachia trailhead across the base of three ridges and three ravines, to the Caps Ridge Trail on Jefferson.

The first three finishers of the RMC 100 were Curtis Moore (who finished in four days), Lynn Farnham, and Jim Snyder-Grant. All are longtime Randolphians (Moore served five years with the RMC trail crew) and all found themselves on at least one patch of trail they had not been on before.

The RMC is a volunteer-run organization that maintains trails in the White Mountain National Forest and towns of Randolph and Jefferson, and four camps.

—Sally Manikian

Sources: Randolph Mountain Club Fall/ Winter 2010 Newsletter; The Register of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Special Olympian Summits Mount Washington

On March 5, 2010, at 11:35 A.M., Patrick Kral, a 28-year-old Special Olympian from Avon, Connecticut, became the first Special Olympian to make a winter climb of Mount Washington in New Hampshire. Walt Hampton of Collinsville, Connecticut, a guide and veteran of many high-altitude climbs, together with photographer James Seddon, Andrew Lopuchowycz, Ann Hampton, and Steve Morris, led Kral on the peak.

Kral, challenged with an intellectual disability, has long been an athlete and an outdoor enthusiast. Among his achievements are twelve marathons and the Mount Washington Road Race. He ran marathons in the 2004 World Special Olympics in Ireland and the 2008 World Special Olympics in Beijing.

In summer 2009, Kral decided he wanted to climb mountains and immediately set his sights on a winter ascent of Mount Washington. Kral approached Morris, executive director of The Arc of the Farmington Valley, the organization that provides services to Kral, with the idea. Morris was



Patrick Kral on the summit of Mount Washington, March 5, 2010. HAMPTON PHOTOGRAPHY

enthusiastic and consulted Hampton. “I was fairly skeptical at first,” Hampton said. “I’ve climbed all over the world, and I’ve been colder, wetter, more miserable, and more lost on Mount Washington than anywhere else I’ve been. Mount Washington in the winter is not for the faint of heart. It seemed like a pretty crazy idea.”

Until Hampton met Kral. “I was immediately impressed by his energy, his enthusiasm, and his drive,” said Hampton. “But more than anything, I was impressed by his passion to experience life.”

To prepare, Kral continued to run, work out, and lift weights. Hampton also prescribed the StairMaster at the gym with a fully loaded backpack. “That usually sorts out the serious from the dabblers,” Hampton said, smiling. And as the winter approached, Hampton assembled a team of climbers and teachers for Kral, who had no mountaineering experience, let alone in the winter. The team took Kral to local climbing areas on multiple occasions throughout the winter to train him to walk with crampons, to stop himself if he were to fall, and to wear layers and stay dry.

The group planned a March trip for the longer days and more stable weather. March 5 dawned clear and crisp and calm. Departing from Pinkham

Notch at 7 A.M., the team hiked up the Tuckerman Ravine Trail. “The biggest challenge we had was slowing Patrick down so that he wouldn’t overheat,” Seddon said.

Climbing the winter Lion Head Trail, the team crested into the Alpine Garden where the winds blew a steady 40 miles per hour, the temperature about 5 degrees Fahrenheit. “I was extremely aware that, while the conditions were stable, the temperatures and wind were such that Patrick could suffer significant cold injuries if we weren’t quite vigilant,” Hampton said.

With his summit, Kral broke yet another barrier. When questioned after the climb about what was next, Kral flashed his signature grin and asked, “Do you want to jump out of an airplane?”

—*Walt Hampton*

WALT HAMPTON is a writer, speaker, coach, and adventure photographer. Visit him at www.hamptonphoto.com.

Mom’s Childhood Haunts

My mother, Lib Crooker Bates, reminisces whenever she drives past White Mountain landscapes where she hiked, camped, or swam during her long, active life. To her blasé daughter, her tales used to be of passing interest only, but now that my mother is over 90, her nostalgia is contagious, and her memories seem luminous with import.

Recently we drove north through Pinkham Notch where her father, Milton “Red Mac” MacGregor, is still well known as a founding hutman and as the friendly ghost of the Appalachian Mountain Club’s Carter Notch Hut. Mom grew up scrambling rough trails, tagging along after her father and her brother, “Ski Wax” MacGregor, also a past hutman.

As we drove down the notch along the Peabody River toward Gorham, Mom pointed out which turnouts lead to the cherished but chilly family swimming holes, Emerald and Garnet pools. Approaching Gorham, we crossed a bridge, and she casually mentioned that below is another pool, unknown to me, where she learned to swim.

Learned to swim? I quickly did the math and asked, “Was that about 89 years ago?”

She said, "Give or take a year."

We took a scenic detour through Gorham's tiny town center and drove past the green. Mom said, "That's where I pulled wickets out of the tennis court."

Wickets? Come again?

"Back then, the lines on tennis courts were marked with tape held down by bent wires. I was about 4, and I thought they were the cutest little croquet wickets, so I collected them. I pulled out quite a few before Mother noticed."

We drove east toward Evans Notch. I was impressed by a large stone house and its barn, also constructed with numerous irregular stones.

Mom said, "I once helped hay that field. Your grandmother was invited to a Ladies Aid tea in that house, and I came along. I joined their children out haying in the field. I was 11."

The stone house and cleared field shimmering in sunlight seemed locked in time. I sensed Grandma inside the house, sipping tea from a fragile china cup.

We turned right and headed south toward Evans Notch.

"Your grandfather ran the AMC's August Camp in here in 1930. Grandma was a hostess. We lived all month in tents in a big field. There was only one road into the notch back then. With no road, we had to walk on a trail from the camp to reach the trailheads of the hikes he led."

We came to a point where the Wild River runs close to the road, and Mom said, "There's a pool over there where we used to swim." I pulled over so we could enjoy the sight of the smooth, deep pool in the otherwise rocky river.

She said, "The ledges go straight into the pool on this side, but there's a nice, gravel beach on the far side, so we crossed over on a jiggermirandy."

"What's a jiggermirandy?"

"It's like that thingie at Wildcat."

"The zip line?" I asked.

"Yes. There was a line across the river and you hung from it in a seat. Crossing over you slid down, but coming back, you had to pull yourself up. One lady crushed her hand in it and had to be taken to the hospital.

"There was a flood that summer, and after the flood, a canoe appeared at our pool. We never found out where it came from, but it became my canoe.

I don't remember where I got a paddle, but I was in charge of taking people back and forth across the pool in the canoe. I was 11."

We continued through the notch and stopped at a scenic turnout to view the imposing cliffs on West Royce.

Mom pointed upward. "That's where I learned to rock climb. I was 12 that summer. We learned to climb and to rappel. I did it for two summers. A lady came to August Camp who had climbed in the Alps, and she taught us." (This was Jesse Whitehead, who had climbed in Switzerland.)

"A lady? Mom, do you realize how rare women rock climbers were back then?"

Mom just shrugged. Seemed normal to her. After all, she handled it when she was just a girl.

I examined the expanse of exposed granite cliffs that rose above just-as-steep overgrown cliffs. "Mom, how did you get up there to climb those monsters? You have to climb cliffs to get to the bottom of the cliffs."

"I don't know. I just trusted the adults and followed them."

On the drive home I realized how privileged I was to be with Mom as she remembered her childhood in the outdoors, from learning to swim in a brisk mountain brook to dangling from cliffs on ropes. She tells it so casually. No big deal. Huckleberry Finn-style freedom was just normal life for the daughter of one of the AMC's early hutmen.

—*Constance Emerson Crooker*

CONSTANCE EMERSON CROOKER is a writer from Portland, Oregon, who spends her summers in New Hampshire. Lib Crooker Bates is the former chief organizer and "den mother" of the Over the Hill Hikers in Center Sandwich, New Hampshire. She is featured in the upcoming book, *Over the Hill Hikers*, by journalist Shirley Elder Lyons. Watch for a review in the next *Appalachia*.

Research

Disappearance and the Loon

THIRTY YEARS AGO, WHEN I RETURNED TO NEW HAMPSHIRE'S Loon Preservation Committee as its director, the outfit was distributing a brochure entitled *The Vanishing Loon*. The illustration on the front by local artist Samuel Ward Warren was a triptych showing a loon on the water, a loon diving, and then empty water with a few ripples where the loon had disappeared. The message was powerful, and so was the conservation effort that followed it, fueled largely by year-round and summer residents and empowered prodigiously by volunteers. At least half of that state's common loon population had vanished from as many as 90 percent of its formerly occupied lakes by the 1970s because of a variety of factors. They included egg collection and shooting in the early days—not by hunters but by sporting scallywags, as recorded by William Brewster on Lake Umbagog in northern New Hampshire and western Maine back around the turn of the century, before Aldo Leopold and the conservation ethic came to light. Other decimating factors were the loss of shoreline habitat, nest flooding behind dams, direct human disturbance of nests and broods, and garbage-fed raccoons eating the eggs. By 1981, the common loon was state-listed as a threatened species, and rightly so.

The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) worked hard with its small staff, volunteers, and other organizations and agencies to conserve the loon and rebuild its population. We conducted annual statewide surveys of adults and chicks and investigated the causes of decline. What we found in the early years was a significantly reduced population as well as low productivity by those remaining. Loons had been disappearing partly because they are long-lived birds, so lake residents and users saw and heard their hallmark calls year after year, but few observed that many pairs were raising no chicks. Only when a lake went silent did people notice. We instituted management and education programs. Many still believe that the artificial nesting island was the primary tool of salvation. These floating rafts have been very successful over the years. Yet I still believe it was public education—often passed along from neighbor (grassroots volunteer) to neighbor—and the resultant widespread changes in human attention and behavior that allowed for a growth in loon numbers.



Author and field biologist Jeff Fair holds a rare yellow-billed loon under study on the western arctic coastal plain of Alaska, southeast of Barrow. KEN WRIGHT

Production and survival of chicks increased, and the number of territorial pairs gradually more than doubled statewide.

During that same era, the federal licenses of many of the large reservoirs serving hydroelectric power generation from northern New Hampshire through central Maine came up for renewal. State and federal wildlife agencies asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to require the power companies operating the dams to quantify the effects of water-level changes on loon nesting, and later in the relicensing documents to mitigate these effects and monitor loon populations and productivity. I was fortunate to participate as a consulting biologist early on and to carry the successful efforts I'd seen in New Hampshire to many of the relicensing efforts in Maine. Later, the groups now called the BioDiversity Research Institute

and TRC Solutions, working with power company biologists, took over my simple efforts. They expanded these efforts onto more water bodies and broadened the research into many other avenues, including the capture and color-banding of loons so that individuals could be recognized and biologists could learn more about the demography of these wild voices of the lakes in the high Northeast.

In this manner, New Hampshire's lakes and the reservoirs and ponds across central Maine together became the most intensively studied loon population of its size, and for such duration, in the world. Despite my own preferences for the simpler days of observing and recording loon numbers and behavior in delightful solitude with a No. 2 pencil stub from behind a pair of binoculars—and my distaste for the human handling of these mystical creatures and interrupting their lives to mark them with brightly colored bracelets—this unique program has provided good information and some very valuable techniques.

IN 2002, UNDER THE COOL TWILIGHT ON A JUNE NIGHT ABOUT THE time the black flies were fading and the mosquitoes were taking over, you could squat on the shoreline of Lake Umbagog to rinse out your coffee cup and listen to the wild abandon of the evening chorus of loons. An excellent music, still stirring after all these years.

Aldo Leopold wrote somewhere, "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." One of the penalties of doing loon surveys all these years, and working with others who do them, was that I knew all too well as I rinsed my tin cup in the dark water along Tyler Point that the number of loons hollering at the stars that night was radically small. From 32 territorial loon pairs on Umbagog in 2000 at the apex of two decades of growth, the number had dropped fully by half to 16 pairs in just two years. It would drop to 13 by 2006 and level off at 15 pairs in 2009 and 2010. As a biologist, I also understood that adult survivorship is the most critical of survival rates for a long-lived bird such as the common loon. This loss of adult pairs was locally devastating.

No one had ever witnessed this kind of significant, rapid reduction of a loon population before. No one knew what had caused it. The pairs were there one year, migrated to salt water as usual on the autumn winds, and never returned the following spring. Many of these birds were marked with colored leg bands, and they did not show up on any of the other reservoirs within a normal distance for year-to-year changes of address that loons

occasionally make. They had simply vanished into the autumn horizon, never to be seen again.

Questions and hypotheses abounded among those keeping watch over these birds. Why such an instantaneous drop, and why both members of a pair simultaneously? Why didn't the vacant territories refill? (Some of the new vacancies were assimilated by pairs holding adjoining territories.) Was it a food problem? Those smallmouth bass that were introduced illegally into Lake Umbagog's waters—voracious feeders on smaller fish—are they eating up the loons' food stock? Even if so and thereby a cause for not refilling these vacancies, a growing food shortage would not suddenly send half the birds packing to nowhere.

How about the eagles? After four decades with no eagles, in 1989 a nesting pair of bald eagles appeared again on Umbagog. By 2010, four pairs of eagles were nesting nearby and fishing on the lake. Bald eagles are known to take loon chicks and the occasional egg, and only rarely to attack an adult loon. But for eagles to be responsible for the disappearance of 16 pairs of adults in two years, highly unlikely anyway, one would expect the kills to occur throughout the summer, and not just as the loons lifted off in autumn migration. One would also expect the kill sites to be found by monitoring biologists, and either feather evidence or leg bands to be found by those biologists climbing the eagle nest trees to band the eaglets. None of these things were observed.

Cyanobacteria (what we used to call blue-green algae) might be a cause, some biologists including Dr. David Evers of the BioDiversity Research Institute postulated. Certain species can produce cyanotoxins harmful to humans and animals. Since 1994, cyanobacterial blooms are believed to have killed at least 100 bald eagles and thousands of American coots on reservoirs in the Southeast. Human disturbance might also be a factor again, increasing with a surge in recreational use of the lake, but that also would not induce the timing or immediacy of Umbagog's loon extirpation. Other possible factors suggested were contaminants, such as heavy metals or the toxic industrial chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other poisons flushed up from the lake bottom or carried in on currents of a flooding tributary during unusual spring thaws or summers of heavy precipitation.

As these questions and hypotheses were being tossed about, the loon population on Squam Lake in central New Hampshire plunged quite suddenly from 17 territorial pairs in 2005 to only 10 the following summer. Yet from 2000 through 2010, Aziscohos Lake just upstream from Lake

Umbagog suffered no loss of pairs, nor did Lake Winnepesaukee, just south of Squam Lake. All are large reservoirs or dam-controlled lakes with more than a dozen loon pairs in recent history.

Then I began hearing from my colleagues in Maine, working on reservoirs where I'd been the first to survey and monitor populations of common loons in the 1980s and early 1990s. On Mooselookmeguntic Lake in western Maine, the number of loon pairs plummeted from a steady average of 20 to 8 in only two years, 2006 to 2008. Mooselook flows into Richardson Lake, which across the same two years sustained a drop from 15 to 10 pairs. Both flow into Umbagog on the Androscoggin flowage.

On the Kennebec drainage farther east in Maine, our study area on huge Moosehead Lake suffered only minor losses in loon pairs during the same two years (but losses, nonetheless, and simultaneously), but upstream, Brassua Lake exhibited a steady decline from 15 loon pairs in 2005–2006 to 7 last year. Downstream from Moosehead, Indian Pond has suffered a steady decline from 15 pairs in 1997 to 7 pairs in 2010. Farther downriver, the Wyman Lake loon population declined from 7 pairs in 1991 to 4 in recent years. Productivity of chicks has been low on all four lakes in recent years. Loon productivity can be affected by changing water levels during the nesting season, precisely what we were monitoring and managing for on these Maine reservoirs using artificial nesting islands. But pair disappearance had no direct relationship to changes in water levels, either nature's or the power companies'. On Lake Umbagog, the heart of the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge and where the catastrophic decline was first observed, water levels are held steady as possible through the loon nesting season.

Like Aziscohos and Winnepesaukee, Flagstaff Lake has maintained a relatively level population of loon pairs. Flagstaff lies geographically between Mooselookmeguntic and Moosehead lakes; its water levels sometimes fluctuate during the nesting season. That the disappearances are not pandemic, at least not yet, offers one possible clue to the mystery, as well as time to attempt to suspend a progressive failure. Each lake surveyed has its own unique physiography, bathymetry (depth and topography of the lake bottom), fishery and biotic web, watershed, and history of use by humans and loons. Some currently undiscovered effects related to these unique factors may explain why some lakes have been affected, but to examine them will be a terrifically complex undertaking.

Loon surveying can be an inexact science. But on these reservoirs counts have been weekly, and year-end summaries likely report within one pair in

accuracy, varying only by interpretation of observations. Overshadowing exact precision are the two most disturbing trends: All of the reservoirs with changes were trending downward, some quite precipitously. And after close monitoring since the 1970s and 1980s, all of the most precipitous to date have occurred suddenly between 2001 and 2008. The sad and sobering truth is that the common loon, spirit of our boreal waters, has shown significant signs of disappearing again, and no one knows why.

THE MOST IMMEDIATE AND THOROUGH RESEARCH RESPONSE TO A disappearance occurred on Squam Lake. Loons' blood and egg samples there have shown an unprecedented peak in several background contaminants during the period of population decline. Certain of these poisons were in concentrations of two to three times those known to negatively affect other avian species. These analyses can cost thousands of dollars per sample, stressing the budget of a small grassroots operation like the LPC. Still, investigations continue with sophisticated modeling techniques to attempt to determine whether a shift in diet or the sudden spike in contaminant load might be at fault. Most intriguing so far is an analysis of white blood cell counts performed on Squam loon blood by Tufts Veterinary School, which yielded ratios of different cell types that indicated increased chronic stress in Squam's loons between 2008 and 2010. The author suggested the unusually hot summer of 2010 as a possible cause of the elevated stress, adding yet another candidate to the hypothetical complex.

Biologists agree that these disappearances are surprising, amazing, and mysterious—and that they are most likely caused by varying complexes of multiple stressors. As Umbagog refuge biologist Laurie Wunder put it, "It's not a simple universe." And the mix of causes, like the timing of decline, may be unique to each lake.

For certain, the number and magnitude of stressors affecting loons is growing. More human recreation on the lakes, bass and pike introductions changing the fisheries, more new chemicals (e.g., the new class of fire retardants finding its way into the aquatic ecosystems), warming trends allowing bacterial blooms and enhancing heat stress, a hundred years of lead sinkers on the bottom, more available methyl mercury, and the social stresses resulting from the chaos created by the loss of neighboring pairs and the appearance of new individuals in their place—all above and beyond the environmental stresses loons have had to deal with through the millennia. How much and how many of these in cumulative strain and energy drain can

a bird so perfectly in balance with the preindustrial boreal habitat be expected to endure?

Slow and steady declines in loon numbers could result from the bioaccumulation of contaminants or other increasing stressors, including changes in the species of fish they eat or a lack of food in summer or winter habitats. But the significant precipitous disappearance of pairs between late one summer and early next spring suggests one of two scenarios. Perhaps one or more critical but nonlethal stressors in the breeding lakes during the summer weakens these birds enough so that the additional energy stress in the autumn (migration flight) or winter (molting and growing all new feathers on the ocean) tips the cumulative stressor load over the threshold to a lethal level, causing death. Or perhaps the deadly stressors await them in the near-shore marine waters of the loons' wintering grounds, in this case largely along the North Atlantic coast.

Considering the stressors in the winter marine environment, on which common loons from the Northeast spend one-third to nearly half their lives, doubles the array of variables and unknowns. But we know that the stressors are growing in marine ecosystems, too. And now we add both spilled oil and dispersants, not only in the Gulf of Mexico (where loons from elsewhere on the continent overwinter), but also from spills in our loons' wintering areas, such as the North Cape spill off Rhode Island in 1996 and the Bouchard-120 spill in Buzzards Bay west of Cape Cod in 2003. From good, but limited, evidence to date, we know that loons that nest near each other in the spring and summer appear to stay relatively near each other during the winter. This suggests that a localized poison in those near-shore marine waters—if not lethal on its own, then adding to other stressors—might be weakening their cohorts from the same reservoirs.

None of the slowly declining lake populations have shown signs of rebounding in recent years. Of the five reservoirs where loon populations declined precipitously, Umbagog has not recovered, Richardson and Mooselookmeguntic have partially recovered, and Squam and Moosehead have returned, at least, to long-term average numbers of territorial pairs. Whatever has kept Lake Umbagog's loons at lower than peak numbers is likely not a shortage of loons as much as some stressor present on-site that repels recolonizing loons. It must be something obvious to the loons: the lack of a necessary base of prey, for example.

The idea has arisen that this might be a part of a natural population cycle, numbers of pairs reaching their zenith and then dropping to a lower level.



Common loons across New England are attentive parents, often carrying their chicks on their backs for warmth or protection from predators. These loons live near the Deerneck Bridge between the two halves of Lake Massabesic in Auburn, New Hampshire.

JOHN ROCKWOOD/LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

One old reference from a Lake Umbagog fisherman who knew the lake five or six decades ago reported that it supported only 15 pairs of loons—the same number I had found there in 1978 and now the current “unrecovered level” during the past two summers. But during those early years, Umbagog suffered the stress of significant water level changes several times most summers. Recovery and population growth occurred when water levels were relatively stabilized through the nesting season in the 1980s, and then peak numbers were maintained for years without decline.

As I was researching this report and speaking to my colleagues, another coincidence turned up. On at least two of the lakes, an inordinate number of loon pairs were “over-incubating”—sitting on inviable eggs that would never hatch. This would appear to have more to do with the slower, long-term declines than the precipitous ones, but what is rendering so many loon eggs inviable might provide a clue, if not an outright cause, of at least some of the declines. As I finished writing, biologists were scrambling to find any of those failed eggs that were collected and submit samples for analysis.

Interestingly, the population of loons in Vermont has added 2 to 7 nesting pairs per year since 1998, increasing its population from less than a dozen pairs to more than 70 today. And that population is producing a lot of chicks. Eric Hanson, coordinator of the Vermont Loon Recovery Project, credits this to intensive and watchful management including the use of artificial nesting islands and a strong volunteer monitoring effort. And apparently none of his colonizing loons is wearing a New Hampshire or Maine set of bracelets.

I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED THE LOONS FOR THEIR WILD MUSIC AND GRACE and mystery, but this is one mystery I hope we can solve. I must admit that the capture and handling of loons, which seemed inappropriate to me in the philosophic and romantic senses, now offers the best possibility of identifying the unknown stressors through blood and feather analyses—to listen, in effect, to what the loons can teach us. In the meantime, listening to the gathering silence should be sufficient as a call to concern.

Actually, that may be the greatest lesson in this whole exercise. If the loons, by disappearing, are alerting us to something threatening in our waters, our environment, likely our own food chain—then what else might be going on out there that we haven't noticed? Or as Dave Evers put it, "Think of all the other wild creatures out there that we don't even have numbers for." All the other creatures clinging to the same life that we cling to.

Our growing distraction and disconnect from the wilder, natural world upon which we ultimately depend is costing us. It is a form of blindness to life itself; it threatens our survival and being. It would appear to be time for us as a thoughtful civilization to be more watchful again of the living things outside our domesticity, more caring, more questioning about what they might be telling us, and in that way more involved and alive ourselves. And with respect for what could afflict us. Remember Rachel Carson. And Henry David Thoreau. In his essay, "Walking," Thoreau wrote, "In Wildness is the preservation of the world."

The primary step in preserving our own life is to listen to what our wild neighbors can tell us. Henry had it right all along.

—Jeff Fair

Primary sources: Dr. David Evers, BioDiversity Research Institute, Gorham, ME 04038, www.briloon.org; Harry Vogel and John Cooley, Jr., Loon Preservation Committee, Moultonborough, NH 03254, www.loon.org; Shearon J. Murphy, TRC Solutions, Augusta, Maine, www.trcsolutions.com; Eric Hanson, Vermont Loon Recovery Project, www.vtecostudies.org/loons; Laurie Wunder, Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, Errol, New Hampshire.

Appalachia's Alaska Bureau Chief for seventeen years, JEFF FAIR has studied and written about loons since 1978. He currently divides his summers between common loons on reservoirs in Maine and the rare yellow-billed loons of the arctic tundra in Alaska, Canada, and, quite possibly as you read these words in June 2011, the north coast of Siberia. He lives near Palmer, Alaska.

Tracks of Deer

The last dusk gathers the troughs
and deep wells into its darkness;

the moon assumes its place beside
the silo's reflection; a cloud of midges

condenses the air above the pond.
Winding paths worn through grass

cross the meadow suffused with lunar light.
I bend down, touch the earth.

Wally Swist

WALLY SWIST is the author of seventeen books and chapbooks of poetry. His newest collection, *Luminous Dream*, was a finalist for the 2010 FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize. His new book, *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love*, was the co-winner of the Crab Orchard Series Open Poetry Competition, and Southern Illinois University Press will publish it in 2012.

Books of Note

One Mountain Thousand Summits: The Untold Story of Tragedy and True Heroism on K2

By Freddie Wilkinson

New York: New American Library, 2010

342 pages. ISBN: 978-0-06-183478-3. Price: \$24.95 (hardcover)

THE PREVIOUS (WINTER/SPRING 2011) *APPALACHIA* CONTAINS JEFFERY Parrette's account of the eleven deaths on K2 (in Alpina) and his review of the Graham Bowley book on the disaster. Another version of the story is this volume by Freddie Wilkinson. Like Bowley, Wilkinson is an American who was not on K2 at the time of these events; unlike Bowley, he is a climber and brings a climber's perspective to his writing. Perhaps his most valuable emphasis is on the Pakistani "high-altitude porters" and Nepali Sherpas, whose crucial role in rescue operations is justly explored.

Like Bowley, Wilkinson reproduces a revealing photograph taken by Chris Klinkle the morning before the serac (ice-cliff) collapse that caused most of the fatalities. Klinkle is an American who had the good fortune and good sense to abandon his summit attempt. His picture shows more than fifteen climbers making their way up the last technical part of the route, with the huge serac impending close on their right. This historic place is known simply as "the Traverse." The first to approach it were Fritz Wiessner and Pasang Lama, on the American expedition of 1939. On July 19, the two men climbed a rock buttress to be confronted by a decisive question: keep left on the rocks or head over to the snow under the serac. Wiessner, a superb rock climber, made for the rocks. His account of this choice may be found in the June 1956 *Appalachia*. He and Pasang climbed the icy and difficult rocks to within easy reach of the summit. But by then it was evening, and Pasang refused to continue. Many pages of speculation have been given to their chances of success had they gone on. The summit would have been a spectacular triumph, reached without oxygen in an age when all the other 8,000ers were unclimbed. Even with retreat, the achievement was remarkable. What is less doubtful is what would have happened had they gone to the right that day: They would *very likely* have reached the Traverse and then the summit. But when they tried this route two days later, they had lost their

crampons and had to descend. The expedition then dissolved into confusion, the death of four climbers, and bitter recriminations that are still with us, even after all the expedition members have died.

News reports in 2008 described climbers “stranded” above the fixed ropes that had been destroyed by the serac collapse. Wilkinson points out, “Until the mid-1980s, nobody bothered to take the precaution of fixing ropes on summit day on K2” (p. 37). People got up and down without them. In 2008, about 2,000 feet of line were installed. Wilkinson adds a point that needs emphasis in an age in which giant Himalayan peaks have become the site of guided climbs: In earlier times the objective was to get a few climbers on top, on behalf of the entire expedition. On first ascents, two reached the summit of Everest, two of K2, four (on two days) of Kanchenjunga, two of Annapurna, and—famously—only one (Hermann Buhl) of Nanga Parbat. Now professional expedition leaders must try to get every one of their clients up—and back down again.

With advanced communications, ascensionists can phone the world from the top. Much of the mystery is gone. But the danger remains, as do the challenges of altitude and weather. Nobody climbed K2 in 2009 or 2010.

—Steve Jervis

Wilderness Partners: Buzz Caverly and Baxter State Park

By Phyllis Austin

Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House Publishers, 2008

586 pages. ISBN 978-0-88448-304-5. Price: \$20 (paperback)

JUST AS IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCUSS YOSEMITE AND CALIFORNIA'S Sierra Nevada without mentioning John Muir, and unthinkable to talk about the American Southwest without referring to Edward Abbey, you can't bring up Maine's Baxter State Park without mentioning (aside from Governor Percival Baxter himself) Buzz Caverly.

Caverly may not have written as elegantly as Muir or Abbey, but he has had as great an impact on his neck of the woods as those two writers and activists. Caverly, who joined Baxter's ranger staff in 1960 and became director in 1981, made it his life's work to fulfill Baxter's mission to keep his namesake park “forever wild.” Caverly employed a take-no-prisoners approach that often clashed with bureaucrats who didn't share his near-messianic vision.

Before he retired in 2005, Caverly may have alienated some politicians and others who sought to “modernize” the 210,000-acre park but, by God, he kept it pure. No all-terrain vehicles, no hunting, no fishing, and no trapping. No chainsaws, generators, or other power equipment. Eighty percent of the park minimally maintained as wilderness. Carry in, carry out—strictly enforced. When the park reached capacity, rangers locked the gate. They made no exceptions, even if you had driven from Saskatchewan.

I remember waiting all night in my car outside the gate to make sure I got in to climb Katahdin, Baxter’s treasured peak (at 5,268 feet, Maine’s highest). On another occasion, when I sought a permit to scale Katahdin in winter, the application was considerably more comprehensive than permits I obtained to climb in the Himalaya and the Andes, right down to specifications for the diameter of rope, the number of carabiners to pack, and certification of having taken an ice-climbing course. When our expedition passed the mandatory inspection and launched our long, snowy trek, we felt as if we had broken through Checkpoint Charlie.

Thank Caverly for that toughness, which kept my visits and all visits to Baxter singular experiences. And now we can also thank author Phyllis Austin—a legendary Maine institution herself—for chronicling Caverly’s long, colorful, and sometimes confrontational career in this exhaustively researched, painstakingly detailed book. The veteran newspaper reporter, who sat through countless meetings of the Baxter State Park Authority, clearly shares Caverly’s passion for the park. Although she writes compellingly and comprehensively, I have to say it takes a determined reader to plow through all 586 pages. Yet it was worth telling this story of one man’s fight to preserve an extraordinary natural treasure and his drive to instill that reverence in the 100,000 annual visitors.

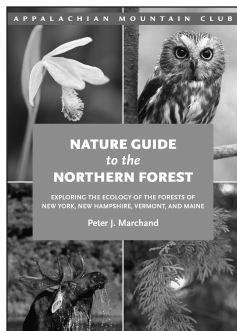
I enjoyed many of the anecdotes, including one that described Caverly’s push to switch from a seasonal park employee to a full-time job in 1965. He appealed to Helon Taylor, then Baxter’s director (whom Caverly subsequently replaced), for a recommendation. Taylor gladly complied, writing, “He is diligent in his work and often goes way beyond the call of duty in an emergency. He is happily married and has no bad habits. He is especially keen in law enforcement. . . . He has a pleasing personality and gets along well with people. I have had many fine letters of commendation about him from our campers.”

This letter was sent to none other than Percival Baxter, who approved hiring Caverly at the princely wage of \$70 a week. Baxter wrote back to

Taylor, “This man will take some of the burden from your shoulders, and as you requested this, I could not refuse.”

The decision proved to be among the many wise choices Baxter made regarding the park. His legacy, and Caverly’s, endure.

—Steve Fagin



Nature Guide to the Northern Forest

By Peter J. Marchand

Boston, Massachusetts: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2010

192 pages. ISBN: 978-1-934028-42-1. Price: \$19.95 (paperback)

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HIKE WITH A NOVICE who at every turn asked, “What kind of tree is that?” “How did these rocks form?” “When was this area settled?” I was once like that, and now, after decades of tramping over hill and dale throughout the Northeast, I can answer those questions. But if I ever found myself on the trail with Peter Marchand, I’d no doubt start asking again because he knows so much about the region’s varied flora and fauna and also how people have influenced the wilderness.

In his elegantly crafted and insightful compendium, *Nature Guide to the Northern Forest*, Marchand focuses on these relationships among various plant and animal species—including *Homo sapiens*. Generously illustrated with color photographs, Marchand’s book is a must-read for all who venture into the Northern Forest.

As a former professor of natural sciences, Marchand writes with authority as well as grace, tracing the evolving forest from the days of colonial settlement and commercial logging to the present threats imposed by climate change.

His tone is both cautionary and optimistic. “There is considerable concern, perhaps justified, that warming in our region will favor weedy, more aggressive species, including exotics, and that some of the more sedentary species, particularly those that evolved in special habitats, will disappear. But weedy species play a pioneering role in every ecosystem, and our understanding of the process of succession gives us reason to believe that in time, these early invaders will be replaced by more stable (albeit perhaps more southern) elements of the Appalachian forests,” Marchand writes.

—Steve Fagin

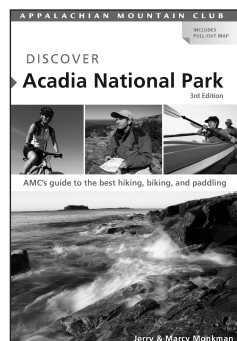
Discover Acadia National Park

Third Edition

By Jerry and Marcy Monkman

Boston, Massachusetts: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2010

288 pages. ISBN: 978-1-934028-29-2. Price: \$21.95 (paperback)



WITH A DRAMATIC OCEAN SHORELINE, ROCKY islands, sandy beaches, pristine lakes, rugged mountains, dense woods, and an inlet considered the only fiord on the East Coast, Maine's Acadia National Park is one of the Northeast's most spectacular and popular attractions.

Every year visitors pack New England's only national park to hike to the 1,528-foot summit of Cadillac Mountain at sunrise, kayak and camp at Isle au Haut, swim in Echo Lake, bike, and when conditions permit, cross-country ski, on Mount Desert Island's gravel carriage roads originally built by John D. Rockefeller.

Many guidebooks cover various individual recreational activities, but for those of us who enjoy more than one, the best guide is Jerry and Marcy Monkman's. They describe the 50 best places to hike, bike, and paddle in the 47,000-acre park. Now in its third edition, the book incorporates extensive revisions and includes five new trips, which makes it an invaluable, up-do-date resource for those planning an Acadian foray. The book includes a detailed map and broad range of itineraries designed for casual as well as hard-core enthusiasts. As in their *Discover the White Mountains* (Appalachian Mountain Club, 2009), the Monkman's join the right blend of history and natural science with such useful information as duration and degree of difficulty for each recommended outing.

—Steve Fagin

Only Annual

The spring's big night has come and gone. I'm late
for salamanders, vernal pools again,
the muck and mud, just right on that one date.

Occupied, I chose my usual fate,
missing this one-time vital digging in.
The spring's big night has come and gone. I'm late,

unlike Housman, knowing cherries abate,
who wouldn't let his blooms become has-beens,
so hiked through muck and mud's ideal dates.

I missed the yellow-spotteds' single night
just as before, my inattentive sin,
while spring's big night arrived, departed. Late,

I didn't catch their marching, congregate,
their frolic, matching, digging to begin
in muck and mud, set for this single date.

Next year, I'm sure, I'll note their plans to mate,
delay my work, determined to take in
the spring's big night for which I won't be late,
alert to muck and mud on that one date.

Ann Taylor

ANN TAYLOR teaches poetry at Salem State College in Salem, Massachusetts. She has published in *Arion*, *Ellipsis*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Aurorean*, *Snowy Egret*, and others. She lives in Woburn with her husband, Francis Blessington.

The Great Eastern Alpine Zone: Expanding our Scope

Based as we are in the northeastern United States, Appalachia can get a bit myopic about the extent of the Eastern alpine zone. A pair of biologists will sharpen our vision in the next issue.

Michael T. Jones and Lisabeth L. Willey, who are mapping all of the mountains of eastern North America, will introduce their list of the ten great alpine peaks of the region, which extends way north into Canada. Some of these are famous; others are obscure. One in Labrador has no name. Jones and Willey are two of the founders of the project Beyond Ktaadn, which uses science to promote biodiversity and understanding of the eastern alpine zone. They believe that its ecosystem ought to be looked at as a whole.

Charles V. Cogbill, mountain researcher, will provide us with context for Jones's and Willey's work.

Ken Kimball, the head of research for the Appalachian Mountain Club, will write an essay on the alpine zone, drawing on his decades of work.

Also in the next issue will be the winning essay of the fourth Waterman Fund contest, a project to encourage new writing on wild places; I'm proud to have helped nurture this.

More climbers are climbing, and dying on, Half Dome, the iconic granite peak in Yosemite National Park. Bob Manning, the Appalachia Committee's resident social scientist who studies mountain behavior, will write about the controversy surrounding managers' attempts to control the crowds.

Canadian alpinist and writer Ron Dart will describe the love of the mountains shared by Jack Kerouac and other Beat writers. Lisa Densmore will recount her quest to find the rare golden trout in remote tarns in Montana. Douglas W. Rankin will look back on his work in 1953 building a bridge—now gone—in New Hampshire's Great Gulf Wilderness.

Expand your mountain horizons with us when the journal next comes out in December 2011.

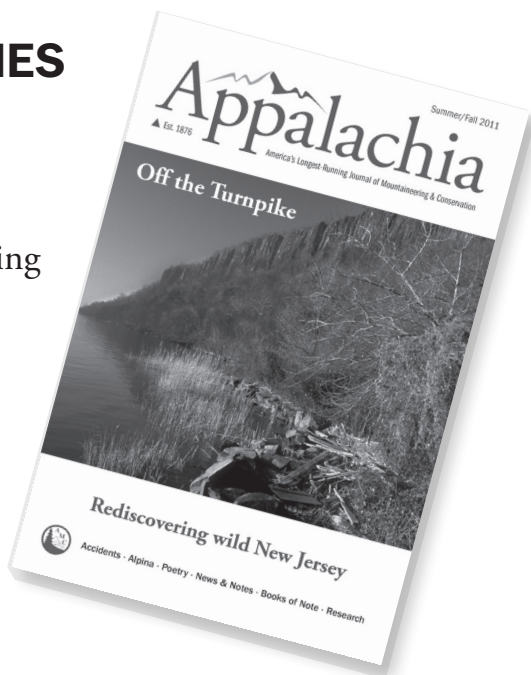
—Christine Woodside
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In this issue of *Appalachia*:

Wake Up

The most densely populated state has preserved one-fifth of its land

Doing Time in Princeton

A Thoreau scholar finds comfort in the nascent Appalachians

Twenty-Five Impressions, 1964

By the late Guy Waterman and photographer George Bellerose

Cliffs of Mount Willard

A World War II-era climbing route rediscovered

Night News

Trailside, hearing of the financial collapse

Ice House Cabin

A bittersweet return to beautiful memories

Also: The mystery of the loons' decline. An essay by John McPhee. The Shawangunks, then and now.



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