

FALL, 1969



THE ROC CAIRN



RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC. — 15TH ST. LOUNGE, R. P. I., TROY, NEW YORK



2272833

BIG TOUNGE

At the break of dawn, six adventurous souls set out to conquer the world(or so it seemed). What other reason could possibly motivate anyone to rise at such a cold, unearthly hour when even the clouds, touching the ground, continued their slumber. We put our faith(and I must admit, our lives as well) into the abilities of our driver (ahem) who managed to get us to our point of destination (more or less). This happened to be at the foot of a mountain-a real, live mountain-in the vicinity of Lake George.

Our mission for the day-to climb(and climb and climb and climb) until we would reach the summit. It was just a "nice country hike" (or so we were told). The spirit of the group was high as we started out and continued so as each ran up the mountainside, climbed up rocky cliffs, or cut across the countryside through bushes and trees creating their own paths in order to arrive successfully at the top. (To tell the truth, we were really secretly struggling to keep going, motivated only by the thought of the delicious feast awaiting our arrival at the summit-water, apples, and M&M's).

The breathtaking view was well worth any and all effort exerted. Having climbed above the clouds, it gave us a feeling of importance and stature to look down upon them as well as the lake and surrounding countryside.

Two brave, trusting souls climbed out on a cliff that jutted out over what appeared to be a dark, empty abyss. The rest of us maintained our logical sense as we sowered back in the safety of solid ground.

The trip down went much faster as we ran and slid through the trees and down the steep slopes. We had left the freedom and magnificent beauty behind as we returned to the safety(?)(I resent the question mark-Ed.) of our car and tripped home. The rest of the world could wait- we had managed to climb one mountain(small-but still a mountain). The others could await the future. Besides, my feet hurt!

Chris Wozniak

Caving October 26

On Sunday, October 26, nine of us left from the 15th Street Lounge for Gregory's and Ward's Caves. Bob and Ellen drove, Bob in his travelall, a breakthrough in modern transportation, and Ellen in her car. After finally arriving at the same place at the same time, we prepared to enter, the more experienced members donning their own specially prepared outfits. We were then equipped with various carbide and electric lamps and pointed to an inconspicuous hole in the ground. We first partially entered Ward's cave, which is a very good example of what a wet cave can be, and got some water from a pool for our carbides. We then back-tracked and entered Gregory's cave, which shares the same entrance. After much slipping, sliding, scraping, and squeezing, we discovered many interesting fossils and rock formations, along with one very unique waterfall. Our path was usually on the main drag, but there was some exploration of side passages, which turned up some very unique dead ends.

We also ran across a register left by a Massachusetts outing club earlier that day.

Anyway, by this time the word was mud, which adequately coated the walls and floors to an extent where traction was difficult and it didn't help to wipe your hands off on your clothes. It was at this time that the newer members became acquainted with a "duck under". As a point of information, this is a part of the passage which is partially filled with water to an extent where there is a very narrow breathing space between the water level and the ceiling. So pushing on, like the spelunkers which some of us weren't, we proceeded to get in up to our necks in the business of cave exploration. The word was now wet and cold, but we pressed on with determination to scramble out into the sunlight and smugly congratulate ourselves.

From somewhere came the suggestion that we explore adjacent Ward's Cave. Well, at this point, everyone was pretty optimistic, having come through alive, unharmed, and not stuck in an opening (there were some close ones), so we agreed to reenter the bowels of the earth. Besides, we were so wet and dirty that a little more wouldn't make any difference. So we explored Ward's Cave, which is primarily an underground river bed (still functional) and also a wet cave. We went as far as an underground pool which was apparently bottomless, where the party split up, the more experienced and adventurous exploring a nearby passage, which they spent a considerable time exploring. (I still don't know what they found, if anything). It was on the return trip that Bob Valentine executed his excellent plunge dive into the pool, followed by a record breaking 1600 meter freestyle to the mouth of the cave. Bob preferred the water route to the land route, for a good reason; it was the quickest way back into the warm sun light. He was fully dry and changed by the time the next person came out of the cave. We then quickly changed to a new set of clothes.

After reclaiming our sense of touching, we embarked to return to good old RPI. We didn't make it, due to the number of concessions and restaurants in Albany, so we stopped and got a bite to eat, two of our members causing quite a sensation, having left their spare set of clothes back at the Tute.

The highlights of the trip were Bob's swim, Ellen's merciless slaying of an infant bat, and Tom Naci being asked if he was married by a ten year old passerby (Bob wouldn't answer). This was my first trip with the club and also my first cave, but I was really impressed by what I saw and learned, and had a really good time as I'm sure everyone did. I hope to participate in more activities in the future.

Don Ruberg

Memorable Quotes Dept.

Jay Mendelssohn upon observing, in the spring of 1969, that Lake George was much higher than normal:
"Hey, the bottom is further from the top than normal!"

Sunday Trip

Adaptability was the keyword to describe our planned trip to Mount Abraham and Ellen this Sunday. When we left Troy at 6:30 AM the weather was beautiful, the sky clear. By 10:00 AM a few drops of rain were falling, and by noontime the wet stuff was all over the place. Our problems were further compounded when we were told in a nearby town that the summits of the two mountains were covered by snow. Still undeterred, Wayne Taft resolutely led the way up the road to Lincoln Gap, bravely passing the two signs which stated that the road up ahead was closed. As we stepped out of the cars into the rain at the point where the road became impassable at the highest elevation, we stood for a few moments observing the steady red light on the dash of Wayne's car and the steam coming out of his radiator. Definitely deterred by the rain and the three feet of snow, we headed back down. But we weren't ready to give up so easily! We headed around Abraham and finally south down route 100. By mid-afternoon our group had divided, one car returning to Troy and the other still trying to find something climable. We finally decided to climb lofty 3200 ft. Blue Ridge Mtn., near Pico Peak. After driving 3 times up and down the road, we finally found the beginning of the well-marked trail around 2:00 PM, somewhere behind a private campground. As we entered, the owner of the area, an old Vermonter, approached us, slowly glancing at his watch, then up toward the peak, and then back to his watch. Finally he said, "You folks are startin' up kinda late, aintcha? It gets dark mighty early now, you know, on standard time, maybe around 4:30 or so. It ain't no sidewalk goin' up there. I don't mean to insult your intelligence, but be careful comin' back down. It's easy to follow the trail up, but you can stray off from it pretty easy comin' down."

Well, all of us made it up the "grueling" 2.4 mile trail in about an hour and 10 minutes; about 5 minutes faster than the guide book time: the guide book time coming down, that is. After a short photo session and an even shorter sapling-climbing contest, we headed back down, reaching the base about 40 minutes later, minus one member of our party. He had failed to heed the wise old farmer's advice, and had taken a wrong turn on the trail, ending up in somebody's back yard. He then retraced his steps, found what was undoubtedly the right trail, and ended up in the same guy's front yard. Within another 10 minutes, however, he had rejoined us.

Exhausted by the grueling 2 hour hike, we immediately headed back for New York and for Reich's Restaurant; here we were soon refreshed by the very "spirit" of the place and later headed back for Troy much more relaxed than before.

Ray Guillemette

Memorable Quotes Dept.

Anonymous, at the bottom of a trip list:
"For breakfast, we'll stop at Potter's Diner-
a new taste sensation."

The Appropriately Named Mountain

On Friday, October 24, full of expectation and high hopes, I left for Big Slide Mountain, not knowing that within 24 hours I would find out how well the name fits the mountain. When all of us finally showed up, we prepared to take off in Jay's car (0 to 60 acceleration in 10 minutes) and Bob's travel-all.

Tom Nace led in Jay's car and Steve, who knew where we were going, drove behind us. Consequently, we got lost. After Steve found us, we made our way to the garden.

After putting on our packs, we began the hike to our night rest stop, two lean-tos built near each other. The faster kids sped ahead but we met them at the ranger station to the dismay of the poor ranger whom we awakened. We proceeded to follow the Great Circle route to the well hidden lean-tos. After making one complete circle of the trails, we decided to camp apart. Thus 5 of us trespassed on private property and set up our sleeping bags for the night.

Hunger was upon most of us by now, so we made our way to the other campsite. Chicken noodle soup with rice and chicken was our supper. In cleaning the dishes, one of our more agile mountaineers fell in the freezing creek.

Throughout the night warm weather melted the snow, so that in the morning we walked through mud. Karen's strength gave out going up the mountain and Joanne carried her pack. We were slowed up now and the faster people steamed ahead. Getting higher up, our hands disappeared from our brain's awareness of their existence. Finally, the moment of glory—we reached the top. I disproved the legend of it being cloudy if you bring a camera and away it snapped. At this time Greg and Tom were trying to put some blood back in Karen's feet and we all ate gorp (M&M's, peanuts, and raisins).

Then we went down and I saw some of the great falls of the century; executed by one and all. I found out why the mountain was named Big Slide as I went down the mountain half standing, half sitting, and always praying. Graceless, wetter, and much happier, since I was done (or so I thought), we came upon a creek. I thought it was no harder than the others, so I stepped upon a rock and proceeded to do a graceless dive sideways into the creek. I learned how to move quickly, and thanks to this, my clothes remained dry. Then I learned to be a quick change artist while the girls turned around. The rest was a walk or light stroll and reaching the car made one feel absolutely full of joy.

On the drive back, I was in the Travel-all with Tom, who was driving. Bob Valentine had told Steve all the gimmicks of working the car and Steve neglected to tell them to any of us. Thus, when we ran out of gas, we did not have the knowledge of how to turn on the auxiliary tank. Only the ingenuity and intelligence of the Outing Club leader saved us as he discovered the correct method of changing tanks. This enabled us to return safely.

With going swimming, dying of exhaustion, and all other discouraging factors, the trip was worth it. Just seeing

Greg attacked by trees and falling snow made it all worthwhile. Thus, over all, the trip was a great experience.

Jack Edenbach

Inside and Outside Clouds

or

"Cloudy, the sky is gray and white and cloudy"

After three months of inactivity, the last time being to Lake Colden in June, at my new domicile in Martinsville, Va., I finally took to the woods again. This time the objective was Mt. Mitchell, North Carolina's and the eastern US's highest peak at 6684. After spending a day at Tom McCrory's house in Greensboro, N.C., the group: Tom, myself and a German exchange student, Winfrid Vaulont-left at 6:30 AM on Sunday, August 31. Note: Winfrid(Sorry, that's how it's pronounced-Ed.) has been climbing in the Alps and went out west climbing before returning to Germany. As a result, he doesn't consider the Appalachians mountains. Traffic was light as we sped westward in my VW squareback-yes, oldtimers, I got rid of my Olds.

After some fudging, we arrived at the start of the trail-at the edge of a federal camping ground. As is to be expected when climbing such a tall peak, it was cloudy. The trail itself is 6 miles long and rises 3200 ft. It starts off with multiple switchbacks, it then crosses a telephone line several times. Despite our most fervent hopes, it did not level off but kept on going. At this time we decided to express heights in meters since the numbers are smaller.

When we reached the summit, after 4½ hours, we, not unexpectedly, found 360° clouds, an observation tower-yes, sports fans, there's a road up the peak-a museum and, unexpectedly, people. After getting off the cold, damp peak, we had lunch. Why do tourists stare at climbers eating bread and cheese? We then left for the 1½+½ hour descent.

Upon reaching the bottom, we fixed our famous, or if you please infamous, Lake George-Friday night supper: thick chicken and rice soup.

We then drove about 200 miles to the Smokies. On the way, we passed through the town of Cherokee, which has so many souvenir stands it even makes Niagara Falls look like a desert.

Having arrived at the park at 11:00 at night in the rain and seeing signs proclaiming "No Roadside Camping", our hardy heroes finally sacked out at midnight at the lookout for cars at Newfound Gap, right on the N.C.-Tenn. border, in the VW-yes, all three of us. (Ed. note-John's Jimmy is 6'1" and weighs in at about 230, Winfrid is the same height, a little lighter, but all muscle. With those two in the back of a VW squareback, there is pitifully little room for a third person, and when they roll over, it sometimes dwindles to none at all.)

Due to our amazement, the clouds lifted somewhat the next day as we drove up Clingman's Dome, where we cooked breakfast. On the summit of Clingman's Dome is a

45 ft. observation tower reached by a circular ramp. nothing is that ugly accidentally, it had to be designed that way. While leaving the park, we saw why they're called the Smokies. Clouds were rising from the valleys like the woods were on fire.

After stopping in Cherokee to see what Winifred called "American Culture" we headed back to Greensboro and then, less than, Martinsville and work the next day at the world's largest nylon plant.

Jim Drake

"Help! Help! The sky is falling!" Chicken Little
or

"Would you trust the man who made this mess to clean it up?"
Richard Nixon

Last intercession, three eager, intrepid and somewhat foolhardy rockers left for the West Virginia area to check the rumor that they grow bigger caves down south than in New York. They included Bill Billobran, Jay Mendelsohn, Greg Paris, and Jay's car (can't forget that-it's gone on enough trips of its own to be called a patch member! How about it, Jay?).

Skipping the boring details (a 16 hour trip down), a few diddle caves after brought us to the mouth of Laurel Hill Cave, so we decided to camp there over night. We brought in our packs and set up the tents inside the cave. Well, why not? When the floor is soft silt and it is 20 feet wide and a roof 7 feet up-it was dry at least-it couldn't rain on us. Besides, pound in a piton and you can hang a Coleman from the ceiling cracks! After a barfy supper-we decided to tire-ourselves out by seeing what the cave looked like when you got in far enough not to see daylight-would you believe 400 yards!

The cave itself fizzled after about an hour of wacking around. Being a damp cave (ie, only 4 inches of running water instead of 4 feet) it was quite foggy. We'd wack into a room and not see anything but for the clouds, and the water vapor (and other odors) steaming off us. There were some stalactites in a few of the rooms, but they only extended a few feet or so from the roof. I say only, because the roof was 30 feet up! Eventually, the cave wrung itself dry (now it was only wet silt) and trickled on into the fog. At this point we got discouraged (and, without a map, slightly apprehensive) at the atmosphere (ugh!) and stumbled, sloshed and ran out-deciding whether (or not) to do the upper half now (or later)-we could see it through some of the cracks in the ceiling, but not having wings... (crumping for the day, we trugged back to our camp, checked our sticks placed in a nearby stream to see if the water level would rise enough tonight to wash up into the wettest, nonbreathable parts of our hole, and went to sleep-waiting for the roar of melted snow flood waters.

For wanting to do many caves (ie, none) the next day, we looked at the entrance to Laurel Hill, looked at Jay's car, and decided Not to drive it inside to keep it warm. Instead we spent most of the afternoon, rigging up the

caving ropes over the mouth of the hole and climbing up and rappelling down over the entrance, a free drop of 50-75 feet.

We tired of this about mid-afternoon, and decided to walk up the road and find another cave to look at (or in). After only one day in West Virginia, we discovered that to find a cave we need only look for a stream--so we found one (a stream and a cave). It wasn't too difficult: when you have something half the size of the Hudson running out of the side of one hill and half another hill through a hole big enough to swallow two greyhound busses at once, that qualifies as a cave. Instead of going swimming and being carried by the current into the cooler regions of Hell, we looked for (and found) one of the other entrances--it wasn't too difficult, there were four we knew existed. We carried supper and carbids for our lamps (considering we couldn't run on carbide and our lamps couldn't burn corned beef hash,...) and trugged downward. Now Greenbriar Saltpeter Cave, as it is known, is slightly big, so we took a map with us--luckily (we would still be there without it). After scrambling over fallen rocks and looking at two medium sized rooms (ie, all three carbide beams together could make out the other wall and ceiling, but not separately: about $\frac{1}{2}$ football fields in area and only about 100 feet high) we found the hole leading to the rest of the caves--it was a real tight fit, we almost had to bend over it was so small. "The Holland Tunnel" continued on for a couple of feet before it split, and it became a choice between "You take the high road and I'll take the wet road." Bill and Jay got wet. I went rock climbing. Back into the tube, it began to get a little lower and we actually had to crouch over--about 3 lanes wide but only 4 to 5 feet high. A side passage led off from this thruway once--it led no where but to a smaller and smaller tube, just duck-crawable--and it went on, and on, and on...we were all having a ball--"It's not on the map", "This is fun", "How could anyone have missed it?"--well, they didn't. At the end was a little room about 3x3x3 (feet), with graffiti all over it! Oh well! Back into the thruway, which 10 minutes later degenerated

into a squeeze crack and a small room (only big enough for West Hall Auditorium). Choosing the path leading from this room to the other easy entrance, we then blitzed through a bus tunnel with a 20 foot ceiling and muddy floor. This got boring after running for 15 minutes, and finally Jay (I think) slipped on some muddy leaves and we saw daylight--dry entrance #2.

On the way back through the bus tunnel we took a side passage which was supposed to have a few rimstone pools--we were beginning to get a little hungry (we entered at about 4PM, now it was close to 5:30--supper time). We found, or rather tripped over and slipped thru some rimstone pools. A huge mountain of lowly scoping flowstone was covered with rimstone pools. Going up fizzled out, so Bill pushed a passage to nowhere while we waited patiently, then not so patiently for 15+ minutes--until he popped up (behind us) and proceeded to stop both of our hearts for a few beats. All three pushed a crunchy

mud passage to extinction in Flowstone before returning to the bus tunnel. We changed carbide and returned to the West Hall room. I stayed put while Jay looked for other rooms and Bill took a gun for a like crawl. Bill came out and we looked for Jay-crawl! Jay and Bill went crawling between rooms while I found none. We all met back at West Hall room and, against Jay's urging, proceeded to follow the room series I found, and followed an arrow pointing to water (Thirst, thirst!!!) sticking Jay in the lead to grumble to himself, we climbed up gravel and rooms...etc. At the top of the climb, Jay stopped, and all we heard was silence-after scrambling up to where he was-we too were silent for a while. What can you say when all three lights cannot even reach the ceiling, let alone an opposite wall. The room was HUGE; we scrambled down our side of the wall, and way down at the bottom we found the half-Hudson flowing into a little crack, quite loudly, and no one felt like following it. Bill waded upstream, while I kept my boots semi-dry and climbed the wall, while Jay crossed the river and started climbing up the steep talus slope on the other side.

We estimated the room as being able to hold at least 2 Navy blimps easily-the only problem being getting them in(or out-Ed.). Eventually Bill and I followed Jay up the hill, swearing at the grunge under our feet, swearing at the disappearance of Jay, swearing about the mud and leaves flying from the boots ahead of me, and at the rock slivers which were cutting up our hands, etc. We hound out where Jay went to-out; so we followed Jay out of the new, unknown entrance he found.

As of now, we had found $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}$ of the known openings, one new one, one blimp hanger, and three very hungrey stomachs. We decided to try to find the place we went in originally, and find out why it was called a Saltpeter cave. So been it-we tript, slipt and almost fell into the hole we were looking for-it was quite vast dark(and supertime). We fueled ourselves and the carbide lamps (with cold canned corned beef hash and carbide and water for all six of us) and found another way into the saltpeter part of the cave. After the blimp hanger, it was slightly disappointing-there was only some putrid tasting salt, some pick marks, some cart tracks, low ceilings and a maze of tunnels throughout the diggings. The saltpeter mines connected the main cave with another hole which ran roughly straight from the boarded over entrance (at last!!) to the end-a large flowstone barrier. Since no one felt like rock climbing up a slippery, gooey flowstone mud hill, we decided to quit-and stumbled across stray rocks, boulders, rivers, holes, and various manure piles on our way back to the road.

On the way back to our tents, we kept our carbide lamps running at full flame, and walked three abreast down the road past a number of bewildered farms, dogs, and open windows-the effect must have been unusual.

All told, we had been in the cave from 4PM untill after 10, and had only given it a cursory overview; but, having run out of energy, ambition and carbide decided to crawl back into our hole.

(Continued next issue) Greg Paris

Ransdellan Cycling Club

Board of Directors

Joe Smith, Chm.
Dexter Gurrell
Richard Cramer
James Trake
Jeff Duncan
Richard Fuhrman
Joseph Franklin
Richard Stetson
Wayne Taft
Paul Yergin

Executive Committee

Pres: Greg Paris, 14th Street, 274-1612
Vice-Pres: Robert Saunders, 3 Prospect St., 274-5323
Secretary: Bob Valentine, 9th and Eagle, 274-2095
Treasurer: Jay Mendelschn, 16th Street, 271-7311
Chair Ed: Tom McCrory, 27 College Ave, 271-7866
Members at Large: Tom Nace, 27 College Ave, 271-7866
Tom Jensen, 411 Nugent Hall,
270-7327

Other Officers

Equipment Chm: Tom Nace, 27 College Ave, 271-7866
Office Manager: Paul Sundgren, 27 College Ave,
271-7866