

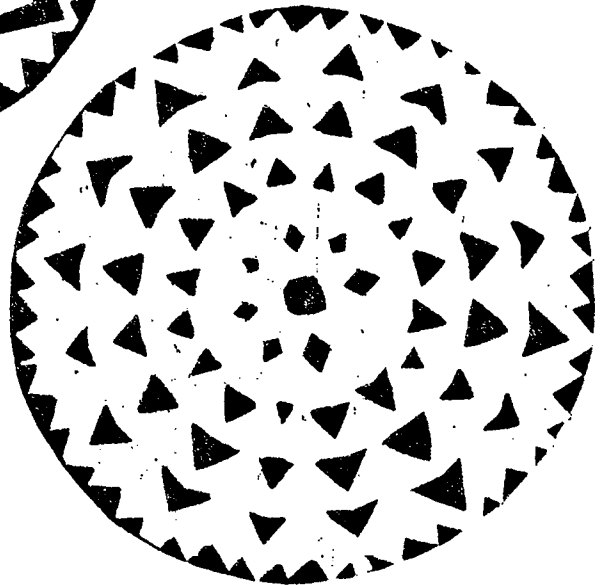
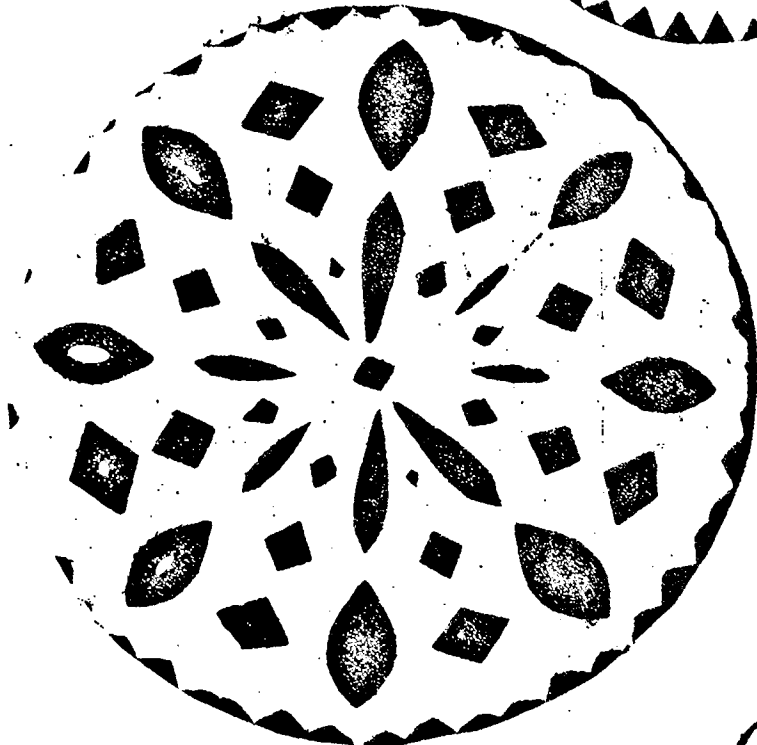
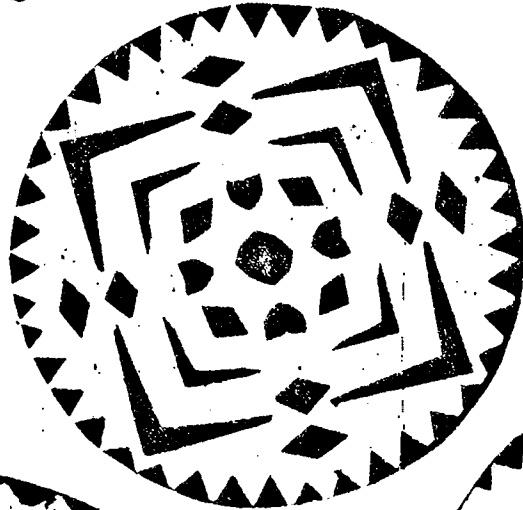


THE CAIRN



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

January '82



Let it snow!

WHETHER WEATHER?

and see what you can find.

HINT!: LOOK up

CIRRUS: High clouds (about 20,000 ft.); also a great season Sierra Design bag. Generally white (DOWN -Like) cloud which forms tufts, plumes, and wisps. If fused together they form Cirrostratus, the giver of halos which are almost transparent and found over moon, sun, and/or Gods. They usually never precipitate on you (sun, moon gods or clouds?).

Great with a North or Northwest wind. Should get warmer if out of the west, but from other directions expect clouds to increase.

ALTOCUMULUS: Medium-high cloud layer, starting above 8,000 ft.. Looks like layers or patches of detached fleecy clouds with globular blobular masses (watch out St. Louis) often in lines or waves. If dark, possible showers -bring soap and towels.

Great if out of Northwest or West, if north will cloud, but the rest implies wet.

ALTOSTRATUS: Medium height (8,000 ft.) with flat or striated clouds which are similar to thick cirrus but lower. If dark clouds are above them, foretells moderate rain or snow.

Except for NW or W foretells increasing cloudiness and precipitation, especially EAST.

CUMULUS: Clouds with vertical development. ("BOY, Does she have great vertical development!) Range from puffs to thick concentrations. Like thunder heads (cumulus nimbus) their bases are usually horizontal.

CUMULUS CONTINUED:

Will lead to clearing and colder weather except if out of S, SE, E, NE which usually brings rain or SNOW.

STRATOCUMULUS: A roll cloud, mayo no butter, with flat bases at 3-5,000 ft. Light Gray with dark surfaces and cavities. Hey , how about some sky caving? Some precipitation but more big stick than lump.

S and NE usually bring Snow.

NIMBOSTRATUS: Low, dark, thick and handsome cloud. Usually ragged edges and steady snow.

E and NE snow (YEA), or rain (boo hoo) and windy.

The rest stormy except clear and colder from NW and W.

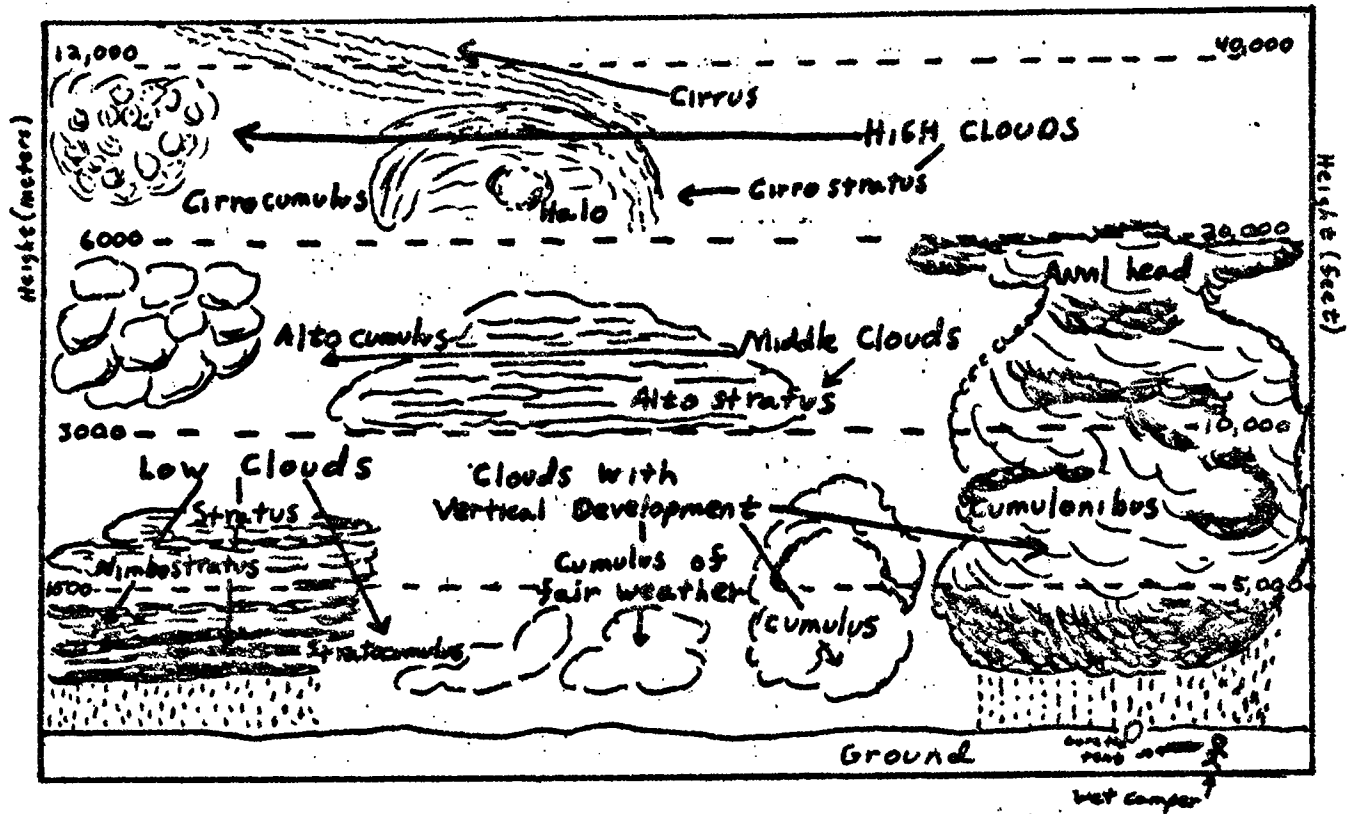
HELPFUL HINTS: 1 True wind Direction- Two methods.

White tip method (Winter use only) Place dextrous appendage into stream or water source. Then extend full length above nearest cranium. Observe side which frost first manifests itself. That is wind direction, but for safety repeat with other appendage to verify.

Wimp Method If can not borrow appendage, observe direction of wind in trees or clouds. If random use west.

2 When cirrostratus, alto stratus and stratocumulus are all visible precipitation is likely. If they are moving in different directions (chaotic sky conditions) precipitation should be heavier and last longer.

3. If precipitation does occur, don't worry, it has always stopped before.



Tom Kopp

Oh yeah, a cairn article. It is the spring semester, is'nt it. No, that does'nt mean white water or graduation, not yet anyway. However, it does mean snow, and unlike the past two years there is enough. Winter school was a success because everyone had some fun and even learned not to freeze at -22 degrees. Snow caves, cold feet, frost nip nose, broken skies, no good stoves, a couple trips to the cars, a early hike out, many broken snowshoes, assaults on some unknown peak by some unknown slide, crummy white mouse boots, grubby faces, and bald heads were just a few of the highlights of the trip.

However, lets look at the bright side. There was a totally bright and beautiful day. That was the first day the walking wounded stayed in camp. Also, no peaks were done that day. The luck of the Irish was'nt with us, but Peg was there for other reasons too.

Following are awards given to those who went to winter school and even those who did'nt, but were involved.

greg

5

Winter School Awards

Jeff All wool nose warmer award

Patty Best dressed camper award
(love those alligators)

Mike Creative snowshoeing award

Bobby Macho mountaineer award
(Fred Beckey likes me pin)

Lyn Award for putting up with Kurt

Robert Most improved robert award

Al Navigator first class
(sure this is the fast way through NH)

Greg Gee Mom look what I ate award
(or most distingushed beard award)

Peg Snacking between meals award
(i.e. see above)

Pete Best dressed feet
(hobble hobble)

Craig Fat woman award
(to keep him warm on those cold winter nights when
he is alone in his snow cave)

Jim Lysol award
(gee it smells funny in here)

Paul Green building arkie award

Matt Spruce tree look alike award

Tom Greg Leger look alike award
(not-repeat- not an honor)

Chris Ms Congeneality award
(what about a 3 man tent)

Steve Mommy's best sewer award
(worst color coordination)

Dan Back to school award
 (gee maybe I should have learned about this before
 I did it)

Howie Ugly award
 (put the hat back on)

Kurt Mr. Martyr
 (for spending a terrible heated night)

Gail Creative poisoning award
 (she got it from Early Winters)

Jim Look how much it cost award
Rawding (and it is all new too)

Tom Honorable mention
Kopp

Tom Deep throat award
Robinson (he even accepted the charges)

*Howie
and I*

ROUGHING IT EASY - ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ICE CLIMBER

Six o'clock - the alarm clock in my bladder says it's time to get up. Good thing for pee bottles! Back to sleep. The ground starts shaking and a loud rumble is heard as well as felt. I duck for security in my sleeping bag ~~to~~ awaiting the inevitable, pounding avalanche. Eventually I realize we're in New Hampshire sleeping next to the train tracks. The watch says eight o'clock - I guess we should get up I say to Joe who pretends he doesn't hear me. By nine we're both out of the tent and, in a short time, the tent is down and the bags are stuffed. We gobble down a few Dunkin Munchkins, a few pecans, and suck down some milk from the Thermos. Ideal climbing food. Soon Joe starts the complaining VW bug so we can get our boots nice and toasty and soon we are ready to climb. An old climbing acquaintance wanders over and we exchange a few stories and lies while the people sleeping at the other end of the parking lot decide to get up while it is still correct to say-good morning.

At a little after noon we're heading down the railroad tracks trying to decide what climb to do. That's the best thing about not cooking in the morning - you get such early starts. We decide to do Dracula and quickly set up the belay and start climbing before we decide it is too hard for so early in the day. It felt warm after a few days of sub-zero temperatures so I shed a couple layers and head up the pretty blue flow. The now familiar rhythm of hammer, axe, kick, kick took me to the base of the crux. Taking a quick breather to warm up my thumbs, I admired the pretty view across the ice crystals and up Crawford notch. All the possible screw placements already had screw holes in them from the busy Christmas season so I dropped one in for not much more than peace of mind. The steep section felt nice and secure, occasionally hanging off of straightened arms to relax. The rope ran out in a good place so I set up the belay on a good ledge overlooking the notch. Using a 165' rope and starting at the top of the initial ramp allowed us to finish in two pitches rather than the usual three. We romped through the woods and shed our crampons to prepare for a beautiful glissade down a steep, narrow shoot. After fetching our packs we headed back down the railroad tracks, laughing with that familiar high that climbing always has to offer.

glenn

What Even the Eastern Climber/Skier Should Know About Avalanches

Even in the northeast one should have a solid familiarity with avalanches before venturing into the winter mountains. Any open slope here is just as likely to slide as in the West. In fact there have already been avalanche fatalities in New England this year.

Any slope above an approximate 30 degrees can avalanche if the conditions are right. Slides occur when the bond between two layers of snow fails. In general, a concave slope is more stable than a convex one because there is less tension in the snow pack.

One condition that should be watched is obviously a storm. If there is a wind blowing the snow around a wind slab can develop. This is very unstable because more snow is deposited than the slope can handle. When snow is falling, the concern is how well the old snowpack is bonding with the new snow. If there is an icy crust the new snow is obviously more likely to slide than if the snow were wet and soft. The thing to watch in a storm is the temperature. If it starts out warm and gets colder it is a good sign. The wet snow can bond well to even an icy surface and the drier, lighter snow on top isn't too heavy for the bond. The reverse case should lend suspicion. If it starts out cold the snow may not bond well and a weighty accumulation on top of that can cause the bond to fail.

The third major cause of avalanching is the formation of depth hoar. This condition forms usually in periods of cold and dry weather. Because of the temperature gradient, the moisture is sucked out of the snow below which forms long, vertically oriented crystals. This crud is very unstable as it can't support a load. It is easily detected however by digging into the snow.

Anyone venturing into snowfilled mountains should certainly do some further reading on the subject. The best source of info is the ABC's Of Avalanche Safety. If you are at all suspicious of a slope - avoid it!

glenn Coffey

THE ART OF CLIMBING

The athlete approached the buldging face; forearms hardened, muscles in perfect tone. His right hand grasps a rounded but coarse knob; the finguretips of his left lock in a sharp, narrow fissure. He feels the sharp pain of security as the granite grasps his fingures in its teeth. A couple of deep breaths and he pulls up to smear his feet on the grains. His whole body is straining intensely to keep his EB's from sliding. His arms are straining to combat the overwhelming steepness. He moves quickly to conserve his strength which is rapidly being sucked out of him. With a gasp, he cranks off his right hand, cautiously moves up one then the other foot, then lunges with all remaining power for a sloping ledge; all in rapid succesion. With hand slowly loosing their hold, he runs his feet up and flips into a mantel. He brings a foot up and, straining for balance and inching up his fingers, he desparately grabs the top lip. A now seemingly difficult pull-up and he is on the top. His body is totally drained of strength yet his mind is filled with joy as he has climbed the hardest local testpiece - he has conquered the rock. . . .

The artist approaches the rock. He stares at the face withdrawing into himself. All his senses are shut off to everything except him and the rock. His mind floats through the moves from below. With absolute concentration, he steps onto the face. He slides one hand into the crack and the other caresses the knob until it finds where it belongs. There is no uncertainty, no doubt. He gently touches each foot to the rock and they bond without sliding. Gracefully, seemingly effortlessly, he glides through the pre-meditated routine. As he reaches the top he has no sense of time. It seems as though no time has passed yet it seems as it has been eternity since he had begun. He once again notices the songs of birds, the gentle breeze, the blue sky. He has not conquered the rock but joined the rock to conquere himself.

glenn

For Final Report
See NRO Cover
October

ACCIDENT REPORT - McFALL'S CAVE
Schoharie Co., New York
Saturday, Sept. 19, 1981

Preliminary
Preliminary only

Report prepared by Bob Addis, Chn. McFall's Committee, from an interview on Sept. 20, 1981 with Bill Donaldson and Eric Smith

Two groups were visiting McFall's Cave on Sept. 19, 1981. A group of six (Bill Donaldson, Eric Smith, Bill Nesheim, _____) from Ithaca, NY, henceforth known as the Ithaca group, received permission first, and the second group was from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY (the RPI group) was led by Howard Kalnitz and had six other cavers on it.

Both groups entered the cave about 11:30 AM, with the Ithaca group using and rigging the Ack's Shack entrance. The RPI group used the Hall's Hole Entrance. Ithaca had also rigged a Goldline rope down Hall's Hole in case they were late and would use their SRT gear. Ithaca had agreed with RPI to use their cable ladder with a belay. The Ithaca group subsequently split up and three of them (Dave, Bill N., Kris) left the cave earlier via Hall's Hole. They used RPI's cable ladder with a self belay.

The remainder of the Ithaca group briefly met up with the RPI group as they converged on the Coeyman's from opposite directions - Ithaca coming from the Upstream Section and RPI from the NW Passage and points downstream. Ithaca moved into the Coeyman's Dome, and their leader, Bill Donaldson, elected to climb the 70 foot drop first. He was carrying a Gibbs SRT rig but chose not to use it and to utilize the apparently "easier" cable ladder. It was about 10:30 PM. Donaldson had climbed three or four cable ladder climbs before, each of them perhaps 40 to 50 feet in height. He had never climbed a cable ladder in a wet suit (which all 13 cavers of both groups was wearing). Donaldson used his helmet-mounted electric light for the climb since his carbide had just gone out or was low. He rigged a Gibbs safety on RPI's Blue-water III. It was attached to an REI seat harness by means of a 1/2" diameter, three strand Goldline rope. Donaldson was rather tired and experienced some difficulty in climbing the cable ladder in a wet suit - mainly it was too tiring for his arms. It was later stated that most of the cavers from the Ithaca group had similar problems. They had completed a hard trip upstream carrying heavy photography equipment crawling or stoop-walking most of the way.

There was very little water falling down the Coeyman's Dome. The normal waterfall on the north side of the pit (left as you face the climb out) was reduced to only a dribble, and nothing was falling down the rigging area. Donaldson made approx. 4 to 6 rests in climbing 60 ft., each time using his Gibbs self belay to support his full weight. When he was chest level at the 10 ft. below the top (and 60 ft. off the floor), something happened and all events are then unclear. Either he was resting and adjusting his Gibbs or he reached down for something. In any case, he next realized he had slipped off the cable ladder and was falling. In a split second Donaldson tried to relax and wait for the belay to catch him, but in 15 feet or so, he realized that it would not catch. Donaldson then tried to grab the cable ladder or one of the two standing lines, the RPI BW III or Ithaca's Goldline. The Goldline was behind him, the ladder and the BW III in front of him and the entire fall was done feet first. The Ithaca group (Tinka and Eric) witnessed the entire fall and the arrangement of ropes, but could do nothing to help. Somehow Donaldson managed to wedge his hand in the cable ladder and slow up his 60 ft. fall somewhat. He landed hard on both feet and fell backwards to sit down hard. Donaldson immedi-

stood up and stated that he was fine, but Tinka and Smith had him sit down again as they checked for injuries. The only injuries that could be discovered were two very small surface scratches on the right wrist. (At 8:30AM, Sunday, Sept. 20th., Donaldson stated he was a little sore on the behind.)

As Donaldson was seated, Kalnitz of the RPI group arrived at the Coeyman's Dome and realized the situation. The remainder of the RPI group filtered into the area. There was a brief discussion whether Donaldson should climb out on his own Gibbs rig or be hauled out. The haul was the decision, and Eric Smith started to climb the cable ladder with a Jumar (?) self belay. Smith had made ladder climbs up to 200 feet, but this 70 ft. climb was very tiring and he climbed slowly. Smith thought this was due to the restrictions of the wet suit as well as the general fatigue of everyone. Smith had to push Donaldson's Gibb up the rope with his Jumar. Smith proceeded to the parking lot to bring the other three of the Ithaca group down to do the hauling. Meanwhile, three of the RPI group climbed the ladder on self belays and set up a hauling system. One end of the BW III was anchored to the rigging bolt at the top and it proceeded down to a SERA pulley on Donaldson's chest harness. The rope then went up to another SERA pulley at the rigging bolt and out to the line of 6 or 7 persons who were hauling. Next to the haulers there was a Gibbs safety. Donaldson backed up the pulley on him with carabiners and ran a Gibbs safety by hand up a standing rope. The haul was very quick and no problems encountered. The 4 remaining RPI group and Tinka of Ithaca then chose to climb out using various SRT and in order of the severity of their chilliness. All were out of the cave and it was unrigged by 3 or 3:30 AM, Sunday.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

The 1/2" Goldline loop used to secure the Gibbs self belay to Donaldson's seat harness broke. It was approx. 36" long (18" loop), and was about 1 1/2 years old. It had been used once before, and looked to be in good shape. It held Donaldson several times as he climbed. The break almost appeared as a cut, but that couldn't be determined with certainty. Speculation on the author's part might expect the rope loop to be at a sharp ledge just as Donaldson's chest cleared the ledge. As he fell and put a dynamic load on the rope and Gibbs, the rope could have been on a sharp edge. A rope under tension cuts very easily with a sharp edge.

This incident raises the whole question of the safety of cable ladders. Granted, there was no failure on the ladder's behalf. However, there are several factors involved here which should be mentioned. Donaldson apparently was quite tired from caving 11 hours in a difficult and tiring part of the cave - the Upstream Section. They had heavy packs with them. Donaldson was basically inexperienced with cable ladders, and had never climbed one with a wet suit on. The fact that his arms were very tired indicated that he was either not in the best of physical condition or more likely he was employing the wrong ladder techniques in not allowing his legs to do the bulk of the work - again, inexperience with ladders. The amount of cave food they had or the rest from the night before is not known. Based on the above, it was poor judgment on Donaldson's part to choose the RPI cable ladders being the "easier" choice. He had been on 5 McFall's trips before he led this one.

The desirability of Goldline rope, or perhaps any rope for that matter, as a safety line or loop should be closely considered. What is its test strength? Would 1" tubular webbing be better on sharp edges? This author would like to know more about that and related questions.

In the final analysis, we are extremely lucky to have Bill Donaldson alive and well today. The rescue and hauling operations seemed to be fine. However we must re-think our techniques and more closely examine the vertical gear of all cavers in our groups. We probably won't get any second chances.

Vapor Barriers, or How to be a Warm Self--Basting Turkey

The use of vapor barriers is a relatively new concept for staying warm in cold weather. Though often misunderstood, it is simple in theory and almost as simple in practice. The purpose, basically is to reduce one of the major forms of heat loss, evaporation. This is done by placing a vapor impermeable layer next to or near the skin. This serves several purposes. When active, it allows one to quickly sense when one is becoming overheated, one begins to sweat, and can take off some layers to prevent excessive sweating. In this way, one avoids the problems of dehydration, which can be very severe in cold weather. When inactive, it maintains the humidity level next to the skin, keeping one's body from having to evaporate more water for this, thus saving energy for keeping one warm. Another advantage of using vapor barriers is that it keeps insulation dry. By keeping sweat and body oils out of insulating layers they will stay dry and insulate better, thus keeping one warmer and more comfortable.

Vapor barriers are commonly used on feet, often on hands and in sleeping bags, sometimes on the upper body, and occasionally on the lower body. They take a variety of forms. Plastic bags are often used on feet and are the commonest example. Plastic or rubber gloves are used on hands and can help keep this vital area warm. Coated nylon in the form of a vapor barrier shirt is very effective, but as with the others, may take some getting used to. Vapor barriers are indeed somewhat clammy feeling, but that is how they work, trapping sweat and preventing it from cooling by evaporation. Being wet does not cause a cooling effect unless this moisture is allowed to evaporate away, which is stopped by the vapor barrier.

Give it a try, it really works.

Bob

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