



THE ROC CAIRN



—RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC.—UNION BOX 26, R.P.I., TROY, NEW YORK—



March 19, 1993



The Official *Cairn* Of Spring!

Er, well, I guess that is just a coincidence. And besides, there is two feet of snow on the ground! While we enjoy a few more weeks of an incredible winter and await what should be a most excellent whitewater season, enjoy this *Cairn*. Brought to you by: Bill, Greg, Diane, and Ken. Many thanks to them for their submissions.

Looking ahead, spring should get us out rock climbing, caving and somewhat warmer hiking and camping, besides the rafting, kayaking and canoeing. So don't get bogged down in your work; go out on some trips this spring. Also, we will probably need help with rappelling off the Union and the kayak pool session during GM week. And don't you think it would be great to have another *Cairn* before summer? I am always accepting articles, pictures, whatever.

Note on Forum:

Forum is designed to bring out varying opinions on varying subjects. Unfortunately, we have heard only one. Have a comment on first aid or leadership or anything else? Send me a note, or even just talk to me.

See you out there,

Eric Kirchner
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Here's a way to waste energy: switch your air conditioner to a setting lower than your target when you turn it on. Your room (or car) won't get cold any faster, so this is futile, wastes energy, AND wastes money.



Reduce use of foil and plastic in the kitchen. Use reusable containers to store food instead.



From Over the Hill

by Greg d. Moore

The second in an irregular series of articles from your resident old-fart. Over the years I've written on a lot of subjects. All of them related to the Outing Club in one way or another. It may seem at times that I talk a lot about the old days, or write about them. There is a simple reason for that. The new days are happening now. Once they've happened, I can write about them and talk about the old days. To quote *10,000 Maniacs*, **These are the Days.**

I can commiserate with Eric about editing the *Cairn*. It is a lonely and sometimes thankless job. It is difficult to put one together when people are unwilling to write articles. In the previous *Over the Hill* article, I talked about what the *Cairn* is. It can be a pile of rocks leading the way along the trail or it can be this newspaper leading a way for the club.

But, before we can talk about what the *Cairn* is, I think that it is necessary to talk about what the club is. The club can be many things to many people. The club is primarily people. We can talk about the size of our inventory, the number of trips going out, where the trips are going, etc. However, all of these are a moot point without people. People make up the club.

Looking back to my freshman year, I can recall at least a half-dozen different people in the club. All, like me, have graduated, but their faces are as close today as they were then. Sometimes during a meeting you may hear Andrew, myself, or some other old-fart mention that So-and-So said "Hi". These are the people that make up the club. Who knows, perhaps 5 years from now some other student will be sitting in a meeting and mention that YOU said "Hi".

But, I notice something serious going on in the club. Namely, there is a distinct lack of people. I know that I am getting older, and my eyesight may be failing me, but I think I can still count. Even more distressing is the lack of trips going out. In the past, there would be on average 3-4 trips a weekend, and more often or not there would be 4-5 trips. Not only where there a larger number of trips, but there were more people going on them. In the past there was a yearly trip to West Virginia over Thanksgiving break, Winter School over Christmas break, and often a planned trip to the Rockies.

Now, it is difficult to get one trip going with enough people that we can be sure of having enough cars.

I could try to point fingers, and say "this is wrong", "that is wrong", etc. However, I'm not entirely sure where the problem lies. I don't think that the trips are getting any more difficult. And I know personally that I've not changed my method of announcing or running trips. Yet, in the past when I've announced a trip up Phelps, I've had 8 or more people sign up. I've already had to cancel a trip to Phelps twice this year due to a lack of interest and cars.

I could mention several other ways that I think things have changed. I will mention however only one.

Red Shirts

Ok, admit it, how many people know what I mean by a Red Shirt? How many people have a patch and wonder what to do with it? Ok, you can put your hands down now, I wasn't voting. Besides, you all look kinda funny with your hand in the air. There, that is much better. Ok, let me explain. In the old days, upon joining the Outing Club and handing over your gold doubloon, your first task was to chase a flock of sheep and shear them with a stone knife you made yourself. You then had to make wool and die it red. Once you had this, you made thread, put it on the club loom and wove the material for your shirt. Then you cut the pattern and sewed your shirt together. Only then could you take your patch and sew it on your shirt.

Fortunately, by the time I joined the club, the auto had been created, the Northway had been built, polypro was being replaced by Thermax and Capiline, and bell bottoms had been out of fashion for a good 10 years. (Please, someone explain to me WHY they are coming back into vogue? Am I going to have to buy a pastel blue wide laped suit next?) By then, after earning your patch, you'd go out and purchase a red flannel shirt, sew it on, and then wear it in pride.

And the key word there is PRIDE. The red shirt was a badge, a symbol. When a new person walked into an outing club meeting for the first time, she'd see 10-15 red shirts and know that this was a club with an identity.

I think the general lack of people wearing red shirts shows a lack of identity for the outing club. This is unfortunate.

1. I'd like to strongly urge that every patch member who has a red shirt start wearing it to EVERY outing club meeting.
2. If you are a patch member and DON'T have a red shirt, go out and purchase one. Then go back to step 1.
3. To encourage people to wear their red shirts, I'd like to institute a VOLUNTARY dunning program. If you don't wear your red shirt to a meeting, you'll dun yourself \$.50 and donate it to the Woppler fund.

Hopefully, within a couple of weeks, we'll see red shirts all over the place. And remember, as long as the club is concerned: Better RED than (having a) DEAD (club).

There, my feet are sore and this soapbox getting wobbly, I think I'll step down now. You, yes you there, be a good one and hand me my walked. Thanks.

Oh? Speak up, I can't hear you. What is a WOPPLER you say? Well, it's underground whitewater rafting. But hey, would you trust an old geezer like me. But it is coming soon.

(A P.S. I just got back from a Phelps trip where everyone signed up had a car. Go Figure.)

Forum Leadership

I would like to address a certain problem I see in the club: the leaders, or the lack thereof. Leaders are those apparently knowledgeable (?) and experienced (?) people who announce trips out during the meetings. A few people, including myself, have noticed that there has been a decline in the number of trips out. This may be because leaders are going out less, but I think the main reason is there are fewer leaders.

Leaders are expected to be able to handle situations that arise involving equipment, itinerary, injury, etc. To this end, the club has a set of guidelines to determine who is qualified, and to what expertise. The E-comm uses these guidelines to evaluate prospective leaders, who must also take certain first aid courses to be able to lead trips. I should note that these requirements are generally easy to attain and do not go much beyond the skills required to participate in the activity. You also get certain benefits in signing out gear.

The present system of leaders provides a way for the club to pass on from one class to another. New members participate and become leaders, replacing those who graduate. So, if the members want organized trips out, some people need to become leaders. Of course, we can change procedures if we want: create a non-led trips category, abolish leadership altogether, suggestions? I can not think of any good reasons not to become a leader, just a bunch of bad excuses.

So, why aren't you a leader?

Eric Kirchner



Save gas. Rotate your tires every 6-8,000 miles.

Also: keep your car tuned up.

And: clean your car's fuel filters.

Extra weight uses extra fuel. Take only what you need when you go out for a drive



Heating water uses a lot of energy. Most clothes don't need to be washed in hot water or rinsed in warm: a warm-cold cycle should generally work just as well. (Remember, the rinse is just to get the soap out--the temperature of the water used for rinsing doesn't affect cleanliness.)

Pleasure Victim: Noun. 1. A rock climb on Wallface Cliff in the Adirondak mountains of New York State. 2. One who becomes victimized by their own pleasure. 3. Climbing fool.

"It'll be great, it'll be an adventure" said Phil. I never should have told him about that weakness of mine. Years before, an old climbing partner and former ROC president, Dave Sudlik had used that same phrase to talk me into some of the worst misadventures of my climbing career. He could come to me with the craziest, most dangerous idea one could possibly think of and with a few repetitions of the magic words, quiet my objections of impending death and dismemberment. Now, Outing Club president (in 1991) Phil Kahrl was using that same weakness to talk me into trying to climb Wallface in the Adirondaks. Little did he know that with that simple invocation, Phil had inadvertently summoned forth some malevolent demon from the climbing nether world; our trip was doomed from the start.

The trouble started immediately. That Friday afternoon, Mark disappeared before we were about to leave and we spent two hours tracking him down. On reaching the Adirondak Loj we promptly hit the wrong trail and headed off into the dark. After we discovered our error, we backtracked. Once back at the Loj, it took over an hour to find the real trail. Once on the right trail, our pace was brisk...until we hit the first section of flooded trail. It had rained heavily most of the previous week and the whole trail had been transformed into a six mile long linear swamp. We finally got into camp at about one in the morning and found the lean-to already occupied.

The next morning, we got up late and began picking our way up the cliff through the house sized boulders in the tallus field from hell. When we got there, we divided into two teams. Mark and Doug wanted to do the Weisner route but Phil and I wanted to do something a bit harder. Looking through the guidebook, we came upon a route called "Pleasure Victim," a heinous poorly bolted 5.11 death route up a blank face. We both laughed at the name; Phil said he hoped we didn't become pleasure victims ourselves. After this we started seriously scoping out routes. The ones we wanted to do were all wet though. We reluctantly decided to do the Weisner route with Mark and Doug. As we neared the start of the route, Phil asked if I wanted to do the 5.6 direct start slab route. The pro looked a bit sparse and the slab had several wet streaks on it but it seemed well within my abilities and I wanted something more difficult than the 5.5 Weisner route. "Yea lets go for it" I said.

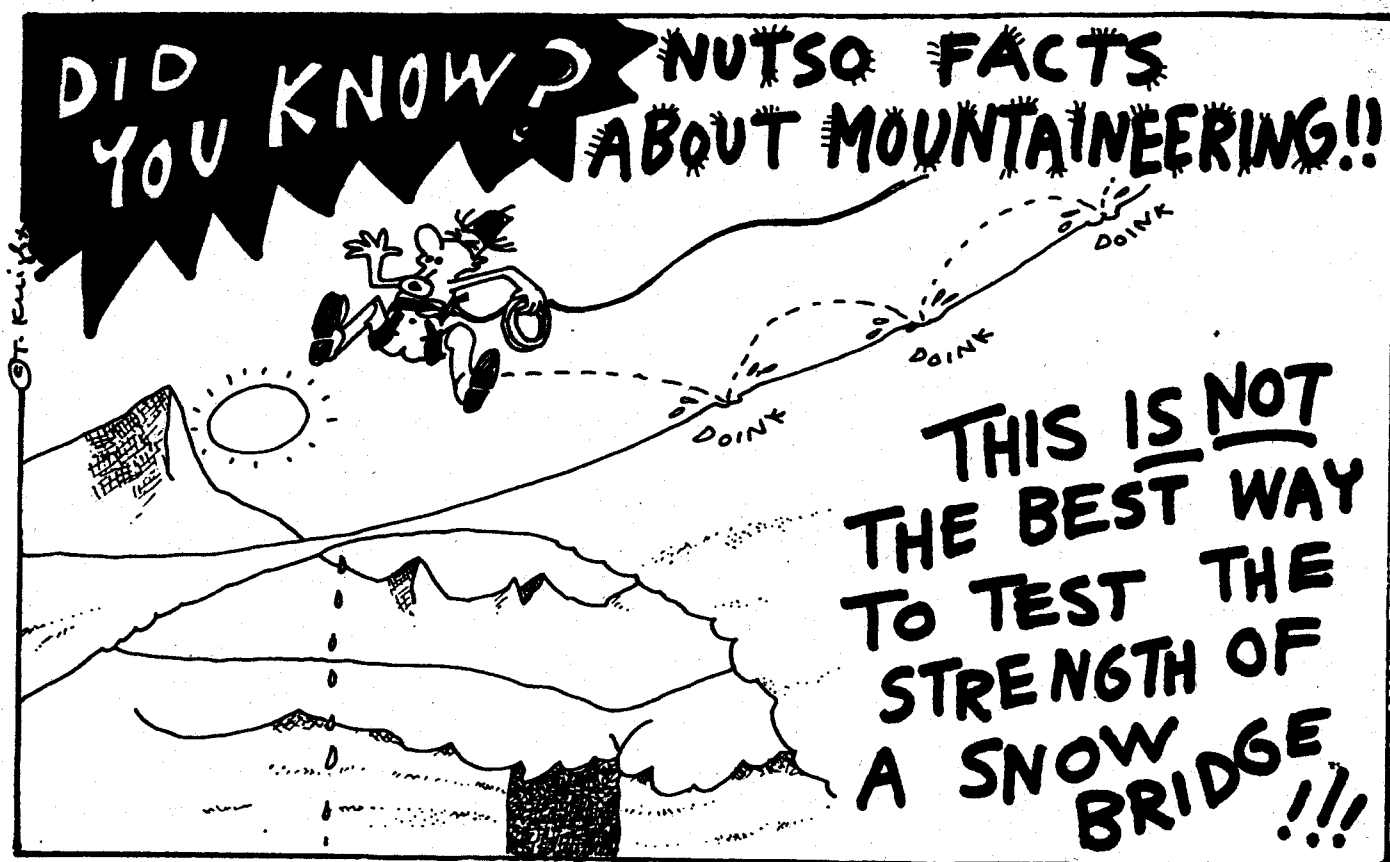
Now Phil had neglected to mention two things he saw in the guidebook were. The first was that the route had an "X" protection rating (which means Falling = Death). There was also a terse and ominous warning at the bottom of the route description: "dry conditions must prevail." I started out. About forty feet off the ground I did a move that I didn't care to reverse and then found that the protection that seemed to lurk above was just one of those climbing mirages. Now above that and to the left, the route blanked out. The only direction left was to the right over a traverse that looked technically easy but which consisted of hand and footholds of slippery wet grass and loose dirt. At this point, my last piece of protection would catch me after I had fallen 40 feet, hit the ground and then bounced 20 or so feet down the tallus field. I had to decide: death traverse or down climb. There's only one thing I hate more than scary traverses and that's down climbing. After 20 or so feet of traversing over wet sod I came to a decent crack that would take protection. "Rain, the crops are saved" (your mind does really weird things during moments of mortal terror). After that it was easy climbing to the belay ledge, I got to live.

Above us lay a dry, well protected but difficult looking crack that I told Phil I would gladly lead. To the left there was an easy but wet and poorly protected gully that I told Phil he would have to lead if he wanted to do it. Always a glutton for punishment, Phil went for the shitty looking gully. All went well at first. He got into the gully, went up and got in some protection. He went up a bit more and then stepped into the notch that exited the gully onto the second belay ledge. He looked as if he had made it. Then, at the last possible moment, he snatched defeat from the jaws of victory and miraculously popped off the rock and slid down the slab. He took a 20 foot screamer and boy did he scream. In fact, he continued to

scream (and swear) long after the fall had ended. It seemed that he had left about half of his skin on the rock in what he referred to as the ablation method to stopping a fall. As Phil hung there cursing, a tremendous noise came from the main part of the route where Doug and Mark were climbing. It seems that Doug was pulling up on a block when it came loose and smashed him in the face, then slid down his nose leaving a nasty looking scrape. WOW! This was better than a demolition derby, Being safe on the belay ledge, I was now starting to have fun.

After this Incident, Phil and I decided to bag the climb and traverse over to a ledge with a tree. From there we could rappel down and get the hell of that cliff. Since Phil was still on the rope, he started the traverse. As he was climbing, it suddenly occurred to me that we had indeed become "pleasure victims." The words repeated over and over in my head: pleasure victim, pleasure victim, pleasure victim, pleasure victim; I couldn't help laughing hysterically--we're all pleasure victims!! Phil got to the ledge, I followed and we raped off. Later on Phil confessed that the laughing had him deeply worried about the quality of the belay he was receiving.

When we got down, Mark and Doug were almost through with their retreat as well. We all hurriedly went down through the tallus field from hell back to our camp. There our luck turned, the lean-to was empty and the cocoa and schnapps we had brought were still there. yeahhh! Four pleasure victims had been sacrificed; the demon was appeased. A few months later, I was trying to talk Phil into a winter ascent of the washbowl cliff in the Adirondaks as training for our return to Wallface. "Oh come on, it'll be great, it'll be an adventure" I said. But that is another story.



Pause

Cold clear moonlit sky above the silent snow

Laden branches evergreen and ever white

Frozen laketop luminous with lunar light

Quiet brook

Motionless

M o t i o n l e s s

...seconds

...minutes

...hours

Shooting star breaks the lifeless trance

Footsteps' echos start again.

Diane H Peapus

DELIVERANCE: DELIVERED

By: Ken Koebberling

February 21 broke foreboding and cold for a quartet of would-be snowshoers and their fearless leader, Greg Moore. The foursome of Matt Gillham, Anita Soto-Canio, Andrew Weiss, and this reporter entrusted their day, their well-being, their very futures to Greg as they arrived in front of the Armory that chilly morning at 0600. After a short bout of musical cars, we set out, Anita and Matt opting for the comfortable ride of my air-cooled jeep. As we made the trek to Phelps Mountain, near Lake Placid in the Adirondacks, I was favorably impressed by Matt's sleeping abilities, as he snored away despite the New York roads, the comfortable jump seat, and ride of the jeep's smooth suspension.

Anita and I became only moderately alarmed to see Greg, in the vehicle ahead of us, frantically digging through the gear in the back of his Subaru as we traveled the Northway. Only later did we realize the truth: our leader, our technical expert, our safety-man had forgotten his boots! After assuring us that none of the extra boots we had would fit, Greg found his saving grace in the Adirondack Mountain Club; alas, they had his size.

After a short class on gear-packing and another on snowshoe-strapping, we were off. The first three miles to Marcy Dam were very moderate, as the trail was well-packed, but one-half mile after the Dam, things picked up, and so did the terrain. We began the final assault after a short break; the entire team had reached the summit by 1300 hours. After a lunch break, punctuated by blood-curdling screams as certain members of the group conducted their own personal "I reached the top of you" initiations to Phelps Mountain, we began our descent, as the expected snowstorm began, albeit slowly. Some of us made it down in 20 minutes; the appearance of two very large black mixed lab/shepherd dogs hastened our gait. I was introduced to the "Seated Glissade" by Andrew, a strange name indeed for sliding down a hill on the seat of one's pants (actually, it was a little more sophisticated than that, as we used the coveted ice-ax as a rudder/brake).

The group rejoined in the Adirondack Lodge about 1500 hours, recounted a few tales, waited for Greg to take a shower, and drank cocoa; we departed, amidst a growing snowstorm. On the way out, the group stopped at a mountaineering store where we saw many quality wares, but naturally didn't buy any, since they didn't fit our budget. From there, the trek to the alma mater was uneventful (at least I'm sure it was for Matt, as he re-gathered his strength on the car ride). The trip proved to be a learning experience for all (Greg too - don't forget those boots next time); perhaps next time we can find a little deeper snow to further test our skills - and have a chance for "Deliverance: Delivered II!

▲ The litter you leave behind at the beach kills over a million seabirds and other animals every year. Don't litter. If you're feeling ambitious, bring a trash bag with you next time, and spend a few minutes picking up litter.

GORY, GORY ROCK CLIMBERS

"Will it go around the chockstone?" called the belayer looking up
Our hero feebly answered "Yes" and slowly inched on up.
He was trying to drive a piton when his foothold crumbled out
Oh, he ain't gonna climb no more

Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die
Oh, he ain't gonna climb no more

He slid right down the chimney and he quickly gathered speed
He shot past the belayer who'd forgot the climber's creed
An anchor to a piton would've been all he'd ever need
Oh, he ain't gonna climb no more (last line to every verse)

The belayer felt the rope pull taut, and tried to let it run
But it jerked him from position and he knew his time had come
He left the ledge behind him and it shot up towards the sun

They sped on down the chimney and they passed the Southern Col
They had such good exposure it had made a glorious fall
They slithered over a friction pitch and sped on down the wall

The days they'd lived and loved and laughed kept running through their minds
They thought about the girls back home, and the ones they'd left behind
They thought about the rangers too, and wondered what they'd find

A medic in the valley watched them through his telescope
And as they neared the bottom his eyes grew bright with hope
For it had been a week or more since the parting of the rope

One had the rope around his neck and pitons through his spleen
An ice-ax in the rucksack had split the other's bean
The trails of red marked their descent as they neared the slopes of green

They hit the ground, the sound was SPLAT! The blood went spurting high
Their comrades they were heard to say "What a colorful way to die!"
They wished that they had never come, or that they had learned to fly

(slowly)

There was blood upon the rucksacks, there were brains upon the rope
Bits and pieces were entwined across the green and grassy slope
We put them in a lunch pail after salvaging the rope

-- author unknown