



THE ROC CAIRN



RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC. — 15th ST. LOUNGE, R. P. I., TROY, NEW YORK
VOLUME VI, NUMBER 2

WINTER MOUNTAINEERING COMPETITION -- YES?, NO?

Your editor is beginning to wonder just what is the true value of the ADK Winter Mountaineering Program. The following letter from the ROC's most active alumnus represents an attitude held by many mountaineers. The CAIRN would like to emphasize that the ROC has no cure-all or perfect solution for this important question, but merely hopes to get other clubs thinking along these lines. Maybe through constructive criticism the situation can be ironed out at the winter mountaineering conference to be held at Cornell this year.

Dear Editor:

9 January 1950.

As an active alumnus and one of the Club's directors I am vitally interested in the development of all phases of mountaineering for members of the ROC. In particular I am interested in the winter camping and mountaineering program inaugurated last winter in response to the ADK's Adirondack competitions.

A great many of us at that time learned firsthand the intimate pleasures of winter activity that accrue to those with the proper clothing, equipment, food, comrades, and attitude of mind. We found real enjoyment where we had formerly suspected primarily hardship. Of the nearly two dozen ROC'ers who spent last winter's mid-semester vacation in various Adirondack leantos, there wasn't a one who didn't thoroughly enjoy himself. The hardships were there, but so was a magnificent spirit which sought to and did overcome them.

The question arises -- why did we subject ourselves to the rigors of winter camping and climbing? I doubt if there is but a sole answer. There was the urge to try something new -- to use new equipment and techniques; there was the challenge of camping and living comfortably in wintertime; there was the desire to do what one's best friends were doing; there was the lure of nature's beauty beneath a 3-foot carpet of snow; there was the common and ever-present urge to simply climb mountains, be it winter or summer. There were all these reasons, and yet there was another one that cannot be truthfully ignored: there was the desire to win the Adirondack Loj Trophy. No matter how the 15-odd men felt personally about competitive mountaineering, they were all interested -- in varying degrees, of course -- in this bait the ADK had set before them.

The ensuing Winter Mountaineering Conference at RPI served to bring to discussion the whole question of competition, where representatives from all the competing colleges -- Yale, Cornell, Syracuse, and RPI -- aired their views. The general belief was that there were some very real dangers in mountaineering competitions, but that some impetus was needed for a period of several years to arouse enough enthusiasm so that the necessary backlog of field experience could be secured. Committees were set up to map out revisions in the existing program so that a better one would be ready for the next winter.

That revised program has recently appeared and is the chief reason for this writer's remarks. In my opinion the ADK has placed itself in a very precarious position, where the criticism that may be leveled against it can undo in a very short time the fine reputation it has built up over a period of many years. The needless red tape, the encroachment on personal and club liberty of action, and the emphasis on overcoming difficult hazards that this year's Winter and Ski Competitions contain point to the need for drastic, immediate action. Should these deplorable features continue, the ADK can practically forget about the whole program. Even last year's rules were better than the new ones.

I have talked to many of the ROC participants and to members of the Yale Mountaineering Club, and their opinions are much the same as my own. I sincerely hope this letter will cause others to pause and reconsider with objective scrutiny the whole competitive program.

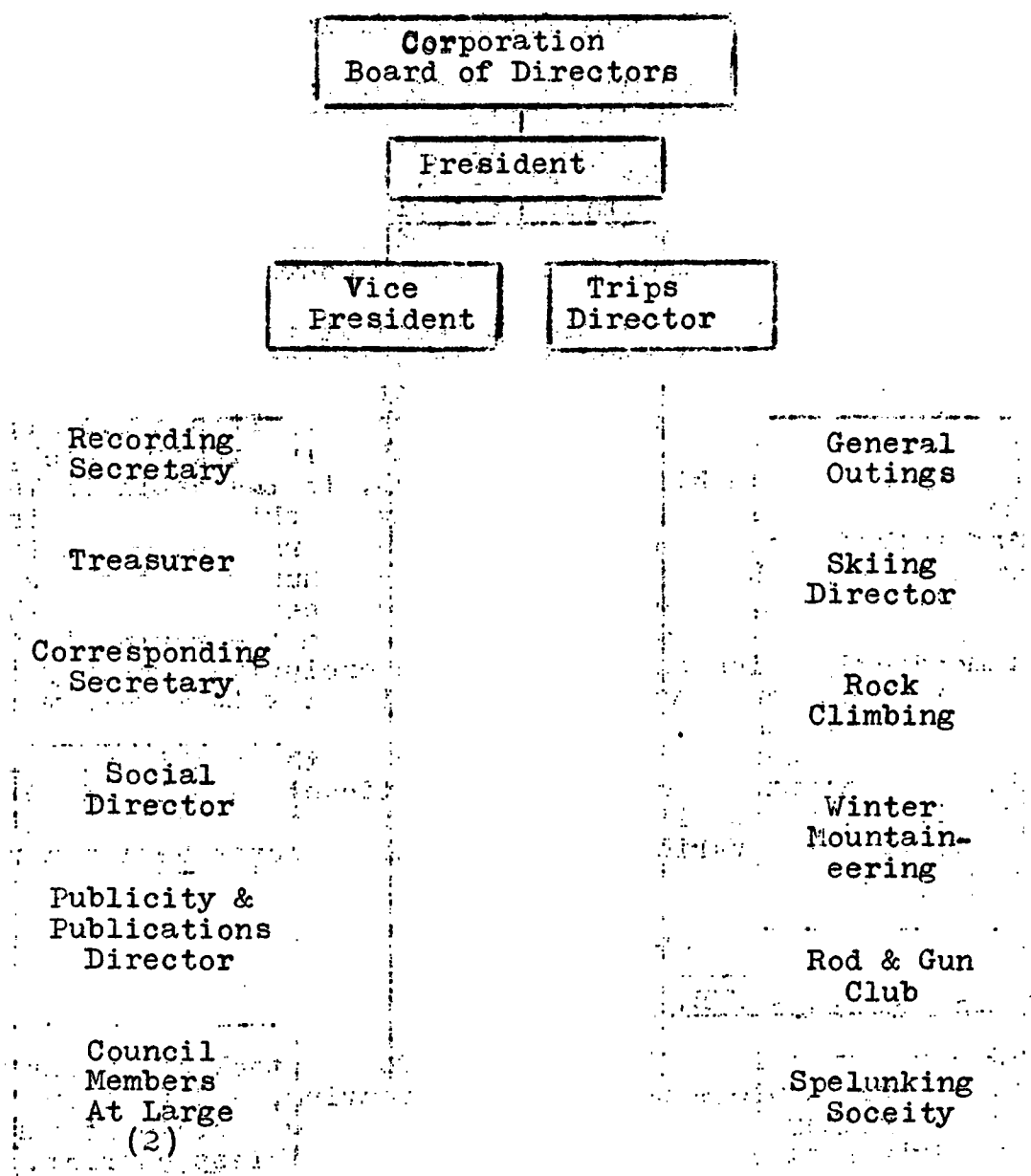
What should be emphasized is simplicity: no forms to fill out except the reports of the trips themselves, no dogmatic rules that say participants "must" do this; a prepared list of suggested procedures rather than one of "duties" and emphasis on safety-- both in the matter of preparations, equipment, and techniques and in regard to weather (not tempting parties to undertake hazardous trips as the Marshall Trophy does or giving points for the treatment of first aid injuries as under the Loj Trophy rules).

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB

On the following page is shown the organizational chart of the executive council of the ROC. The Board of Directors of the Rensselaer Outing Club, Inc. is composed of faculty members, and present and former members who are of legal age. The corporation was formed and is maintained in order that the club may own property directly. The president, of course, correlates the multi-phased activities of the club, and presides at council and general business meetings.

The vice President, who might also be termed a business manager, controls those activities of the club which do not directly involve outings. It is under his direction that the club functions as an organization. The recording secretary is in charge of the



office watch, the records and files, membership, and historian. The treasurer handles all club finances. The corres. sec. conducts all general correspondence and maintains a record of all club correspondence. The social director plans all square and folk dances held by the club and will have charge of the Winter and Campus Carnivals. Publicity and publications include "Poly" writing, poster making, radio publicity, miscellaneous publications and the CAIRN.

The trips director's activities are pretty well self explanatory. Also included in his department but not members of the executive council are the transportation and equipment directors. The activities of the trips departments are basic to the club and give meaning to the work of the other departments.

SKI THE EASTERN SLOPES

This has been a tough winter for those of us who love to point their hickories down a snow covered mountain slope, and as during last winter, were forced to hunt further afield for secluded snow bowls.

Between terms some members had an opportunity to wander through the eastern slopes region of the White Mountains in New Hampshire and ski every day away for a week while other ski areas were barren. The town of Jackson, New Hampshire, nestled among the mountains provides an excellent jumping off place, as it looks up to the 4,000 foot chair lift on Thorn Mt. and is only a short distance from the skimobile on Cranmore Mt. in North Conway and the T-bar on Black Mt.

But the best skiing isn't always found at the ski resorts, as the clubbers invasion of Diamondhead and Washington seemed to prove. Mt. Washington is easily one of the most interesting and varied areas for those with the yen to do a little climbing. It's a 2.3 mile ascent up the Fire Trail in Joe Dodge's cabin in Pinkham notch, maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club, to the cabin in Tuckerman's Ravine. This is still rather early to ski in the ravine as the temperatures still hover in the minus range and winds frequently reach sixty mph in the ravine and one hundred at the summit. It isn't unusual, however, to find two feet of snow on the Sherborne Trail, with its two mile descent from the ravine to the base. Diamondhead, which seemed to be the exclusive property of the MITOC this vacation, has an excellent trail with a well maintained cabin at its summit.

The inexpensiveness of the facilities at these ski areas is a welcome feature, as an all day chair lift ticket is only \$3.50 and the T-bar only \$3.00. So if you have the time and the inclination you'll surely find the variety of the Eastern Slopes Region a pleasant ski holiday.

FAST ACTIVITIES

CAMP GRACE - JAN. 29 - FEB. 3

Bright and early a stalwart band of five OC'ers took off by car for the hills. Eleven hours, one burned out bearing, and fifteen miles of packing later they arrived at Grace Camp, now a stalwart band of four. (The driver elected to stay with his faithless chariot.) Ten hours of packing out and a hearty breakfast later they drew lots for the job of packing back to Keene Valley for the weeks rations. The lucky winner took off while the others, now a stalwart band of three, ascended Big Slide Mt. with a party from Cornell who were at the nearby winter camp. The going was icy but the trip was completed without mishap. The next day two men rested up while a stalwart band of two packed a cache for Snobird leanto which will be used for a future trip via Saddleback and Basin Mts. The trip ended the following day as three men packed home while a stalwart band of one remained to greet the tired and hungry group returning from Expedition Argo.

EXPEDITION ARGO - AL N MOUNTAIN ASCENT - JAN. 1 - FEB. 3

Five men started the trek into the wilderness from St. Huberts in a slight drizzle with the temperature in the forties. Rather than make the arduous pack over Sawteeth, they decided to chance a crossing on the water of Lower Ausable Lake. Successfully across, they quickly set up a shipshape camp and turned for fourteen times forty winks. The following days found them completing the ascent of Allen Mt., glissadeing on the slopes, and following the trails in the vicinity of Basin and Haystack Mts. They also left a cache at Snobird. During their wanderings they recovered an army radio-sonde apparatus which now may be seen in the ROC office. The return was made by way of Camp Grace where a "stalwart band of one" met them with a very welcome roaring fire

CAMP GRACE - FEBRUARY 3 - 5

After a gruelling tussle with the red tape of an R. P. I. registration four OC'ers decided to recover in the peace and quiet of the Adirondacks. Due to their late start they did not reach Camp Grace till after midnight so they quickly sacked out. They had but two pairs of crampons between them so they were forced to do their climbing in shifts. The first group packed the yellow trail with another cache for Snobird, the steep climb being made possible only by their crampons. The second group made short work of the ascent of Gothics the next day. The steep climb was adequately rewarded by the beautiful few the clear weather afforded. The trip reaffirmed their belief that there is no better way to relax than to take to the hills.

SPELUNKERS - VA. & W. VA. - DEC. 26 - 30

Refusing to heed the annual halt a northern winter calls to their activities, four R. P. I. Spelunkers went in search of cave areas further south. Their first stop was the headquarters in Washington of the Nat'l Speleological Society where they sought information on cave areas in the Virginias. The Franklin Area in Pendleton County, W. Va. as well as Clarke Cave in Va. were both highly recommended and immediately became their objectives.

The two caves in the Franklin Area, Front and Hamilton, were found to be well worth the trip in themselves. Hamilton was inactive and extremely large. It had been a salt peter mine during the Civil War and still showed traces of past mining activities. Front, although smaller, had a great number of very interesting formations. It was almost an endless maze and when the unwary Spelunkers tried to return to the entrance they found themselves walking in circles. The entrance passage was finally found by the process of elimination.

The exploration of Clarke Cave was carried out the following day. The main entrance consisted of five small openings leading to the main passageway. All five were negotiated before the explorers turned their attention to the other passages, some of which were large enough to drive a car through. The rest of the day they spent taking photographs of the various formations and recording the numbers of the many banded bats found in the cave. These numbers were later sent to the conservation authorities.

WINTER CAMP WITH VASSAR OUTING CLUB -- DECEMBER 26 - JAN 1

Deep among the splitters of the clouds,
Beside the sparkling laughter of old Johns Brook,
There's a mighty shout of "For crying out loud!,
Why don't you go home?, you low down shnook."

Such was the humor that added to the cheer,
As the new year pushed its way out of December,
Twas the VOC-ROC winter mountaineers,
In an experience which each will long remember.

This sonnet, of course, refers to that ultimate of trips, the VOC-ROC winter camping expedition. After packing five miles up Keene Valley to the winter cabin of Johns Brook Lodge, ten truly fortunate outing clubbers climbed in the grandeur of winter in the Adirondacks, square danced to the tunes of an old banged up vic, and enjoyed that brand of real camping fellowship which can be found only under such conditions.

Big Slide, Upper and Lower Wolfjaw, Gothic, and Basin mountains all fell to the wiles of enthusiastic climbers. Many more hours were spent skiing the slides of Upper Wolfjaw and touring trails on snowshoes. Cooking, or schmooking as one termed it, featured delicacies to water the mouth of any connoisseur. The stewed cabbage is especially worthy of note. What began as enough for ten soon filled every container in the camp and almost reached the point where snowshoes were necessary to keep from floundering in the stuff.

The hours spent on charrades, the mad-bent for election sack races and everyones gear drying out over the fire are but a few of the scenes that will live long in the memories of those who attended. To quote an old Afghanistan climbers term, "Eet was tearefeec!!"

THE UNSUNG HERO

