

APRIL, 1985



# THE ROC CAIRN

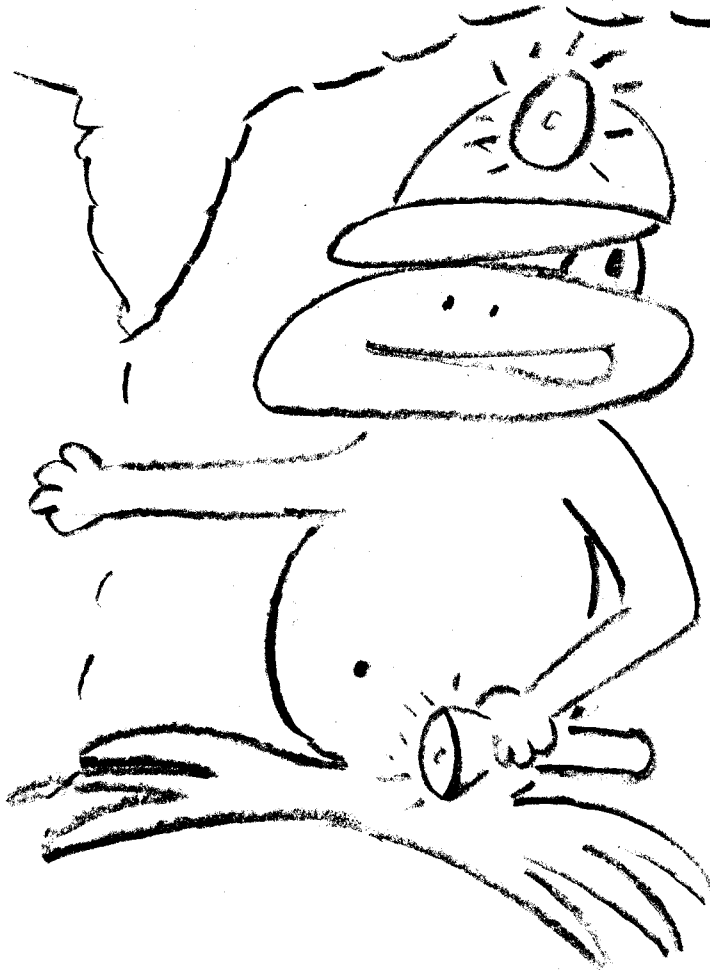


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RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC. — 15TH ST. LOUNGE. R. P. I., TROY, NEW YORK

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WHERE'S  
THE  
MUD?

GM

WHO'S WHO IN THE OUTING CLUB

PRESIDENT	Ray Tice alias Santa Claus
VICE-PRESIDENT	John Turi
EQUIPMENT CHAIRMAN	Davis Chapman alias Cave-head
TREASURER	Lee Schipper
SECRETARY	Shawn Mc Donald
MEMBER-AT-LARGE	Guy (ski) Moffat
CAIRN EDITOR	Your's truly, Rick Marsan

A dedication to the steep and unexpected hills found while skiing.

### Gory, Gory

"Are all the racers ready?" cried the starter looking up.  
Our racer bravely answered "yes", and then we stood him up.  
He went a boomin' down the trail, but his bindings were unhooked.  
Well, He ain't gonna race no more.

Refrain: 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  
Well, he ain't gonna race no more.

He felt the wind, he felt the chill, he felt the sudden drop  
He tried to stem, he tried to check, and then he tried to stop.  
A sudden crash, a horrible thud, a sickening rush of blood.  
Well, he ain't gonna race no more.

Refrain

(slowly)

There was blood upon the bindings, there were brains upon the skis  
Intestines were a hangin' from the highest of the trees.  
We scraped him off the snow, and then we poured him from his boots.  
Well, he ain't gonna race no more.

Plagiarist Unknown

### IN IOCA'S HISTORY The Legend of IOCA's Barnacle Bill

by Bert Raphael

It all started when Ira Schnall of the Rensselaer Outing Club discovered a broken-down pinball machine for sale in one of Troy, New York's less reputable neighborhoods. Deciding that this was just what he always needed, Ira invested \$15 and boldly carted the monstrosity - emblazoned with "Barnacle Bill" in illuminated letters across the back glass - to his top-floor apartment. With a little fiddling and rewiring, Ira soon had most of the bumpers working with the coin slots disconnected.

But Ira's roommates did not appreciate lights, bells and buzzers flashing randomly at 4 am. Before long, Ira came home from classes and found Barnacle Bill missing. Luckily, he looked at the trash heap in the back alley before the garbage truck arrived. Barnacle Bill then was stored in a downstairs apartment while Ira looked for another place to live.

The downstairs residents - I and other ROC members - enjoyed playing although it was quite a distraction from our studies and from the more important job of planning the 1956 Fall Lake George trip. Then an idea struck: why not make this IOCA trip unique by offering pinball amusement to the Saturday night Square Dance? Ira was unwilling to risk all of his \$15 investment with notorious IOCA trophy hunters, so Mike

Smolin and I each purchased 1/3 shares.

At Fall Lake George, more than 300 IOCA's canoed to Mohegan Island to find a pinball machine plugged into the generator with the usual lights and the square dance P.A. system! Before leaving shore, we decided that the glass cover was too fragile to bring across the lake, so Barnacle Bill's inner workings were exposed. Naturally, the steel balls rapidly vanished, but nobody seemed to mind after they discovered that fingers could push bumpers and ring bells and buzzers just as loud! A few alums grumbled indignantly that the pinball machine's presence degraded IOCA and the great outdoors. On the whole, however, the crowd enjoyed the incident before deserting Barnacle Bill for the square dance.

Late that night the square dance lights went out suddenly. By the time the generators spark plug was replaced, both Barnacle Bill and several MITOCers were gone. . . . a motor boat was heard in the distance. By the following morning Barnacle Bill appeared in Boston. That evening, MITOC presented ROC with one of the steel balls. For several weeks, Barnacle Bill kept many MITOCers away from their studies so they decided to bring the pinball machine on their next rock climbing trip in the Schwangunks and turn it over to the first convenient ROCer, who promptly passed it along to the Cornell Outing Club.

Several months later, Cornell hosted an IOCA weekend in the Catskill Mountains. Posters suddenly appeared in the campground: "See the highest Pinball Machine in the East - on top of Slide Mountain!" Barnacle Bill sat on the platform atop the fire tower on the highest peak in the Catskills! The ROCers present that weekend had no personal interest in the machine, and they were not inclined to rent packboards from Cornell (at \$5 per minute) to bring it down. Some MIOCA people decided the pinball machine shouldn't be left on the mountain so they took possession.

No word was received from Barnacle Bill for several weeks until an RPI alum mailed a copy of the "NYU News" to the ROC office. On the front page was a photograph taken in the NYU Hall of Fame with the pinball machine standing proudly by the bust of George Washington! The story was reprinted in the "RPI Poly," and several days later, some RPI students (not outing clubbers) were arrested in New York City for attempting to break into the NYU building after dark. They told the police some wild story about a pinball machine!

Several weeks following the 1959 IOCA Conference, rock climbers in the Schwangunks had to overcome a strange obstacle on the familiar Three Pins route - Barnacle Bill was sitting on the first belay ledge more than 80 feet above the ground! An IOCA climbing "rescue" party was formed to remove the pinball machine from the cliff by dropping it off the cliff; the guts (switches, relays, transformers, etc.) had disappeared earlier in Barnacle Bill's travels.

It is not clear when the pile of splinters and broken glass was picked up but, at the next Spring Lake George trip, Dwight Deal sponsored a souvenir stand where he sold Barnacle Bill's remains - assorted scraps of wood, glass and metal - to IOCA trophy hunters.

CAVING  
West Virginia '85

This past Thanksgiving six people went on a caving trip to West Virginia. We left Troy at 2 pm on Friday, which put us near our goal at 3 am. After searching a while for a campsite, we parked on the side of the road and slept in the cars. The next morning we did Harper's Cave (see Guy Moffat's report).

After getting out of the cave, (about midnight) we had dinner and then headed South for an hour, to a camping area and the next cave. We ended up setting the tents up on the side of the road. Waking up at noon, we were greeted by rain. At 4 pm, the campsite had been found, and the convoy headed for Bone Cave. We stopped for some food at a little place near the cave, and a couple of tipsy locals gave us final directions, incredulous that a group would come all the way from New York to go caving (instead of hunting), and would be heading for the cave after dark on a rainy night in November. Upon arriving at the parking area, we started to wonder the same thing. Insanity prevailed, and we climbed into our muddy, wet caving clothes and headed out to the cave.

Bone is aptly named, being bone dry and warm. That lifted our spirits greatly. After several thousand feet of walking the single passage that is the cave, the group arrived at the crawl that led to the Devil's Pinch. The other side of the pinch is Norman's Cave, whose entrance is two miles from Bone's. Everyone fit through the pinch (8.5 by 24 inches), so the group started to explore Norman's Cave. I had been in the cave before, so I led the group back to an area with formations (about a mile). The end room of reddish brown stalagmites, stalagmites, rimstone pools and flowstone had been coated with mud by at least two floods since I had been there two years ago, but the other set of formations were untouched. This was a little area of snow-white curtains and stalagmite-cascades against one of the walls in the passage. They defy description.

We got out of that cave about 9:30 the next morning, and stayed awake till evening to get back on a normal schedule. That next day we did a cave called Swago. It consists of a 60 foot entrance drop followed by a 50 foot drop. We actually rigged the rope into the third of three pits. Guy Moffat ended up dropping his lamp into the second pit while chimneying across the top (to get to the third pit). We did not even attempt to recover it, since the pit had at least two feet of water at the bottom with more water raining in from the top. At the bottom of the second drop is a small stream passage which leads to the main walking passage, a mile long. The highlight of the cave was the gypsum crystals. These are curly, white strands of gypsum up to an inch wide and several inches long that grow on the walls. They are just beautiful.

We got out of this cave at 4 am to discover that the rain had stopped, the stars were out, and it was much colder (about 20 degrees).

That next afternoon, Guy and Ko headed back to Troy to catch up on schoolwork and the rest of us did Tub Cave. Tub consists of one single room that is about 1.4 acres in size. We walked around it and then played some frisbee in the cave.

When we awoke the next morning, it was 5 degrees outside. Berrrrr! This day (Thursday) we decided to do a new cave called Greenville Saltpeter Cave. It was so named because saltpeter was mined from the clay in the cave during the Civil War (used in making gunpowder). This cave had about 13000 feet of mapped passages and we did them all. The area with the saltpeter works was really neat.

The last day we decided to do the passages around the Norman's Cave entrance. We entered the cave around 3:30 pm and did most of the upper passage. It was very wet and muddy, but it did have some formations, especially some very nice rimstone pools. The group then found the lower stream passage that led to Bone Cave, but none of us were psyched to slog through the water for two miles. Getting out of the cave, we changed and were on the road heading home by 8:30 pm.

Davis Chapman, trip leader?

### The Flip Side

After sleeping in cars for the remainder of Friday night, we awoke to the beautiful rolling hills of West Virginia. Rather than waste time cooking breakfast, we decided to eat at the local restaurant/general store/gas station. We all had bone dry hot cakes that made Bisquick a delicacy.

After breakfast it was off to Harper's Cave; up the road a piece, over the creek, and past the limestone quarry. It turned out we had slept about 200 yards from the cave entrance! Ah, dry, clean caving clothes. They won't be that way for long! We herded the cattle and sheep away from the entrance drop, where we would spend the next nine hours, and rigged up. Davis used some half-rotted logs from which to rig the 1 by 3 foot hole. It took a little while to convince Bob that the logs were sturdy, despite their appearances.

The descent was easy: an 80 foot free rappel to the bottom of the shaft. One more 45 foot rappel and we were ready and eager to explore some cave. We entered the first major room, which had two leads. The group split up with Ko, Bob, and Davis pushing a narrow crawl to the left. Sure enough, Ko reported a small room at the end, with a deep pit. Davis went down the crawl to investigate, pushing his cave-pack in front of him. Upon reaching the end of the crawl, he gave the pack one final heave into the room, to be greeted by silence. A far-off thud and Ko's laughing confirmed his suspicion, the cave-pack had found the pit. A brief inspection of the situation led to the question "Was there anything valuable in it?" Since it contained his lunch, Davis decided to retrieve it. A closer look at the pit revealed that it was too wide to chimney and too smooth to down-climb, so Davis went back to get some vertical gear. Lets see, a rack, prussiks, and a piece of webbing for a rope... That webbing sure goes through the break bars fast! He rescued his pack, then proceeded to prussik up the 30 foot pit. Prussiks sure don't hold very well on wet, muddy webbing! He made it up unscathed, and the group proceeded to the right passage back in the main room.

This passage was no picnic either. There was a 30 foot chimney followed by a 20 yard crawl to a second very large room. After regrouping, everyone started to explore this room. After pushing leads for half an hour, Guy squeezed down a hole, which kept going down at a gentle slope, ending up in a small room. There he heard Davis popping in from above. One by one everybody followed. All the leads pinched out, except for a small branch which led to some formations. There were soda straws on the ceiling, flowstone on the walls, and best of all a three foot long curtain hanging twisted from the ceiling - as thin as ribbon candy.

The return trip was straightforward until we reached the lower rappel. Prussiking up the free hanging rope was easy, until the overhanging top was reached. Davis kept yelling "Push off the wall with your feet, then slide the prussik over the ledge." "Sure, Davis, I can't even reach the wall under this overhang!" After some trial and error I managed to get the rope off the ledge with my body, and

continued to prussik out. Whew! solid ground under my feet!

Now, just an 80-foot cable ladder climb remained to the arctic air above. Cable ladders are sure strenuous. Sort of like doing 100 pull-ups. Oh well, it is just as easy to keep climbing as it is to stop and rest. At least the exercise kept me warm.

At last! A breath of fresh, COLD air hits. I'm almost there, I can see stars! One last brute force climb and I am free. Out in the crisp autumn air, there is frost on the grass and my coveralls are quickly freezing solid. Ah, but I am still warm from the strenuous climb.

Being the first one out, it was my duty to change to keep warm, and start dinner - Mac & Sack "soup" with kielbasi and plenty of hot chocolate! Mmmmmmm!

Guy Moffat

R.O.C. and S.O.C.  
and the  
"Great Presidential Traverse Adventure"  
(a mini-series)

or

"To boldly go where no ROC'er has gone before"

So as not to brutalize anyone in the typical half-hour, trivia-packed, detail ad infinitum report style, we decided that a highlights story was definitely in order. We spent five spectacular days in the Whites Mountains over spring break, all of which were filled with a plethora of happenings worthy of profuse detail and agonizing trumpery, but as we've promised, let's get right to the point.

First of all, never let anyone convince you that trekking in the Whites in the winter is easy-far from it! Our first day entailed a seven-hour trek, five of which we broke trail on (wearing full 40-50 lb. packs, of course), migrating our way straight up the freaking face of Mt. Madison. That day we climbed over 4,300 feet - basically a vertical ascent. Never again would I complain about the switch-backs out west - oh, to be in Yosemite again! Just when we thought we had reached the ridge, it was always just over the next hummock - so close but yet so far away. I thought to myself after about two hours of attack on this ridge, "well, I guess once we're at the ridge the rest should be a cakewalk"...oh yee of too much faith!!!! After the torturous ascent in deep snow (step left, plant ice axe, step right, move ice axe), on 50-60<sup>0</sup> pitches, the sky beginning to dim in the late afternoon hours, all was not as rosy as I had hoped. If only we could stop here for the night, I thought. But where? One does not normally pitch one's tent on a 60<sup>0</sup> slope, totally vulnerable to the harsh mountain elements on an exposed ridge, with giant conglomerate boulders breaking through the snow as a platform for one's shelter. No, this didn't seem reasonable, but it certainly did as far as my aching muscles were concerned.

"We must be getting close by now", I thought I heard my knees scream. Davis kept reminding me to appreciate the views we were getting. "Right Davis!" And, indeed, he was right. The air was crisp and fresh and we could see for miles from our cliff side trails. After another hour or more of trudging in deep snow, over boulder after boulder, up another lofty pitch or two, down a couple more profound slopes, we finally



reached the heaven-kissing summit of Mt. Madison.

As if climbing this tower would not pass muster, we now had to contend with the lofty, chilling and inexhaustible winds that were abounding around us. All we could think of was the hut near the summit (yuk yuk), and thoughts of camp, food and anesthetizing sleep. Several times I was dashed against the boulders by the blasts of air, my legs too weak to fight off the brisk dominance. Not much further, I thought, keep pushing on, after all, the guys were doing fine except for an occasional groan or two. Then we caught a glimpse of a tiny light, far off in a down-reaching col. For the third time (within the last hour) tears rolled down my cheeks, stinging my skin as the icy air growled past my face. I had nothing left to give, I could hardly stand let alone walk and how could I ever descend this colossus mound of rock into the deep depression below to where the telescopic lights glowed like tiny fireflies. Well, down we marched; it was just a matter of convincing our battered bodies that it would all be over in another twenty minutes (it felt like it had already been all over hours ago!!!). But we had done it. We finished our eight hour death march up and over Mt. Madison, our first objective was now completed. We had wonderfully clear weather all day, with many spectacular vistas and lots of laughs (it's easy to forget the goodness, however, when sleep is the only relief from the agonizing pain of a long day).

Our next three days were blessed by somewhat rested muscles, mild temps., tons of sunshine and wonderful far-reaching vistas all around us. Our hike up Adams (the second tallest peak in the Whites @ 5,798 ft. - Madison @ 5,363 ft.) on Sunday afforded views of the karma-killing Madison to the north and the four other colossal peaks we'd be conquering in the next three days in the southern part of our route. We triumphed over Jefferson (5,715 ft.) that day also and camped in the col between it and Mt. Clay (5,532 ft.). Good fortune and godsend were still with us as the weather remained sedate and peaceable. This was just too good to be true. What about all those "high wind and monstrous storm" stories we had all heard about? Details on this and more at eleven!

Monday we broke camp and headed south to gain vantage ground on the omnipotent Mt. Washington (6,288 ft.). Our

hike up Clay was relatively languid, perhaps it just seemed so with the impending precipitous approach of Washington yet to be carried out. The weather was still cooperating while the majestic Mt. Washington stood out in proud and solemn view for all of us to take in. "Are we still in Kansas?" Andy queried.

We started our approach up the now gentle giant not really believing that we had come this far and still dubious as to whether it would yield to our innocent conquest. Up the steep, hard-packed, granular snowfields we climbed, my Koflach "edges" receiving a bounty of blessings and praise. I thought I heard a few profane and scoffing out-bursts from Warren in his good ol' club mouse boots...but maybe not. The prime ice covering the sprawling weather station could now be seen. What a sight!!!! The entire building (s) looked as if it were constructed of snow and ice. YAHOO!!!! we were on top of the giant. What an exhilarating feeling. We managed a speedy lunch break, and a quick group picture on the summit and down we headed. Lakes of the Clouds was our next destination.

We arrived at 2:00 pm anxious to set up camp and stretch out in the baking, genial sunshine. Three of the group went for a try at Mt. Monroe, made the summit in twenty minutes and then had one hell of a good time glissading down the mountain. A real enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

Now for the rest of the story.....

After bedding down for the night, it was obvious that the winds were picking up, but no biggie, after all we were still up at 5,000 ft. or so and winds were to be expected. Well, between eight and eleven pm we were repeatedly awakened by blustering, boisterous winds gushing against the sides of our VE-24. Had our luck run out? Were we still in Kansas? We called to the other tent to find out how they were faring. Despite the fact that our tents were no more than four feet apart, we could not discern each others shouts and screams over the howl of the winds. We finally made out a piercing "o.k." from Ted and gradually fell back into the arms of Morpheus.

The winds were relentless. The blasts were so strong now that not only was snow blowing in through the snow tunnels, but it was being blasted through the zipper on the door. As we laid underneath it in utter disbelief, the snow crystals

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sprinkled coolly on our exposed faces. By 2:00 am (Tuesday) the squall was still picking up in strength. Our tent walls now crashed as if bombarded by cannon balls with each blast of the whirlwind. The frame was bending and twisting, this way and that. The fact that we had pitched them in the lee of the building, protected by its massive walls and roof, afforded us little to no protection from this tempestuous southerly monsoon. Snow and ice crystals were being dashed against the tent and from the inside sounded as if we were being hopelessly buried in a tower of frozen snow. The hurricane winds roared down the shoulder of Washington, crashed into the col below and volleyed against our supposed "high wind", four-season, expedition tent frame, which now felt rather frail and failing as this vicious and hellborn storm brewed around us. Tom suggested that Andy and I get fully dressed (summit gear and all) and pack everything but our bags, in case we had to evacuate in a hurry. We promptly obeyed. We fell asleep once more only to be awakened moments later by the powerful snap of the fly being ripped away from the tent frame by the brute force of this demonstrative typhoon. We all yelled to the other tent; again it took minutes before we could discern each other, but once again we heard, "we're o.k.!" Tom screamed that he was getting out to refasten the tent fly. Ted joined him outside for some midnight air (ha ha). As soon as Ted exited from his tunnel he knew not all was quite as well with their tent. The fly was completely off, although still attached, and was violently convulsing in the brutal winds.

After about ten minutes of adjustments and additional lashings, back into the tents they came, their feeble attempts at saving our shelters completed. We laid in the tent now dreading this horrible storm, fearful of whether we'd make it out of this calamitous col or not. It was now necessary for all of us to sleep up against the sides of the tent in order to hold it down. The next three hours brought higher sustained winds and unbelievable propulsions of wind buffeting the walls of our tent. The floor was being lifted from all corners as we were dashed and jostled about. The backlash of winds off the side of the building now ricocheted off the back of the tent and added insult to injury. The percussion effects were deafening. At this point the tent no longer had the shape of a normal

conventional VE-24. The frame was being distorted beyond all belief. With each cannon blast the walls received, they began to buckle and bend over, collapsing the tent in half. Twice we looked up to see the tent poles fold down, as if on hinges, and touch the floor inside the tent, enfolding me and Tom in its battered grasp. We spent an hour or so sitting up against the tent walls, but even that proved to be futile.

At around 5:30 am, with the onslaught of yet another heinous and howling blast, we heard the ominous sound of a snapping pole and with that we lost all hopes of being able to weather this whirlwind from inside our tent. The next sound was that of the broken pole piercing the tent fly. That was it- The sign inside the refuge room had said: FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY - TO BE USED ONLY IF UNDER THREAT OF LIFE AND LIMB. We instantly assumed we qualified! We stuffed our sleeping bags and waited inside while Tom went out to tell the others to evacuate. To his utter surprise, they were all lying naked inside their bags totally unprepared for the worsening conditions around them. Oh, to be young and foolish or is it ignorant and bliss. Well, whatever, they had managed to sleep through the tumultuous gusts not even a tad worried about their tent. Luckily theirs was still intact and standing. Ted was soon dressed and out with Tom while Andy and I "stayed with the ship" getting bounced around inside like, as Andy said: "some kind of an amusement park ride". Within ten minutes we exited from our deflated shelter. Tom has suggested that I tether myself to one of the large stuff sacks which contained all of our gear from inside the tent. My only concern was that it might act as a kite tail rather than the intended and much needed anchor. We scrambled around outside in the blasting, icy winds attempting to take down the now demolished tent fly, bent poles, and tent. Rather than trying to wrestle it to the refuge room around the other side of the building, we decided to roll it up (which was more like wad and tangle it up) and throw it into the trench we had dug behind our tent (as a precaution for the rains that had been predicted). We then proceeded to anchor it down with huge blocks and chunks of icy snow that we ice-axed out of the drift in the corner of the building. The tent all "secured", the three of us made our way around the building,

with all of our gear in tow, to the emergency refuge room. We had crouched and scrambled our way down the long wall of the hut and had just rounded the corner when we were struck by a helldriven gust. I felt the surge of air, screamed, and was instantaneously lifted off my feet. I sat stunned for an instant, but the tug of the tether line prompted a quick recovery. We reached the shelter unharmed; just momentarily stung to the quick, and overwhelmingly relieved. Davis, Ted and Warren still had to endure this heart-stirring incident. Minutes later, as we all stood as if frozen in sheer amazement to still be alive, Ted appeared with a load of gear from their tent. He and Davis made several trips back to the tent site to collect various pieces of equipment. Miraculously, not only did we all make it to the shelter, but every piece of equipment was also rescued from this wrathful fury (even the freakin' door supports for our tent were lost, but heroically found by Ted). Our guardian angels were obviously on duty that morning.

To make an already long story longer, Tom cooked us all a hot breakfast, we counted our blessings, wondered how long we'd be prisoners inside this dark, dank room and slept for four or five hours until early afternoon.

Around 2:00 p.m. Davis noticed that the winds had died down and that the clouds had cleared from on top of us. We made a hasty decision to make a run for it down to the shelters about three or four miles away. Unfortunately, our repacking and retreat was not as hasty as our decision, never leaving camp until 3:45. We had a few pensive moments trying to locate cairns in the fading light and in the slight snow storm that was brewing, but somehow we managed to avoid perishing in the all-devouring Huntington's and/or Tuckerman's ravine (our passage being the middle course between the two). Davis was our saviour, having been on this approach before... thank you J.D.C.!!!!!! Our cherubic guardians were again on duty when the clouds miraculously lifted and a window opened allowing us to view the headwall of old "Tuck's"!! Wow, saved again.

We followed the Lion's head trail down, down, down (60° slope blanketed in seventeen inches (yes, Virginia real snow storms still happen!) of fluffy, new snow) into the Hermit's shelter col.

This was uneventful except for Davis's full tilt body collision with a tree..nice work Davis!! We spent a luxurious night in an"enclosed" (eee GAD) lean-to @ \$3.50/person. Not quite "Jim Rawding lodgings" but close!!! Wednesday morning, snowshoeing over fifty-eight glorious inches of white stuff, we headed down to Pinkham-Notch AMC hut pleased to be alive, gracious for our good fortune and anxious to satiate our cravings for pizza and beer!!!!

\*Happy Trails\*

Gail