

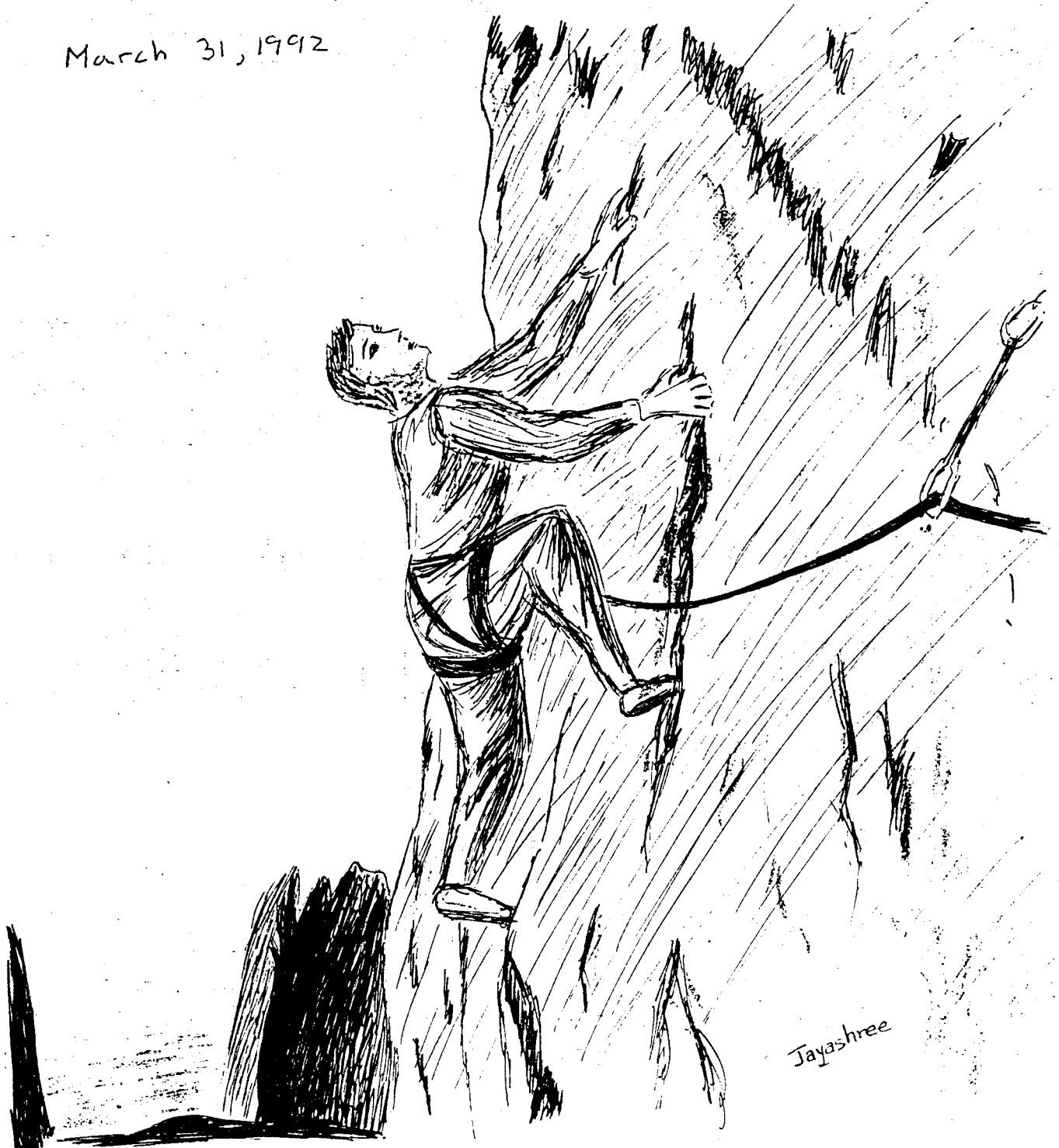


# THE ROC CAIRN



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

March 31, 1992



Jayashree

## Welcome

Hello all, and welcome to the first *Cairn* of the new administration. I would like to thank Greg and Frank for sparing a few moments to share with us their ideas and experiences. Thanks also to Jayashree for the artwork, and to Doug and Todd for the comics. If you would like to know the source of these for amusement or litigation purposes, talk to them.

It would be great to get another *Cairn* out before summer, so if you need some reason to procrastinate writing your thesis or studying for exams, an article or picture or whatever for the *Cairn* can burn that extra bit of time, and you could become famous!

I will also compile a summer address list so that people interested in going out can find others with similar inclinations. Look to sign up at meetings or in the Pit, or leave your name, number, address and activities you are interested in doing in the Union student government office box #26. I will post the list outside the Pit before finals.

## E-comm

The E-comm has been discussing the issue of active membership, or the lack thereof. I believe the Outing club membership is over 100, while we see only around 20 at meetings or on trips, and there are apparently even fewer leaders. This has the unfortunate effect of reducing the number of led trips and the activity of the club, and therefore diminishing the interest of many members and possible future leaders.

To counteract this cycle, the E-comm is kicking around a few ideas: Activity chairmen and leaders could run trips with the intention of creating new leaders. By discussing the requirements and involving people in the planning and execution of trips the ominous label "leader" is reduced to a few easily accomplished steps. Other possibilities include combination trips and variations on Greg's pot-luck dinners to increase interaction between various "cliques" in the club.

Another significant proposal was to develop committees around each of the officers and chairmen. These would not necessarily be formal but could provide an easy way for new members to immediately become involved in the club, make friends, and develop ties to the club.

If you have any feelings about these or other ideas, talk to an officer, or stop by an E-comm meeting; or better yet, write a small (or large) item for the *Cairn*.

## Forum

As to the promised controversy I promised you all at elections: In future *Cairns* I want to create a forum for discussing opinions on various policies in the club. I have certain opinions about some club rules: first-aid policy, leadership requirements, led versus personal trips, etc., that I will discuss in future *Cairns*. I would like to print some other view points, so if you also have opinions you would like to share, please feel free to write a letter to the Editor. Any subject accepted: gear policy, events, how many years in the future will we be hearing about the former caving chairman's lost pulley and ascender, etceteras....

That's all for now. Now get out!

Eric Kirchner

[kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu](mailto:kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu)

## A Winter Alternative: Indoor Rock Climbing

by Frank P. Florence

Last year, during a winter break characterized by depressingly sparse snow conditions, I and three friends sat on the porch of the Adirondack Loj, watching a fine mist mature to a drizzle and then into a steady downpour that washed out our plans to climb Marcy. Driving home that morning, I saw more water coming over Roaring Brook Falls than I'd ever imagined from looking at the creek in the summer. It was a day to consider alternatives.

This year, anticipation of filling the winter break with back-country ski touring had propelled me through one week of X-C skiing on good, if thin, conditions in the Adirondacks and Vermont. My enthusiasm, however, was no match for the sodden reality of a Sunday afternoon's freezing rain and the week of wet-and-thaw that followed. It was once again clear that the game plan needed modification.

So it was that last week I met my friends for a different winter break activity at the Hard As A Rock climbing gym in Queensbury. Snow conditions remained marginal, but in the gym we faced the more appealing prospect of a dry workout without the inconveniences of klister and gouged bases (if skiing), or numb digits and flimsy protection (if climbing). Negative reinforcement can be compelling.

The gym is a recent addition to the local climbing scene and it is the creation of Steve Adler. Steve is an ardent climber who, when not working at the gym, teaches rock and ice climbing, works as a ski patrolman at Gore Mtn. and conducts classes in mountain and high-angle rescue techniques. He is also an enthusiastic proponent of indoor rock climbing. "It's fun and it's training. You learn how to really use your feet, to keep

from blowing your arms out. You pick up a lot about balance. You learn what works for you." Learning what works is at the heart of the gym's attraction. There are numerous climbing routes, and Steve changes most of them on a weekly basis. "I like to leave some of the lines up for a while, especially some of the hard ones, so people can come back and work them out. But I want to keep the place new and exciting for the regulars, as well as the first-time people."

The main climbing area consists of three steep to overhanging walls containing routes that range from easy to very difficult. There is a 50 foot wide back wall that rises up at about 75 degrees on the right side and is vertical on the left. To the left of this is a right-facing vertical wall capped by a 4 foot horizontal roof. The wall on the right is also topped by an overhang, but this one is only about 2 feet wide. On the right side there is also a triangular arete that runs from the floor up past the overhang, offering an alternate means of ascent. A new addition consists of a free-standing structure with two inward facing overhanging walls connected by a large horizontal roof. Climbing across this is a bit like being a spider doing a traverse of the inside of a tent.

Cast sand-and-epoxy holds, between 3 and 10 inches across, are screwed into the walls, creating the hand and foot holds of a climbing line. The holds come in a large variety of shapes: some are cups ("jug-handles") that can be grasped like ladder rungs, others are small, convex disks ("smear holds") that provide minimal purchase for boot soles. The holds are asymmetrical, so the difficulty of a route can be substantially

altered by mounting them with different portions facing up.

The climbs are up to 27 feet high. That's not long by mountain standards, but high enough to warrant protecting the climber. This is done with one of the many top-ropes set up. Belayers on the ground all have anchor attachments to keep them from becoming airborne and belaying is done with mechanical devices to prevent rope burns. There is also a thick bed of well rounded stones covering the floor around the base of the climbs that acts as a shock absorber if someone should land hard.

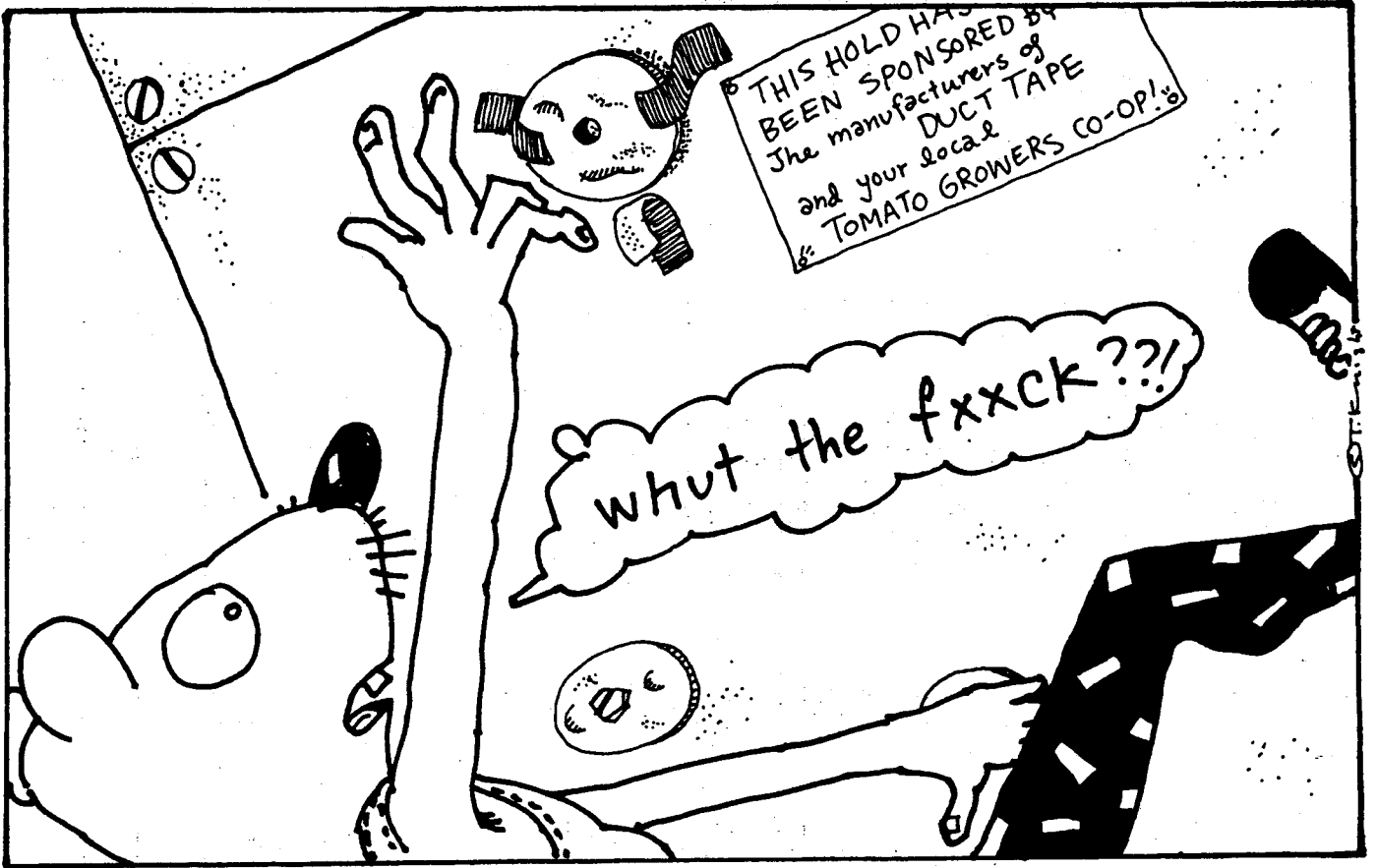
My friends already had their shoes and harnesses on when I got there, and one of them had begun working out the moves through the "easier" overhangs on the right. "Keep moving. Don't hang out" cried his belayer. "Use your right heel. Get the heel-lock." I watched the climber drop his weight till his arms were straight, then kick his right foot around the roof lip, catching the heel on a jug hold. He then pulled his chest up to his hand holds, cocked his right arm, and pushed up straight on it. Then quickly, left foot up, left hand to the next jug, and, voila, he was over the roof. I knew I'd want to give it a try myself, but decided to work up to it. After a few minutes of stretching, I began with a little bouldering on some moves near the bottom of the climbs. When I'd loosened up, I opted to try a line on the vertical back wall section. The first moves required a bridging maneuver between small holds, then a long reach to a tenuous handhold on the left. Apparently Steve had put this route in when he was in a benevolent mood. The higher moves became progressively easier, and after passing the halfway point, I scooted to the top.

Over the next three hours, my friends and I traded off climbing,

belaying and talking. The social scene in the gym is casual and comfortable. It's easy to start a conversation with other climbers, especially if it's about the problem you're currently working on. "When you get to that hold, cock your right knee, and transfer your weight onto that side. Then straighten out and shoot with your left hand." Sometimes it worked, and sometimes I'd end up dangling. But in either case, I'd thought about how to make the move and practiced with the balance and strength required to pull through it. It's fun and it's training.

Towards the end of the evening, I felt myself tiring. My forearms had become wooden (could it have been that roof?) and I knew that I didn't have the strength to pull myself up the harder routes any more. Instead, I climbed up onto the lowest holds at one side of the wall and began to traverse left. As I moved across to each new hold I tried to grip it as lightly as possible, and let my feet carry most of my weight. With each shift to the left, I focused on how I transferred my weight to the new hold, on the effect of lifting or dropping my heel and how turning my hips helped keep me centered. I was too tired to expend much energy, but in exactly the right frame of mind to explore these economizing techniques. Getting to the top on a thin line or pumping around an overhang in this place can certainly build the confidence one wants at the crags, but I think I get "smarter" about rock climbing when fatigue forces me to slow down and evaluate the consequences of each move.

I still dream of getting in some more blue wax ski days this winter, but no matter what, I'll be spending occasional evenings on the walls, too. I hope to see you up there.



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TOMATO GROWERS CO-OP!

whut the fxxck??!

G. F. K.



# From Over the Hill

by Greg d. Moore

Well, welcome from over the hill. First, let me explain the title. Years ago, when I was President, I wrote a few articles for the Cairn called, "View from the Top". Well, since I'm no longer president, or a student, and now classify as an "old-fart", it was suggested to me that I title a piece "Over the Hill". So, from over the hill, let's see what there is to see.

While sitting in the Pit the other day, a few of us were discussing the lack of articles for the Cairn. We thought about why people weren't writing anything. My excuse was weak. I said I'd written so many in the past, that I should let someone else write a few. But, no one else has been. So, I decided I'd do my part and write, in the hopes that I'll inspire others to write. The hardest part of course is always deciding what to write about, to wit, choosing a topic.

As you may have noticed, I've yet to settle on a topic. But I'm building my way up to one.

I've got lots of thoughts churning in my head, but none that I can make a whole lot of sense of right now. So, I think I'll settle on something simple for now;

## The Cairn

First, for those of you who aren't familiar with what a cairn is. Simply put, a cairn is a pile of rocks marking a trail, a signpost if you will. It tells you where to go, or if you look back, where you've been. But, keep in mind, it only marks the trail, it doesn't force you to stay on the trail, it simply suggests one way of getting where you're going. Many times cairns change sizes. Sometimes they grow smaller as a rock falls off and rolls down the hill. Other times they grow as each hiker comes along and adds a rock to the pile.

The Cairn, is also the club newspaper. A signpost perhaps of where the club is, was, and where it is going. And like a cairn on the trail, anyone can add what they want to this Cairn. Building a cairn doesn't take special knowledge or skill. You don't have to go to cairn building school or have a special permit from anyone to add to a cairn you find along the trail. Like a trail cairn, adding to this Cairn doesn't take special knowledge or skill. So, please, write whatever you wish for the Cairn. I know that I'll be interested in reading it, and I'm sure others will be too.

## USENET

Before I end this article, I wanted to add a quick note. As you're all probably aware of now, RPI now has a very large campus-wide UNIX system. Sure, many of you may think of this as "that slow machine in the VCC I have to do Maple on," but there are many other uses for it also. One of them is USENET. What is USENET you might ask? Well, it's simply a worldwide conferencing section. There you can find a discussion group on almost any topic you can think of, including the outdoors. Currently, among the discussions are several of interest to club members, REC.BACKCOUNTRY, REC.CLIMBING, REC.BOATS.PADDLE, and many more. Through these discussions you can talk to people around the world on subjects close to your heart. Want to know what others think of water purification systems? Tune in to REC.BACKCOUNTRY, this topic has been going on for several days. Want to know when they remove the cables at Half-Dome? Check out REC.CLIMBING. Want to know what boats people recommend? Check out REC.BOATS.PADDLE.

To access all this, type **RN** at the UNIX prompt. I'm not sure what the program is on most machines, but **RN** (Read News) is fairly common. There are several others, ask your system consultant for more details. Once the program is running, you can usually type **G <discussion name>** to go straight to the discussion of your choice. Check it out, I hope you find it as enjoyable as I have. Who knows, you may meet someone new, or run into an old friend. (I've already discovered alumni this way.)

... you happy outing.

*Greg d. Moore*

