

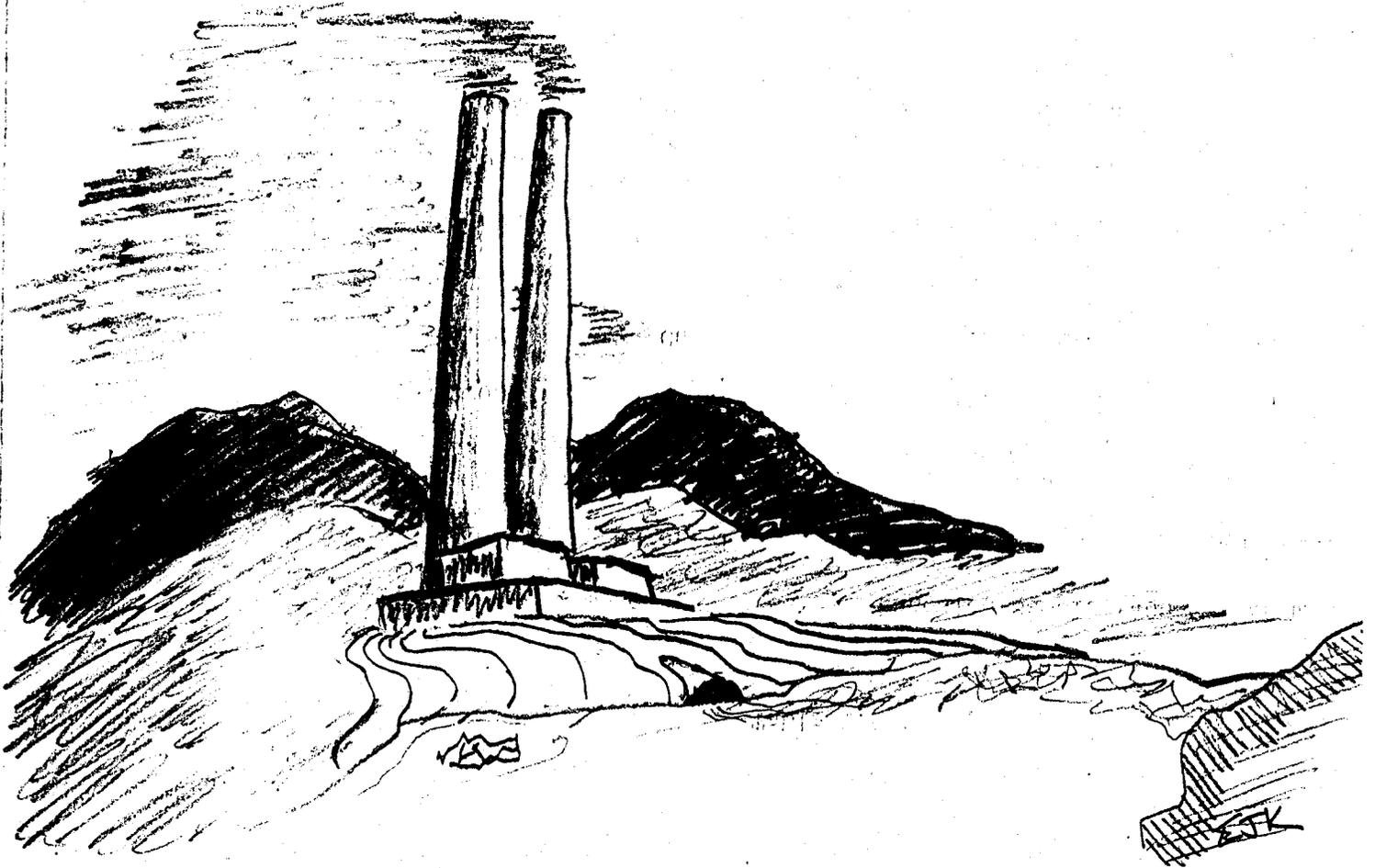


THE ROC CAIRN



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

January 25
1994



Here it is, finally. Thanks to all that contributed. Unfortunately there were no submissions for Forum. Does this mean that no one has any opinions? Does this mean that no one cares? Speaking of caring, a very few people were involved in taking care of the club inventory and budget. These are unrewarding tasks that we all benefit from. The club does not just run itself. If these chores had been split amongst the membership, they would have been done in half an hour instead of taking over one weekend to complete. We are talking one half hour from your semester so that the club can function. You could do it instead of watching Beavis and Butthead (unless you think that would be more productive).

A new addition to the *Cairn* that I am rather pleased to see is accident reports. We can all use these to learn how we would react in such situations. If you have any comments to make or other reports, please submit them.

Coming up in the future is elections. If you are at all interested, feel free to ask questions and help out any of the officers (come to an E-comm meeting). No experience is necessary, just a little enthusiasm.

It would be nice to get another *Cairn* out before the elections. So, get your articles, stories opinions, pictures comics, drawings, etc. (pretty much anything 2 dimensional) in to me.

Eric Kirchner
kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu

Forum

The Clarksville "Experience"

by Scott Stepenuck

Friday night caving is always an experience, but this was one to remember. I led a group of eight people into Clarksville cave, through the "Crack" entrance. Sixteen other people went in the Main entrance, intending to go out the crack or the duck under. Before I entered the cave, I asked to see a map to refresh my memory, but a map was unavailable at the time, so I went from verbal directions from the trip leader. I got all eight people into the crack, when I heard someone crying. One of the new cavers got stuck, I, I mean temporarily immobilized! I passed three people to get to the individual. She had been going through in a vertical position, and had lost her foot holds, causing her to get wedged in the crack. After calming her down, and trying several ways of getting her out, I noticed that her other foot could almost touch the ground. I managed to get to the other side, and get underneath her to provide my knees as footholds. She was able to push herself up out of the crack. After this we continued to the main cave, where we met one of the other groups. The group leader told us that the three members of my group that had gone ahead, not realizing that someone was stuck, joined the trip leader's group. I then proceeded down to the pool room with my group of five. We then caved around for about 2-3 hours looking for one of the other two exits. [After getting out and talking to the trip leader, it turns out that we were within about five feet of each of the other two entrances at times during our trip.] Since it was getting late, and most of the people in my group were hypothermic, and I was in danger of becoming hypoglycemic I decided to exit through the crack. We made it out safely at about 2:30 AM. The trip leader had gotten food for us, and had gone in with two other people to look for us, and was apparently about to start a search in the woods in case we got lost outside of the cave.

Since this incident, I have received some suggestions from more experienced cavers on some ways to make these situations safer. One was to have a garbage bag taped into every helmet. With this, and a carbide cave lamp, a person can be warmed up very quickly -- to fight hypothermia. I have also started to get copies of maps of the caves I enter, and will insist on at least seeing a map before leading a known cave (if I'm expected to find entrances other than the one I entered through).

Fall Lake George "Accident Report"

by Scott (Splash) Hagelin

At 7:00 PM, Friday, October 1, Mark Gunther and myself set off canoeing to Turtle Island. An hour and a half later we were about half way to our destination when we encountered very windy conditions and high waves. Around 8:30 we were tipped over by one of the 2-3 foot waves. We were able to right the canoe, and climb in without losing much of our gear. We attempted to paddle towards the nearest island, but the wind and waves impeded any movement that was not in its direction. Deciding I might have better luck kicking than paddling, and that I might be warmer in the water than subject to

the wind. I got out of the canoe, and grabbed hold of the side. Mark followed, and we resumed our quest to reach the island.

After ten minutes of futile swimming (it seemed like) and with no one responding to our calls, we began to worry that much more exposure to the water would result in hypothermia, and the inability to stay afloat, so we decided to let go of the canoe, and try swimming with both hands and feet. I grabbed an oar, and the big hiking pack containing the sleeping bags(which could give us warmth when we reached land), while Mark was in the canoe grabbing his oar as well as his gear. Before he could grab everything, a wave knocked him out of the canoe, scattering his oar and his clothes bag over the surface of the lake. Within seconds we noticed how quickly the wind swept the canoe away from us, so we decided to swim that direction hoping another island would show up.

After about twenty minutes a buoy came into view, and I swam towards it in hopes of finding some distress signal. Not finding anything I let go only to notice that Mark had been swept away from my view. After about 10 minutes of swimming around and shouting his name I decided I had better get to an island in order to warm up and let go of the hiking pack which was really weighing me down. So I spotted the nearest island and made a determined effort to reach it.

After twenty minutes of solo swimming I finally reached the rocks. I threw my gear on a rock and climbed to the highest point calling out across the lake for Mark or help. I heard Mark call back and went down near the water to look for him. When I found him climbing up the rocks. I guided him up to the highest and most visible spot where I figured we could camp and be seen. I grabbed the sleeping bag and we huddled underneath it in some bushes to try to stay warm.

When the sun came up the next morning, I rigged a towel on the dock as a help signal, and walked around the island yelling at passing boats and nearby islands for help, but what seemed to no avail. An hour later, though, a nearby camper motor boated to our island and offered to bring us to the outing club campsite. We arrived on Turtle Island around 11:30 AM, Saturday, October 2, having passed our beached canoe turn up on some rocks en route.

Fall Lake George -- From the Other Side by Scott Stepenuck, President

The trip to Lake George seemed to be going smoothly, the power boat had been sent out with two people to set up base camp, and the beacons. Many canoes had already left for Turtle Island. At ten o'clock p.m. I left in a group of four canoes, three of them towing kayaks. We noticed that the lake was a little rough when we left Camp Chingacook, but we were unaware that the camp sits in a cove. The lake became very rough about halfway to the island. We decided that we could make the trip, and proceeded to do so. When we got to the island, we found out that two people who left the camp at seven o'clock had not yet arrived at the island. We decided that it was futile to start a search in the dark, and that, if anything, would just put more people in danger of their life. So we sent word back to the mainland to not let any more canoes go out that night. [Note: apparently word the first power boat ride was a rough one, and the driver

was asked to tell the people on shore to not let any canoes go out until morning. Unfortunately, this message was never relayed to the people on the mainland, and that power boat driver left for the weekend.] Anyway, in the morning, we had breakfast, and were discussing what to do. I decided I would go in the power boat to the ranger station a little ways up the lake, and alert them to our situation. I was about to leave the island when I heard someone shout "Scott and Mark are hear!" Sure enough, there they were soaking wet. I immediately led them to my tent, and had them put on my dry clothes. Then I had Don Lussier get them a hot breakfast while I went to the mainland to warn the other people that the lake was still somewhat rough (nothing like the night before, but still rough). They decided to proceed with less of a load than originally, and made the journey safely, on the now calming lake.

Many suggestions were made to make things safer next year. Some of those were:

1. Have direct contact between the mainland and the island (not through chingacook).
2. Rent a powerboat that we can drive as needed.
3. Rent a cellular telephone to call for external help from the island.
4. Have all canoers equipped with whistles.
5. Send out power boat to gauge weather conditions, and get Ranger's opinion.
6. Wait until Saturday morning to canoe out.
7. Have more unique island marking (different color lights flashing.)

Please, if you have any more suggestions, we would love to hear them. You can tell me, Scott, or Alan Demers, Member at Large, who plans the event.

White Water Canoeing --- In Over Our Heads? by Eric Kirchner

I had the pleasure of being introduced to white water canoeing by our esteemed former president Mark Leonard. Being comfortable in a kayak, this was not much of a transition for me, and thus lead one canoe as we took two beginners down the Hudson river - Ripparious to the Glen. To our surprise, the river was running at 7 feet, quite a bit higher than expected, and at a level that makes the run interesting in a kayak, let alone a canoe. Confidently, we decided to do the run - "what could go wrong" we said. The difficulty of this problem quickly showed itself soon as we had to stop to bail on the easier part of the river. We figured we had all day, so stopping every once in a while would not be a problem. Continuing this was not a problem, and we successfully ran 'the ledge', the only real technical rapid on the river. However, soon after our next bail, Mark and company - bailed - approaching 'Horse race", a quarter mile steep rapid spotted with deep holes. With no place to eddy out, the best I could do was stay close to the swimming Mark, beginner and canoe, as we filled with water. At the bottom, the beginner was able to get to shore, but Mark chose to stay with his canoe in an effort to get it safely to shore. Unable to tow him, the best we could do was get our swamped canoe to shore, bail, and

give chase. After an extreme effort, we were able to catch and drag the pair to shore (at this point Mark was swimming with the dexterity of a log).

Mark, having swum a mile or so in clothes well suited for cold weather (not swimming, the rest of us had drysuits on), was at the point of uncontrolled shivering. We got him in dry clothes, wrapped in a blanket, and eating. 30 minutes later, no improvement (and no sign of our 4th companion) forced us to hike to the road, and hitch a ride to a warm room. Our 4th was later found casually hiking his way through the woods to civilization.

In retrospect, I believe our assumption about what could go wrong was somewhat correct. We misjudged the river, the cold, and our abilities, but we also knew there was a road and homes running nearby along the length of the river. There are a few things that will be different next time. Everyone should dress appropriately for swimming when swimming is a distinct possibility. Also, save the people first, they are a lot more useful warm than cold. It was amazing how difficult it was to kick out the hypothermia beast once it was established. If you are far from help, don't let anyone get cold! As far as the canoes are concerned, installing airbags would have made this run much more straight forward. I would also say that open canoes in class III water is a bit much unless everyone knows what they are doing.

An important aspect that would be the first thing I would change about the Lake George incident is paddling in groups. By having a second boat (minimal) on the river we were able to get the second boat ashore. On lake George, a second boat could have provided enough support to ascertain the swimmers got to shore with sufficient gear to keep warm. Also, groups generally make better decisions, like turning back.



From Over the Hill

by Greg d. Moore

Written in September 1993

Yet another in my intermittent ramblings from over the hill. In case you've not met me yet, I'm Greg Moore, resident old-fart. These articles I write to fill my time and fill your head with useless ideas and facts. Or perhaps not so useless. You decide for yourself.

I've been with the outing club since the fall of 1985, when I was a freshman. Of course back then things were different. For example, the glaciers were still retreating and we would often go glacier skiing down Congress St. But, now sunlight actually makes it to Troy once in a while.

Seriously though, you'll see people sitting in the back row of CC330 (or wherever the current meeting is) who have been associated with the club for an average of 10 years or more. In fact, if you total up our years associated, we've been associated with the club for longer than it's been around. (See how meaningless statistics can be, to quote Mark Twain, "There are lies, damn lies and statistics.")

Last time I wrote about the *10,000 Maniacs* song **These are Days**. This time I want to write about Epicycles. What are Epicycles you may ask? You probably recall the pre-Galileon idea of a geocentric system. The problem with this system is that it couldn't fully account for the motion of the planets. Planets at times would appear to stop, back-up and then start moving forward again. The idea of the planet revolving around a point in its orbit was introduced. This solved some problems. Yet, it still wasn't accurate enough. So the idea of the planet revolving around a point that was in turn revolving around a point in its orbit was introduced. This was better, but still not accurate enough. So yet another epicycle was added. This continued for quite a while until the radical notion that the sun was at the center solar system was introduced. In a flash this obliterated the need for epicycles. The math fell away and everything was made simpler. Ironically, it turns out that epicycles weren't entirely wrong. In fact, mathematically it turns out that they were actually an infinite series that accurately described the elliptical motion of the planets.

Epicycles were the right solution to the wrong problem.

What does this have to do with the outing club? Well this past weekend I've seen a lot of cycles. Within my apartment, a furious cycle of people moving in and out has taken place. Stacy Smyth, a former housemate was moving back in, this time with his wife. Friday night I again went to Schoharie Caverns, a cave that I had remembered as extremely boring and as a waste of my time. Pleasantly I was wrong. It is also a cave that I first took Stacy into. Watching him labor over a few of the rocks and stuff, I thought it was a mistake. Now I know... after all he's a park ranger

at Wind Cave National Park now. In turn I've seen Stacy take a beginner caving who now studies cave formation as a graduate student. Makes me wonder what beginner this time will end up as a serious caver. And of course, having only one exit, makes the trip through the cave itself a cycle.

On Saturday evening, I went to the Mother's show. Last time Barbara Bailey Hutchison was here there were 15 people in the audience. I knew Mother's was in trouble. This time, there were over 60 people in the audience.

On Sunday when I lead my hiking trip, there were several cycles. I returned to the place I went to high school. The particular hike I had hiked at least twice before. On top of this, the hike was a big loop, or cycle of sorts, not repeating any part, but ending up where it started.

Yet, all of this could be the wrong way of looking at things. While parts of my life may appear to be repeating, I'm moving on. Things repeat, but I look at them differently. My first caving trip as a freshman is far different from my caving trips now. Then I was a novice, now I'm a leader in the club. When I started as a freshman, Mother's was some mystical place I could go for music. Now I help run it as an alumnus. My high school has changed. And each trip back is different.

Coming up in a few weeks is Fall Lake George. My ninth FLG that I'm attending. Wow, I write that, NINTH, and really wonder. In that time I've seen FLG shrink from 150 people (60 from RPI) to a low of 60 people (5 from RPI). I've also seen it grow again. As different people join and leave the club, the style, presence, enthusiasm, size, etc. of the club changes. And I like that. It's not static. Each person in the club has the opportunity to make a difference. I've seen the meekest quietest freshman come in and become an officer, or a trip leader. It's a place to grow. I've seen people at the top of the rope, ready to rappel off the Union scared stiff, afraid to tackle their fears. But once they've done so, I've seen them grow. I've seen this happen over and over again. So, while I see the cycles, 9 years of them now, the cycles apply differently to every person. Each person and each cycle is uniquely its own.

I can tell you what to expect from the club: learning the various activities the club explicitly teaches; such as caving, hiking, canoeing, x-country skiing and more, and the implicit skills it teaches, leadership, learning your limits, learning others limits, having fun and being safe in the outdoors, learning a respect for nature and more.

Perhaps you'll go on to lead an expedition up Mt. Everest, or teaching white-water rafting for a living. Or, perhaps you'll still be an engineer, but you'll have an appreciation for the outdoors. That I can't tell you. It's up to you to make the most of it and make the club yours. The cycle is there, but you can make it unique.

Buildering Handbook

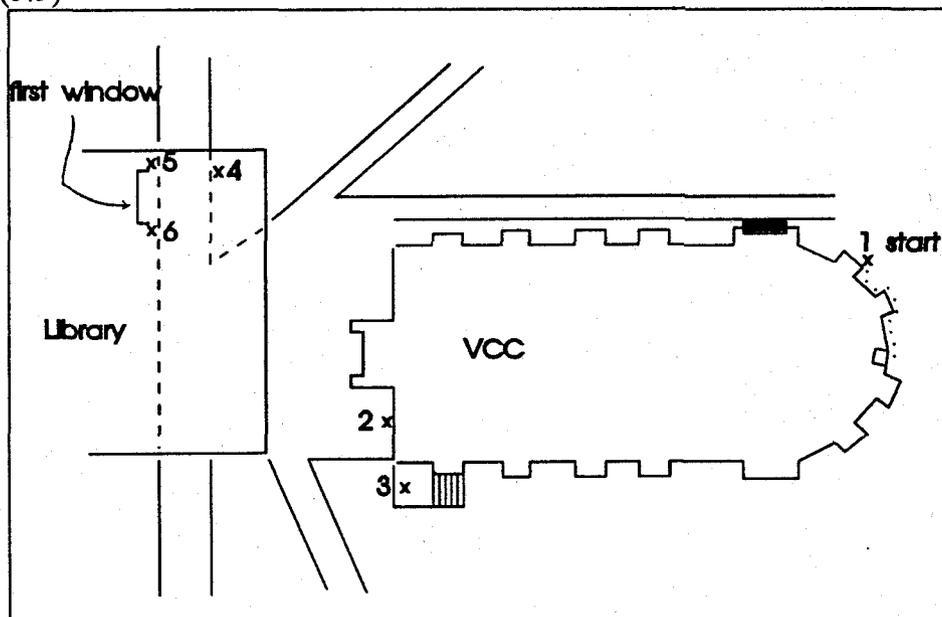
This article is updated from the December 1976 *Cairn* and reviews established traditional routes on the 'old' VCC as well as advances on 'new' the library. Please submit new routes and updates to the Cairn. (Note, this article is included for contextual interest. Climbing can be dangerous, and in this case probably illegal.)

VCC

1. *The Ornament* - One of the most continuous moderate climbs on campus. An interesting highly technical builder. Start by climbing the buttress to the ledge. Traverse past window, around second buttress and stop at the niche. Jump down. (5.5)
2. *Close to the Edge* - Located on backside doors between VCC and library. Simply climb up until you are standing on the 2x2 inch square on the end of the door sill. (5.7)
3. *Well of Hell* - Located at the bottom of stairwell facing MRC building. Starting at the door, climb to top. (5.7)

Library

4. *Beginners Lunge* - Start on the graveled ground under the ramp. On the side farthest from the windows, jump up to the sloping ledge and lunge to the top. (5.7)
5. *Fingers* - Start on left facing window ledge. Finger traverse right and climb to top of ramp. (5.8)
6. *Sticky Fingers* - start on right facing window ledge. Finger traverse left and continue to top. (5.9)



Blizzard on Blood Mountain

My ex-roommate, Sue Setzler, and I left Amicalola Falls at eight a.m. on March 10th, with hopes of reaching Hot Springs, NC before Sue's vacation ended and she returned to the "real world". By taking it easy at first, with extra sleep Wednesday night to make up for driving though the night on Tuesday, we figured we ought to reach Neel's Gap by Saturday, but carried extra food in case it took longer. We met very few other thru-hikers; the only ones we saw were one couple we stayed with at Stover Creek shelter the first night, and a father-son team that we said goodbye to at Hawk Mountain shelter on Thursday. That Thursday night Sue and I continued on to Justus Creek, where we camped.

On Friday morning we awoke to a beautiful day and enjoyed lovely hiking weather. We made dinner at a small creek past Granny Top Mountain Creek before heading on to find a camping place. So, when it started to snow on Friday evening, Sue and I were somewhere on Turkey Stamp Mountain, quoting Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening", and wondering if we could get a cool photo of our North Face Tadpole NHP tent with snow on it. What a neat story to tell- Snow in Georgia in March! To the joyful tune of "Let it Snow", the tent was erected and photographed, the food hung securely from a tree, and two happy campers went to sleep.

Early Saturday morning we awoke to find our winter wonderland resembling a serious northern storm, not the gentle southern snowfall we had expected. The sides and ends of our tent were starting to collapse under a massive accumulation of wet white stuff, so I quickly cleared the roof and sides and returned to the warmth of the tent. Sue decided breakfast in bed sounded like a great idea, and went out to retrieve the food bag. Unfortunately, it was securely fastened to the tree branch by ice and snow. However, NOTHING can stand between a thru-hiker and food for long, and after many unsuccessful attempts, the food bag was retrieved and rapidly lightened as we consumed a cold breakfast.

After a valiant attempt to decrease the weight of her 35-pound pack by eating as much food as possible, Sue agreed with my plan to wait out the storm in the tent, and we went back to sleep. A few hours later we awoke to find that the wind had blown snow under the fly, onto the mesh tent wall, and then to Sue's bag, where it was slowly melting. We realized that the decision concerning what to do had been made for us, so we carefully planned a method of breaking camp that would minimize the amount of time spent outside the tent. We would pack up and hike two miles to the shelter on Blood Mountain where our synthetic bags should stay reasonably dry and we wouldn't have to worry about our three season tent surviving the wind and snow.

Our boots, which had been kept in the vestibule, were now buried under a foot of snow. We dug them out, shook out the snow, placed bags over our socks and were thankful that the cloth boots hadn't frozen stiff. I watched Sue put in her contacts, glad that I

hadn't been able to talk her out of bringing them since my glasses would quickly succumb to the wrath of the blizzard. Packs were packed inside the tent, zippers and snaps on our expedition-weight polypro and Gore-Tex outerwear were fastened, and we bravely decided that the time to take down the tent had arrived.

Taking down the tent was quite a challenge, and an ominous reminder that we were committed to our plan. The poles were frozen, and we actually bent one while trying to break the ice surrounding it. Another pole came out the rings and blew a short distance away while we struggled to keep the tent itself from becoming airborne. Eventually, our tenacity won out and we set out through 14 inches of snow.

To put it bluntly, the next two and a half hours were the most challenging and miserable hours I've ever spent hiking. I blindly followed Sue up Blood mountain, as she searched for blazes that were few and far between. Sue soon discovered that her inexpensive waterproof pants wouldn't last, however it was cold enough that none of the snow melted on her polypro bottoms as we hiked through thigh-high drifts. We reached a low point when we saw the sign for Slaughter Gap, and realized that had camped not two miles from the shelter, but two and a half. Knowing we had no choice but to continue, we hiked onward. We barely noticed the uphill climb, instead we concentrated on staying upright despite the wind and snow while searching for the white blazes that blended in so well with the snow. We later learned that the winds were gusting up to 70 mph and the temperature hovered near zero as we climbed. As I forced myself onward, an deep understanding of Kipling's poem "If" dawned on me. The phrase "If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve their turn long after they are gone, and so go on when there is nothing in you except the will which says to them 'go on'" kept repeating in my mind. I knew that the only thing keeping us going up that mountain was our sheer determination to ascend it.

After an eternity of telling my legs to continue "just one more step", Sue spotted a wooden structure off to the left. A truly joyous cry of "A privy!" filled the air, and we hurriedly searched for the nearby shelter. Sue ran to it, only to struggle with the door. What a relief to finally figure it out and finally escape from the wind inside a 4-walled shelter!

Sue set about building a small fire from some wood left there by the Sawman while I fixed hot drinks on the stove. We were very glad to find that the four 1-liter bottles someone had left at the shelter were only partially frozen. By setting up our tent in the back room, consuming a lot of calories, and climbing into our bags we were able to maintain a reasonable temperature of 25 degrees inside the tent that afternoon.

After a few small misadventures, such as melting gloves over the small fire, and letting the bakepacker run dry when we baked bannock bread, we awoke the next morning to a much more pleasant

day. Though we hoped no one was unfortunate enough to be behind us, we melted enough snow to refill one of the bottles, packed the empties, rearranged the small amount of wood left, and set off in search of the trail to Neel's Gap. Soon we were rewarded for surviving the trials of the previous day with a fantastic view of a winter wonderland. Clumps of snow clung to the magnolia leaves like cotton candy, and frostwork etched its way along bare branches and trunks. After some lucky guesses on where the trail might descend from the rocky overlook, we were in the woods and enjoying a very comfortable downhill hike, though finding the trail was still difficult. After an hour or so, (including numerous stops for incredible photo opportunities), we came upon a campsite, and were able to follow footprints down the hill. About half a mile from Neel's Gap we saw 2 weekenders who had camped out Saturday night, presumably to test their winter gear. They were the first people we had seen since leaving Hawk Mountain shelter three days earlier.

Our arrival at the Walisi-Yi was something of a surprise to Jeff Hansen. Apparently efforts to account for all potential thru-hikers had missed us. This was not surprising since there was no place to register at Amicalola if you did not leave there during business hours, and our spouses figured there was no need to be concerned unless we failed to make contact by Monday. We were very disappointed to hear that our daydreams of hot showers, laundry, heated rooms, running water, electric lights and phone service would remain fantasies because of the storm damage. However, Chuck Logan provided some wonderful trail magic and drove us 18 miles to Cleveland where we could make phone calls home and eat out at McDonalds. We wandered around the Mountain Crossings store with flashlights and were able to replace my melted gloves and Sue's destroyed pants, as well as purchase additional winter gear. We decided to spend Sunday night at the Walisi-Yi and enjoyed a cookout with Bear (the Sawman), Overload, Lowrider, Eggman, Bluejeans, and Razor's Edge. Dorothy Hansen baked a delicious pineapple cake and we celebrated 3 upcoming birthdays.

The next morning all the thru hikers set off in search of the nearest shower. Our progress was slow, but steady, and by the 19th of March, Sue and I had covered the 37 miles to Dick's Creek Gap. At the suggestion of Kilgore Trout, who had been lucky enough to survive the storm in a hotel room (and kind enough to appease our incredible appetites with gorp), we hitched into Hiawassee. We resupplied at the grocery store, had our first shower of the trip at the Blueberry Patch, met the rest of the Neel's Gap crew there, and continued on again the next day.

Some days were good, and we could travel 10 miles before darkness fell. Others were not so good; on our shortest day after leaving Neel's Gap we spent an entire day struggling to reach a shelter a mere four miles distant. But gradually we encountered more miles of broken trail, (in many places the path from a shelter to a road would be broken, but not the trail past the road) and our travel was made simpler. We began to see signs that the snow was melting, and sometimes, instead of treading in the footprints of the

preceding person, we could actually venture carefully across a thin crust of ice on top of the snow and give welcome relief to aching muscles. After a near eternity of tramping through snow one day we spotted a patch of muddy brown trail. The welcome rains that raged on the 22nd and 23rd rewarded us with the brown trails that were soon fringed by the faintest hints of spring. Our winter experience would soon be over, but never forgotten.

In summary, our blizzard experience was enjoyable, and, with the exception of the hike up Blood Mountain, something neither of us would mind repeating. However, as a word of caution to all other hikers, I would like to suggest that everyone starting in March or early April carry far more winter gear than the guides suggest. Had we followed the suggested clothing advice, not packed extra food, carried heavier packs, or been inexperienced enough to panic, we would have had a miserable trip. While we made many mistakes, most notably underestimating the severity of the storm when it started Friday night, none of them resulted in permanent harm to us. While my first 17 days on the trail were certainly not the most pleasant ones I've had, they are days that I will always remember fondly.

Batitude