

Appalachia

Volume 69
Number 2 *Summer/Fall 2018: Role Reversal in
the Mountains*

Article 1

2021

Appalachia Summer/Fall 2018: Complete Issue

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia>



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2021) "Appalachia Summer/Fall 2018: Complete Issue," *Appalachia*: Vol. 69 : No. 2 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol69/iss2/1>

This Complete Issue is brought to you for free and open access by Dartmouth Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Appalachia by an authorized editor of Dartmouth Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dartmouthdigitalcommons@groups.dartmouth.edu.

Summer/Fall 2018

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876

America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation

Role Reversal in the Mountains



New perspectives, new circumstances



Accidents · Alpina · Poetry
News and Notes · Books and Media

Volume LXIX No. 2, Magazine No. 246

Summer/Fall 2018

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876

America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation



Appalachian Mountain Club
Boston, Massachusetts

AMC MISSION

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club, a nonprofit organization with more than 150,000 members, advocates, and supporters, promotes the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of the Appalachian region. We believe these resources have intrinsic worth and also provide recreational opportunities, spiritual renewal, and ecological and economic health for the region. Because successful conservation depends on active engagement with the outdoors, we encourage people to experience, learn about, and appreciate the natural world.

WELCOME

At the Appalachian Mountain Club, we believe the outdoors belongs to you, no matter who you are, where you live, or how you choose to enjoy it. And we want to help you spend more time outdoors, fall in love with those special places, and share that love with family and friends. Because with your help, and the help of good people of all ages and communities, we can protect the outdoors and ensure that everyone, now and in the future, can experience that same sense of wonder, spiritual renewal, and love. Wherever your path leads you—to a challenging summit, a quiet river, a sandy beach, or your neighborhood park—we want to be your connection to the outdoors.

© 2018 AMC Books

Appalachia is published by the AMC from its publications office at 10 City Square, Boston, Massachusetts, 02129.

ISSN 0003-6587

Third-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and other mailing offices. The journal is issued two times a year: Summer/Fall issue (June 15) and Winter/Spring issue (December 15). A subscription (both issues) is \$18 for one year, \$32 for two years, \$42 for three years. Distributed by TNG.

The opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the policies of the AMC.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the consent of the AMC. For uniform binding, this issue constitutes No. 2 of Volume LXIX and is numbered pages 1–160.

The interior pages of this journal are printed on responsibly harvested paper stock certified by The Forest Stewardship Council®, an independent auditor of responsible forestry practices. For more information, visit us.fsc.org.

Committee on Appalachia

<i>Editor-in-Chief / Chair</i>	Christine Woodside
<i>Alpina Editor</i>	Steven Jervis
<i>Poetry Editor</i>	Parkman Howe
<i>Book Review Editor</i>	Steve Fagin
<i>News and Notes Editor</i>	Sally Manikian
<i>Accidents Editor</i>	Sandy Stott
<i>Photography Editor</i>	Skip Weisenburger
<i>Contributing Editors</i>	Douglass P. Teschner
	Michael Wejchert
<i>At Large</i>	Catherine Buni
	Gene Daniell
	Jeff Fair
	Robert Goeke
	Rebecca Oreskes
	Lucille Stott

Appalachia Production

<i>Production Manager</i>	Abigail Coyle
<i>Designer</i>	Eric Edstam
<i>Copyeditor</i>	Robin Gold
<i>Typesetter</i>	Brandy Polay
<i>Proofreader</i>	Kenneth Krause
<i>Indexer</i>	Ezra Freeman

AMC Board of Directors

<i>Chair</i>	Rol Fessenden
<i>Vice Chair</i>	Elizabeth Ehrenfeld
<i>Vice Chair and Treasurer</i>	Cliff Krauss
<i>Secretary</i>	Ann Lesk
<i>Directors</i>	Greg Agran
	Yvette Austin-Smith
	Ed Belove
	Peter Bergh
	Michael Feldberg
	Moses Feldman
	Laurie Gabriel
	Robert Hecht
	Imari Paris Jeffries
	John D. Judge
	Scott Livingston
	Andy McLane
	Elizabeth Munro
	Diane Nordin
	Dana Pope
	Stephen Rushmore Jr.
	Steve Smith
	Marty Wallace
<i>Regional Directors</i>	Janet Ainsworth
	Thomas Eagan
	Sharon Foster
	Jody Inglis
	John Mullens



*Adélie penguins out for an austral summer amble last December near McMurdo Station, Antarctica. *Pygoscelis adeliae* live only on the southernmost continent.* TODD SWAIN

Appalachia

▲ Est. 1876 America's Longest-Running Journal of Mountaineering & Conservation

In Every Issue

- 6 **The Long Way Home**
- 102 **Accidents**
- 120 **Alpina**
- 128 **News and Notes**
- 139 **In Memoriam**
- 147 **Books and Media**
- 159 **A Peak Ahead**

Poetry

- 9 **Ordinary Time**
PAULA BOHINCE
- 35 **Herons at Sapsucker Woods**
POLLY BROWN
- 61 **Brief History on the Black River**
RUSS CAPALDI
- 67 **Hiking the Florida Panhandle
in March**
ROBIN CHAPMAN
- 81 **Elegy for What Hasn't
Passed Yet**
TODD DAVIS
- 85 **Along Inlet Waters**
KAY MULLEN
- 91 **Poem for the Season**
JOHN SMELCER
- 119 **Inky Cap Mushroom**
MAX STEPHAN
- 127 **Deer Park**
WALLY SWIST

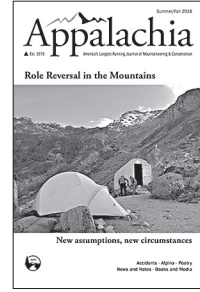
Title page photo: *Linda Kurczy reaches the rainy summit of Mount Washington on her first backpacking trip.* STEPHEN KURCZY

Front cover photo: *United States climbers settle in at base camp on Pico de Orizaba, Mexico's highest peak. They hiked to the camp last fall after spending several days assisting injured migrants nearby.*

LISA DENSMORE BALLARD

Back cover photo: *Dan Szczesny and Janelle Mylott on the summit of Mount Sugarloaf in Groveton, New Hampshire.*

MEENA GYAWALI



In This Issue

Role Reversal in the Mountains: New Perspectives, New Circumstances

- 10 **Care for the Caregiver:** His mother had never backpacked; he took her to the Presidentials for her 60th birthday. · STEPHEN KURCZY
- 24 **Climbers as Humanitarians:** Helping injured migrants in Mexico.
· LISA DENSMORE BALLARD
- 36 **Continuing Adventures of Buffalo and Tough Cookie:** Sometimes a family goes deeper than blood. · JANELLE MYLOTT AND DAN SZCZESNY
- 46 **Emotional Rescue:** A hiker becomes a benefactor as she follows a set of sneaker prints. · TY GAGNE
- 56 **The Resourceful Teen:** A broken stove awakens ingenuity.
· LISA DENSMORE BALLARD
- 62 **Problembar:** Germany's first bear in 170 years. · BRENDAN CURTIN
- 68 **Sequoias and Redwoods in a Hotter World:** When trees as high as 30-story buildings die "on their feet," something's wrong. · CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
- 82 **An Injury Changes the Story:** Encounter with a baby stroller. · ELISSA ELY
- 86 **The Last Gift:** Months before a father's tragic death, he encourages his son to seek challenges. · DOUGLASS P. TESCHNER
- 92 **Early Logging in the Southern Maine Woods:** The woods produced shoe blocks, spruce gum, and more. · WILLIAM GELLER

Encounter with a Hare

PAST MIDNIGHT I AWAKENED AND CREPT BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN shelter, over dry leaves behind the back wall. Wind rustled from the open ridge of Vermont's Mount Tom toward the spruces. I wore my improvised headlamp, a flashlight on a nylon cord tied around my head. The light wagged back and forth over dead leaves. I teetered unsteadily on my left hand while peeing. I always felt calm and safe doing my business in the woods, but why?

Something off to the left rustled. I turned my head. My flashlight on its cord swung out, then crashed into my forehead. I grabbed the flashlight and pointed it at the largest rabbit I'd ever seen. It stood like a post in my obnoxious light and seemed to stare at me. How could it do that? Rabbits can't look forward. Yet I stared back. My companions slept. I felt alone with the creature. I did not smile, something I might do with a person nearby. All pretension vanished. I saw that this creature and I did not understand each other. The creature, the edge of the flashlight's beam, each individual moldering leaf near my squatting spot brightened into sharp focus.

I moved my light back and gathered up my long johns. I stood and trained the light back out into the dark. The rabbit had gone.

For years I remembered this moment but did not know what I'd seen. It was a snowshoe hare, *Lepus americanus*. It lives in dense forests, mostly in far-northern woods. It favors thickets. Its fur grows brown until the winter, then turns white. It has no interest in meeting me. It does not need me. The hare's babies stop nursing and hop off to their own lives within one month of birth. Hares spend most of their time avoiding danger. Because it had come close, my encounter left me in awe.

YEARS LATER I SAW MY SECOND ONE. I'M CERTAIN THAT MANY DOZENS of hares have watched me walk by without showing themselves. Now I walked alone down off the forgotten side of Carter Dome in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. I descended off a trodden route onto a path few walkers go. I crossed into the federal Wilderness area and saw moose droppings every few feet. I sensed that animals hid just off my trail, waiting for me to move on.

I walked three miles down into a desolate campsite. Perkins Notch, once bustling, had gone back in time and become a ghostly opening in the woods, really just a signpost. The Wilderness Act specified that humans must interact as little as possible with this area now called the Wild River Wilderness. A year or so before I got there, U.S. Forest Service employees had dismantled a shelter but piled the lumber by the trail. Graded areas for tents now resembled rutted gravel squares. I seemed to be the only human for miles. Forecasters had predicted rain. I wandered about looking for a good tentsite—not the abandoned gravel tent pads; they’d funnel moisture toward my sleeping pad. I settled on a flat spot below a stand of saplings. But here, I felt uneasy. Something 50 yards away caught my glance: Someone had built (out of the pieces of the old shelter) a crude A-frame shack. I shuddered. “I’m not going in there,” I said to no one.

The stream ran back by the way I’d come in, so at dusk I returned there with my cooking pot and water bottle. There sat the pile of lumber from the old shelter. There leaned a rotting signpost. It pointed to lonely, little traveled trails deeper in the wilds.

The stream rushed, interrupting my loneliness. And then I saw the first animal of my evening. A snowshoe hare, in summer brown fur, stood. Posed. Stared. I stared back. I thought for a second that I had made eye contact—one eye. This animal barely noticed me. Or didn’t see me. I didn’t fear it. I feared what it knew that I didn’t know. A natural cycle in which I have absolutely no part was playing out in Perkins Notch. The hare had emerged at dusk looking for plants it could eat in safety. An owl could swoop in and grab it. Most hares die violently, actually. That’s why they breed like rabbits.

AT TIMES NEW ENGLAND WILDLIFE MANAGERS HAVE TRANSPORTED snowshoe hares from Maine to states where too many had been hunted. Moving hares also saves Canada lynxes because the only thing a lynx will eat is a hare. I did not realize at that moment I met the hare that a much larger animal might be lurking. I thought the hare looked wise and that it somehow embraced nature’s cycles—find food, live a while, then die—with more grace than I accept those cycles. This hare, of course, thought nothing of life’s stages. It lived in a constant state of fear. I have never known such fear.

Martin Laird writes in *Into the Silent Land* (Darton, 2006), a short book about Christian contemplation: “Fear itself becomes a vehicle of deeper silence,” and, “Be still in the midst of fear.” He tells us that the Eskimo word

for polar bear is *tornarvsuk*, “the one who gives power.” Eskimos confront the bear to grapple with their fear of it. In doing this, they “receive the gift from the bear.”

I had come seeking something like peace. Instead I confronted the gift from the snowshoe hare. I had run right into a creature that didn’t know enough to fear me.

I knelt clumsily at the stream with my pot, water pump, and bottle. I could find no level ground or rock on which to prop the pump, so I lugged the pot of stream water and the rest of the stuff back to the campsite. Dusk had moved in. I could see very little. Was that movement over by the A-frame shanty? No. What was that crackling? The whirr, the whish? I was out of place and would always return to such spots trying not to be.

—*Christine Woodside*
Editor-in-Chief

Ordinary Time

When the dead
stay down, and the scarab no longer
resembles Beelzebub,

but reverts to pure beetle—
signifying nothing—

and no incense burns
but citronella in jars, though *myrrh*,
myrrh is heard
from the vibrating throats
of warblers.

The cruciform hawk eases
into our lives
without passion, circling an unkempt
and untroubled garden.

Paula Bohince

PAULA BOHINCE is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *Swallows and Waves* (Sarabande, 2016). Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Best American Poetry*, and elsewhere. She lives in Pennsylvania.

Care for the Caregiver

His mother had never backpacked; he took her to the Presidentials for her 60th birthday

Stephen Kurczy



SHE HOISTED HERSELF UP AND OVER ANOTHER RAIN-SOAKED boulder along the Gulfside Trail between Mount Washington and Mount Adams. Each step required concerted effort, as if her mind had to constantly overrule her body's growing yearning to stop. Thick rain clouds rolled along both sides of the 5,000-foot-high ridge. Distant lightning, followed by a low rumble of thunder, threatened to engulf New Hampshire's high peaks, and along with them my 60-year-old mother, Linda Kurczy.

Mom reminds me of a pit bull: short in stature, with cropped black hair and, depending on your perspective, either strong-willed or stubborn. She had been awake since sunrise, grinding forward even as the windchill dropped to 30 degrees. It was August. Her nerves were frayed from a day that had begun in a shelter below Tuckerman Ravine and turned monstrous, with rain turning to hail and wind ramping up to 71 MPH (the highest wind speed all month, according to weather data). Such conditions wouldn't surprise those familiar with the area, but this was Mom's first time in the White Mountains.

As darkness settled, she became unsteady on her feet. I feared she might fall and break a tooth or sprain an ankle. We each put on headlamps, and I clenched a flashlight in my teeth. It had been more than four hours since we had hiked away from the Mount Washington Observatory, which had closed its doors early at 4 P.M. because the near-hurricane-force winds had compromised the safety of the Auto Road and spurred most people to evacuate the summit—with the exception of my mother and me, it seemed.

I gripped a hiking pole with one hand while helping Mom over the rock-strewn trail with my other. I took her day pack and wore it along with my 50-liter backpack. I rechecked the map. We didn't say it, but we each wondered if we were lost. An image flashed through my mind of my grief-stricken sisters looking at me and saying, "We can't believe you killed our mother for her 60th birthday."

Mom fell. Then I fell. Then she fell again.

"I don't know if I can keep going," she said, tears coming down her cheeks. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry," I said, hugging her. "I'm sorry that I got you into this."

"How much farther?" she asked.

Linda Kurczy pushes across the ridge below Mount Washington as a storm lifts.

STEPHEN KURCZY

DESPITE WHAT THE INTERNET SAYS, 60 DID NOT FEEL LIKE THE NEW 40 for my mother. Born in 1955, the same year that Disneyland opened and Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat, Mom greeted her 60th year with more anxiety and existential self-doubt than a Camus-reading teenager. She questioned what her final years of professional life as a public school teacher would be; she didn't want to be seen as *that teacher*, the one hanging on until retirement. Would society continue to value her? She also seemed haunted by the death of her parents from cancer when they were in their early 60s. Studies have shown that the longer your parents live, the longer you're likely to live, which is comforting unless both your parents died young.

I thought a good hike in the White Mountains might help Mom feel younger, or at least excited about new adventures. She had lived in New England most of her life, yet she'd only seen the White Mountains from a car. In recent years I had started trekking through the range regularly. I would share photos and stories, and Mom would say that she'd love to experience the mountains one day. She was probably just hinting that she'd love to spend more time with *me*, but I took her literally.

So in 2015, during the second week of August, just after Mom's birthday on July 30, I told her to get ready for a weeklong mystery trip. It would be our longest uninterrupted mother-son bonding time since—well, since I was in the womb.

It's strange to think that I once happily lived inside Mom's belly, physically tethered to her through an umbilical cord. Even after that cord was cut, I was still tethered to her emotionally, dependent on her care. This mother-son relationship has been endlessly analyzed, but I think stories about mothers and sons in the wilderness reveal more of the unique dynamic. Of a mother's protectiveness, as with the 2016 story of a Colorado mom who pried open a mountain lion's jaws to rescue her 5-year-old son. Of a mother's encouragement, such as how ultramarathoner Scott Jurek was inspired by his late mother's battle with multiple sclerosis. Or of a grown son's need to take on the role of guide, as I did in this story.

The first stop on our road trip was not Mount Washington but upstate New York, where we spent several carefree days touring wineries. I mention that detail because this story is also about the lengths that a mother will go to spend time with her children. My mother did not drink alcohol for most of her life. In her teens, she joined a conservative Baptist church, where she was inspired to become a missionary. She attended a small evangelical



Stephen and Linda Kurczy in Pinkham Notch, at the start of their two-night backpacking trip. COURTESY OF STEPHEN KURCZY

college in Maine and married an even more conservative man who had attended Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in Virginia. Eventually, they returned to Connecticut, where Mom had grown up. My father became the pastor of Mom's childhood church, and she became the director of Christian educational programming. Alcohol didn't mix with that life.

Only after all three of her children had grown up and moved out of the parsonage did Mom try her first glass of wine, one night out with her brothers; she hated it. But she kept trying varieties and quickly developed a taste for dark reds. The drink became a way for her to connect with family and, I think, shrug off some of the pressures of being a pastor's wife. Less than a decade later, as she and I toured the Finger Lakes wine region, I asked her why she had been so opposed to alcohol for most of her life.

"It was called 'the devil's drink,'" she said. For many years, it had been inconceivable to her that a good Christian could have liquor in the cabinet, an assumption that was slowly eroded. She once asked her brother—the same

brother who would later coax her into trying wine for the first time—if he would hide his beer when his church friends came for a house party. He responded, “Why would I do that?” Out to dinner once with church friends, Mom told the waitress that their table would not be drinking alcohol; a friend interjected, saying, “Who are you to speak for me? I’ll have a beer.”

“It was a jarring reality—that my idea was not the only way,” Mom said. That realization was part of a newfound tolerance, not just for alcohol but also for alternative political opinions and religious views. “I’m at a more generous time in my life,” she told me. She said she wanted to be more gracious, more compassionate, and slower to judge, and not be seen as a scold or a prude. Then she glanced at me and said, “I’ve thought so many times, Whatever is Stevie going to say about me at my funeral?” I asked her why she’d wonder such a morbid thing, why she was so emotional about turning 60.

“Because the end is in sight,” she said. “I want to stay present, to stay alive in my classroom—not just alive, but vibrantly alive with my students. I long for us to leave our church in a good place, in a strong place. I want to finish these things well. I’m afraid that I’m going to get tired.”

MOM PREFERRED RED, SO I PACKED A 1-LITER CARTON OF CABERNET Sauvignon for our trek into the White Mountains. On August 10, we awoke at 4 A.M. and left the Finger Lakes, driving eight hours across New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire to the town of North Conway. By then, with Mount Washington looming overhead, Mom knew where our mystery ride was headed. When I said we’d pack food for three days, the scale of our hike more fully dawned on her. It’s one thing to go up and down Mount Washington in a day, an 8-mile hike with the assurance of a hot shower, warm meal, and soft bed at the end. It’s another to spend three days in the wilderness, carrying all food and camping gear, hiking through the elements, sleeping on hard surfaces, and waking to 60-year-old aches and pains. She had never climbed a single 4,000-foot mountain.

We stopped at the gear shop International Mountain Equipment to buy last-minute supplies and check the weather report. Thunderstorms were forecast for the following day, just when we intended to summit Mount Washington and cross the Presidential ridge to Mount Adams. Standing behind the counter, the stern, gray-haired manager Alec Behr warned me, “Tomorrow is not a day when you want to be above treeline.” I nodded. Mom, no doubt intimidated by the burly boots for sale all around her, worried that her old hiking boots, which she hadn’t worn in a decade, would

not be good enough. She found a secondhand pair of Asolo hiking shoes from IME's basement consignment section.

"Do you think the weather will be a problem?" Mom asked as we got back into our green Subaru. I shrugged. "On Washington, the weather can always be a problem. Locals have the luxury to choose what day they want to hike, but we've come a long way and we're here now. We'll take it as it comes."

We drove to Pinkham Notch Visitor Center and changed into our hiking gear in the basement locker rooms. Upstairs in the lobby, I showed Mom our planned route along the 6-by-8-foot topographical map, beneath which is listed the 150-plus people known to have perished around Mount Washington since the mid-1800s. Her eyes glued to the name of a 63-year-old who had died of a heart attack on the Tuckerman Ravine Trail, where we were headed.

Finishing packing, I gently stuffed a full-size bag of Utz potato chips—sour cream and onion, Mom's favorite—into the exterior pocket of my backpack. We each took a trekking pole. Mom was visibly anxious. She later likened the feeling to that moment before you get on a roller coaster: You just want to be strapped in and have the bailout option removed before you psych yourself out.

Starting up the Tuckerman Ravine Trail, the dirt path quickly turned into a flow of large rocks. Mom didn't yet realize it, but this would be the terrain for the next three days. Known as "the rock pile," Mount Washington is quite literally a huge pile of mica schist and granite cobbles, which forces the hiker to pay constant attention as she hops from rock to rock.

We gained 1,800 feet in elevation over the 2.4 miles to the Hermit Lake Shelters. With each step, our potato chips bag became more and more bloated, appearing on the verge of bursting. But Mom felt good. We checked in with the Hermit Lake caretaker and found a wooden shelter with a sliding front door. As we dropped our bags, a bearded man popped out and welcomed us. He said he was staying there alone for a full week, a veritable hermit. Mom gave me a look that said, "We're sharing this shack with somebody else?" She soon learned we were also sharing it with curious squirrels and at least one bold mouse.

After unrolling our sleeping pads and sleeping bags on the rough wood floor, we took a walk around Hermit Lake. Among a group of Canadians camping in another shelter, one man was hunched over his boots, duct-taping the rubber to the leather—that could have been my mother had she not invested in that "new" secondhand pair at IME. Back at our shelter, we

poured two cups of red wine and broke open the Utz chips. We munched on diced avocado, fresh olives, crackers, and Finger Lakes goat cheese. The hermit marveled at our spread.

“This is what I’ve always said I’d want as my last meal,” Mom told him. “Good cheese, olives, wine.” She didn’t realize how ominous she sounded when she said, “my last meal,” as if she were a prisoner walking to the gallows or Jesus breaking bread before the crucifixion.

THE DAY OF THE STORM BEGAN WITH A BEAUTIFUL SUNRISE. I SLID OPEN the shelter’s door, revealing a glow on the horizon that cut orange through the low clouds and cast silver shadows across the forested mountain ridges. We warmed up with instant coffee and oatmeal, then packed and were back on the Tuckerman Ravine Trail by 7 A.M.

As we ascended the steep, treeless path, the predicted storm clouds began swooping into the valley below and tumbling over the ridge above. As we topped out of the ravine, the clouds enveloped us, too. Visibility dropped to 25 feet. I strained to see to the next trail-marking cairn. The mist turned to rain, then hail. The wind picked up to 71 MPH. I saw a shadowy movement nearby. Two other hikers lay on the ground. One of them was crying because the wind had knocked her over. We passed in silence. Now a strong gust pushed my mother sideways and to the ground. While intimidating, the wind was still only one-third of its maximum recorded speed atop Washington: 231 MPH, in 1934. The only higher wind speed measured on Earth was in 1996, when Tropical Cyclone Olivia sent a 254 MPH gust over an Australian island, although that was recorded by an unmanned device and not by two dudes hunkered inside a rattling cabin atop New England’s highest peak.

We had no idea what our distance to the summit was until we realized we were standing beneath one of the weather towers. A bit after 9 A.M., we reached the summit post, which noted the elevation at 6,288 feet. Although the peak normally would be overrun with visitors that time of year, we were the only people in sight. Few others had deemed the summit worthwhile in these conditions. Yet we were only a quarter done with our day’s journey.

The plan next was to hike across the Gulfside Trail to Mount Jefferson and down to Edmands Col, then turn onto the Randolph Path toward our destination of Crag Camp on the north slope of Mount Adams. For now, however, we were going nowhere. We took shelter inside the visitor center and shed our wet clothes. Weather radar showed a massive storm moving across New England for the next several hours. There was nothing to do but wait.

We played rummy. Mom wrote postcards and mailed them from the summit's post office. We could see nothing but white out the windows, so our focus turned to the stream of waterlogged hikers taking refuge inside. A shivering teenager showed up alone because he'd lost contact with his father somewhere near Mount Madison; the kid waited all afternoon in his sopping wet jeans, only to learn that his dad was waiting for him at the base of the mountain. Another father and son who'd taken the Cog Railway up walked inside soaked and appearing physically rattled from the trip. "It was like riding inside a washing machine," the dad said of the railcar journey. Two brawny Canadian hikers, dressed in serious trekking gear and rain protection, departed the visitor center to hike down to Pinkham Notch only to return drenched a half-hour later. "The weather is brutal," one said. "We're taking the shuttle down." They were joined by a mother-daughter team thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail who had decided, for the first time in their entire Georgia-to-Maine journey, to leave the trail and take shelter overnight from the elements.

A ranger warned that the last shuttle would be leaving early because the high winds and pounding rain had compromised its safety. The visitor center would also close its doors an hour early. At 3:30 P.M., as staff began mopping floors and stacking chairs, I told Mom we had to choose one of several options: (1) Pay \$50 apiece to take the shuttle down the Auto Road; (2) hike 1 mile to Lakes of the Clouds Hut and potentially pay \$127 apiece to stay there overnight (space permitting); (3) hike 1.6 miles back down Tuckerman Ravine to Hermit Lake Shelters; (4) hike 4 miles back to our car at Pinkham Notch; (5) continue with the original plan of hiking another 4.5 miles above treeline across the high-elevation Presidential ridge, which is covered in challenging boulder-strewn terrain.

"It's too many details," she said. "Just tell me what to do."

I pointed out the window and said we could now see several hundred feet to the parking lot, so it seemed the clouds were dissipating. Mom was skeptical: "Look how the window pane is still shaking in the wind." The clouds were so thick that she hadn't had cell service all afternoon, but now she suddenly got a few bars. On her tenth try calling, she reached my father—the minister—and asked him to pray that their son would make the right decision. She later told me she felt compelled to make the call in case he never heard from her again.

"I think our original plan to hike across the Presidential ridge is still doable," I said. The rain was easing, the wind was dying, the clouds were

lifting, and the weather radar was showing a sustained break in the storm. “We’ll be fine. We’ll be there before sunset.”

“You really think we can do it?” Mom asked.

“Yes,” I said.

I believed I was making a calculated decision based on weather reports and my familiarity with the mountain trails, though I also know I was toeing the line for unacceptable risk when hiking with your 60-year-old mom. This readiness to brush aside her concerns reminds me of how an ex-girlfriend once told me, when we were breaking up, that my lack of empathy was borderline sociopathic. I’ve since been reassured by friends and family (and a new girlfriend) that I am not a sociopath. But I know that I can be slow to sympathize with others’ pain and fear, that I don’t readily place myself in another’s shoes, that I don’t quickly see—or simply don’t *want* to see—that my abilities and thresholds may fundamentally differ from my partner’s. In my mind, if you have a goal, you pursue it, pain and obstacles be damned. And in the circular logic of someone who thinks that way, I sometimes see the person who fails to stay committed as another obstacle to be overcome through coercion, force of will, or by minimizing their concerns. This way of thinking is what led me to downplay the decisions of other hikers and the advice from the manager back at IME.

The irony is that I got this trait from my mother. Like her, I can be described as either intensely driven and strong-willed or myopically stubborn and bullheaded. The same sense of conviction that made Mom a teetotaler for her first 50 years—as well as sustained her marriage, her faith, and her belief that her three children were the most incredible beings on the planet—had also nurtured my personality over the years. If I have a goal and am convinced of its worthiness, it can be near impossible to change my mind. In the White Mountains, this shared sense of conviction was coming full circle. The character trait that my mother had instilled in me was leading us into the storm together. She was so eager to please me and so hungry to spend time with me that she could not consider quitting on me.

SHORTLY AFTER 4 P.M., WE LEFT THE SUMMIT VISITOR CENTER AND MARCHED into the rain wearing hats, gloves, jackets, and ponchos. Minutes later, Mom broke down crying. Hours of anxiously waiting had frayed her nerves and drained her emotionally. She seemed frightened by how the rain had turned the trail into a field of slippery boulders.

“I don’t know if I can do this,” she said.

“We can still turn back and take a shorter way down,” I said. “There’s nothing wrong with that.” Yet even as I said that, I knew that we had already given up both the shuttle and the Cog Railway, whose rattling engine we could now hear fading away in the fog. Finally, for the first time, I wondered, What kind of birthday gift am I giving my mother?

“Just let me cry,” she said. “I need to let out some stress.”

I expected the traverse from Mount Washington to Mount Jefferson and then down to Crag Camp to take three hours, tops. I had not factored in the slipperiness, my mother’s physical exhaustion, or her mental fatigue. We moved slower than 1 mile per hour during the five-hour journey.

There were moments of stunning beauty. Rounding Mount Clay, the clouds parted, and we could see a small blue pocket for the first time all afternoon. As the barometric pressure rose, the clouds dropped into the valley, leaving us with a spectacular view of a series of mountain ridges with clouds spilling down between them like rivers. For me, detached from the growing pain my mother was feeling, the experience felt worth the risk of getting caught in a thunderstorm. But as the hours wore on, Mom became increasingly sluggish. She scrambled over boulder after boulder only to encounter yet another boulder, at which point she hung her head and muttered, “Oh, c’mon.” “Stevie, she said, “this is not what I had in mind for my birthday.” Then she stopped speaking altogether—it required too much energy—leaving her mind to turn over the worst scenarios. Soon one started to unfold: hiking in the dark. She later said she’d been convinced we were lost and would be sleeping in the rain.

Dropping below treeline, we both put on headlamps. I tried to reassure her that we were going in the right direction, that our destination was near, that she was doing fine. I was becoming her cheerleader and leading her as she had led me for the previous 32 years of my life.

“How much farther?” she asked.

“It shouldn’t be far,” I said. The actual distance was still another hour; I also didn’t reveal that we’d taken a wrong turn that would add a strenuous final uphill to the journey. “We’ll stop at Gray Knob cabin. We don’t need to keep hiking the extra half-mile to Crag Camp.”

“But you wanted to camp there tonight. We can still go,” Mom said meekly, trying to be a good sport.

“I’ve already put you through enough misery,” I said.



Slippery boulders slowed the pace as the afternoon wore on. STEPHEN KURCZY

I'd never seen my mother so vulnerable or so willing to accept help. And in that moment of extremity, with Mom stumbling on nearly every step and me slowly guiding her forward, I felt that we had reversed roles, even though this came about through my willingness to take risks. Yet here we were: She had once carried me. Now, I was carrying her, holding her hand as she balanced across the rock-strewn trail in the night.

At 9:17 P.M., a time that my mother later said was seared into her memory, we reached an empty Gray Knob cabin. Mom stepped inside and collapsed on a bench, exhausted and helpless. She closed her eyes and didn't move. I unrolled our sleeping bags in the loft, then returned downstairs to find Mom still splayed on the wooden bench, her waterlogged boots still laced tight. I untied the knots and peeled off her boots and wet socks. I spread out dinner, but she said she felt too exhausted to consume anything but a few sips of wine. She said she needed to pee, so I helped her up and out the back door toward a footpath leading to the drafty outhouse. It was far enough for Mom to groan midway, "I'm about to go right here."

WHEN I READ THE ACCIDENTS SECTION OF THIS JOURNAL, I SOMETIMES cringe at the similarities between my adventures in the White Mountains and the misadventures of those who run into real trouble. I feel that I got away with something. I am reminded that my luck will run out if I keep pushing it.

And yet, the very intensity of such trips into the White Mountains can force a deeper awareness of one's abilities and limits, of one's relationship to nature and to other people. Our trek forced my mother and me to experience what the future holds as she ages. I will be asked to think carefully about her well-being, to make decisions for her safety. Increasingly, I will need to be the caretaker off the mountain, and this stubbornly self-sufficient woman will need to relinquish control and accept others' care.

The day after the storm, I awoke at 6 A.M., unzipped from my sleeping bag, slid my feet into my soggy shoes, and went outside to fill two big jugs with water from the spring a quarter-mile away. The clouds were lifting, and sunlight was filtering through the trees. By the time I returned to the hut to boil water for coffee and oatmeal, Mom was awake and moving—slowly, but moving nonetheless.

Mom said her quads were shot, so she used both trekking poles to steady her wobbly legs. We hiked a half-mile to Crag Camp, where the deck offered a clear view to the summit of Mount Madison and down into the valley. Mom leaned against the railing and soaked in the sunlight. A finch flew onto the deck and chirped for food. A hiker's dog jumped in the sun. The setting was almost surreal, like we'd hiked through hell and arrived in a kind of mountaintop Eden.

From Crag Camp, we descended nearly four miles to Route 2. Mom braced herself on the steeper sections but was soon walking easily, as the rocky, evergreen-lined path turned into a rolling dirt trail dotted with mushrooms and surrounded by tall maples. The air warmed, and the humidity increased. It was practically balmy. When we reached the Appalachia trailhead, Mom again started to cry.

"I'm so sad that it's over," she said with teary eyes. She had experienced the extremes of Mount Washington and the White Mountains: the quirky and kind people, the sunshine and hailstones, the stunning vistas and socked-in summits. We had pushed ourselves to the extremes of emotion and physical strength. She had cried several times. At times, we both had been annoyed—she for being pushed to exhaustion, me for being forced to slow down. But we had confronted everything together. And that it was our



Linda Kurczy, near the end of the odyssey, points to the sign warning that only those in “top physical condition” take the trail she had just descended. STEPHEN KURCZY

longest time alone together since she had been pregnant with me underscored its incalculable value.

Something about the mountains—the isolation, the beauty, the challenge—brings parents and children together. The following summer, my mother’s brother—the same brother who had introduced her to alcohol a decade earlier—convinced his teenage son to climb all 48 of New Hampshire’s 4,000-footers with him. (Fittingly, one night my uncle offered his son his first sip of beer.) People repeatedly told them during the hike, “You’re so lucky to have this time together.” My uncle later told me, “I really do feel like I was stealing this moment in time.” His son had slightly less enthusiasm for three weeks of one-on-one time with his father, but surely all children take their parents’ time for granted, as I long have. As my mother came to terms with turning 60 and her time running down, what better gift could I have given than my own time?

Standing on the side of Route 2, we stuck out our thumbs to hitch a ride back to Pinkham Notch. Within minutes, a Subaru stopped and offered us a

lift all the way back to our own Subaru parked 17 miles away. The driver asked what we'd been up to. Mom gushed about how her son had taken her on a mountain trek. The man nodded, then told a story of how he'd taken his own mother on an 80th birthday trip to Washington, D.C. "She was so happy we did it, and so was I because she died two years later."

"Hopefully my mom lasts a few more years," I joked. Mom laughed, too, because what else can you do?

In a sense, it all was a glimpse into the future. Mom would soon be diagnosed with lung cancer. The following March, on the day after Easter, she underwent a lobectomy that cut away nearly one-third of her lung capacity. I had my heart broken when I saw how frail she looked in postoperative care, tubes sticking out of her chest, and once again I was challenged to be her caretaker—a role that I had never easily embraced but that, perhaps in a small way, we started preparing for in the White Mountains.

I spent a month home with Mom during her recovery, prodding her to do regular breathing exercises and, despite the agonizing pain, to walk a bit farther each day.

First she walked just around the house, then up and down the street, and soon around the block, with the goal to complete a loop around a nearby lake by end of the month—a challenge so much smaller and yet so much bigger than our trek across the Presidentials. It was slow going. She constantly sought my affirmation, saying, "I'm doing good, aren't I, Stevie?" At times she felt she'd never fully recover. But she kept pushing, one boulder at a time. She made it around the lake. She went back to teaching. She held a new grandchild.

The bout with cancer would seem to justify her fear of dying young, as her parents had in their 60s. But the battle also helped her get over that fear, similar to how she had hiked through the storms of Mount Washington and emerged stronger for it. Rather than being a cancer-watcher, she became a cancer survivor, telling me how she'd love to experience more mountains with me.

STEPHEN KURCZY is a Connecticut-based journalist working on a book about the National Radio Quiet Zone. He last wrote for the Winter/Spring 2016 issue of *Appalachia* about climbing Mount Aconcagua.

Climbers as Humanitarians

Helping injured migrants in Mexico

Lisa Densmore Ballard



PICO DE ORIZABA CALLED TO ME WHEN I FIRST SAW IT IN NOVEMBER 2017, while driving into Tlachichuca, Mexico. I looked up its northwestern flank and wanted to stand on top of its white cone. It beckoned, cool and refreshing, framed by an azure sky, miles from where I stood. Around me, heat waves rose from the pavement and dust devils swirled among the cornstalk pyramids by the village gate. I realized I must not underestimate this alpine goliath.

Pico de Orizaba (18,491 feet) is the third highest mountain in North America, after Denali in Alaska and Mount Logan in the Canadian Yukon. Located in Mexico's volcanic belt, on the border of the states of Veracruz and Puebla, Orizaba rises prominently from a pancake-flat patchwork of corn and cactus in central Mexico. Like Africa's Kilimanjaro, Orizaba dominates the landscape, drawing the eye.

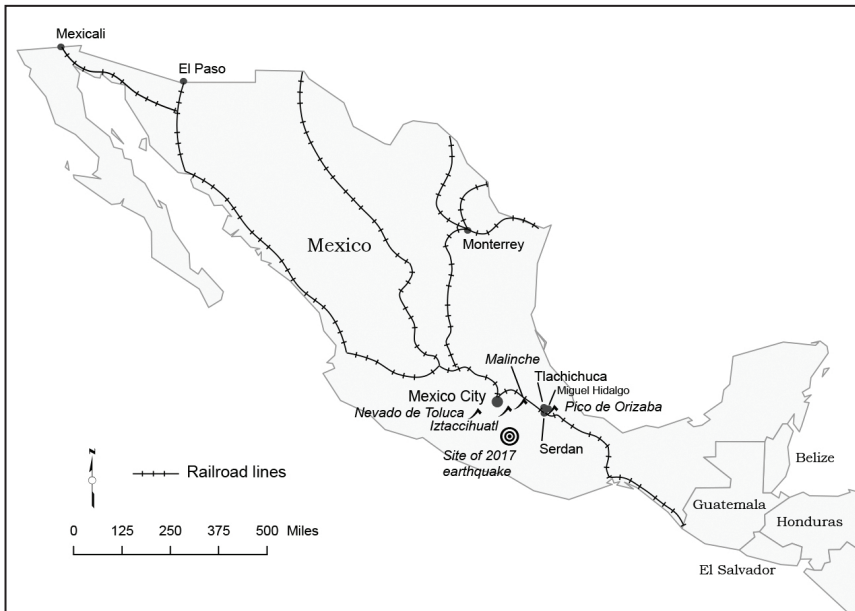
Also called Citlaltépetl ("Star Mountain") in the local Nahuatl-Aztec language, Orizaba is one of only three mountains in Mexico with permanent snowfields. Nine glaciers cover the peak, including the country's largest, Gran Glaciar Norte, which spills down its northern side. The upper mountain can be skied, which intrigues me because I am a professional skier besides being an avid trekker and occasional mountaineer. When the invitation came to visit central Mexico, including a hike to base camp on Pico de Orizaba at 14,000 feet, I booked my plane ticket.

My attraction to that volcano was secondary to the reason I traveled to Mexico. Our group went because we wanted to help the Mexican Red Cross in the wake of the September 19, 2017, earthquake. While international headlines focused on a ravaged Mexico City, the state of Puebla reeled. Of the 220 cities, towns, and villages in Puebla, 212 of them sustained severe damage.

The invitation came from John Markowitz, an emergency room technician at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. He has traveled to the volcanic region of Mexico off and on since 1999. He initially went there to climb Pico de Orizaba. Over the last two decades, he climbed Orizaba three times and scaled Iztaccihuatl (17,160 feet) twice, La Malinche (14,639 feet) three times, and the rattlesnake-ridden, sulfurous Nevado de Toluca (15,390 feet).

In a mere month, John acquired a grant through the Hitchcock Foundation and a private local philanthropist to fund our humanitarian mission. During

Climbers bought this used Unimog ambulance for Red Cross workers. LISA DENSMORE BALLARD



The climbers originally aimed to help victims of the 2017 earthquake southeast of Mexico City but ended up assisting injured migrants in the Tlachichuca area. The main train lines show where migrants try to hitch rides into the United States, often leading to serious injuries. While in Mexico, of course, the climbers felt the call to trek on Pico de Orizaba. LARRY GARLAND/APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

that time, he also recruited Dave Foster, an electrical engineer from Hanover, New Hampshire, and three firefighters from three nearby fire stations: Charlie Barker from Lebanon, Chris Sweitzer from Hanover, and Tom Ritland from Hartford, Vermont.

In addition to their professional skills, our team members were also at home in the high country. Dave had hiked throughout New Hampshire’s White Mountains. Charlie had rock-climbed for 30 years in the Northeast and in Joshua Tree National Park. Chris was an avid hiker and backcountry skier. Tom had accompanied John to Mexico in 2004 to climb La Malinche and Pico de Orizaba and to help the Mexican Red Cross with the ongoing challenges related to undocumented migrants.

Each year, 100,000 men, women, and children, typically from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, jump onto cargo trains, which they call “the beasts,” near the southern border of Mexico, hoping to ride the trains 2,400

miles north to the United States. It's a two-month journey holding on to the roof or a narrow grate between the speeding train cars, in the scorching sun. The lucky ones find shelter in an empty boxcar for a few days. The less lucky fall off and get seriously injured. What's more, bandits sometimes hijack the trains and kidnap the migrants. Though we embarked on our journey expecting to help earthquake victims, our mission became dedicated to these desperate travelers.

Laden with \$5,000 in medical equipment, solar ovens, and school supplies, we checked into Servimont, a walled compound in the center of the city of Tlachichuca and a haven for climbers. The owner, Gerardo Reyes Carlín, a medical doctor and one of the better-known climbers in the region, greeted us warmly. John, who had stayed at Servimont on numerous occasions and was a personal friend of Gerardo, immediately sank into one of the wood-frame chairs in the sitting room of the two-story dorm. He was home.

"We could have stayed in a hotel somewhere, but I thought you would feel more comfortable here," he said. "I just love this place!"

INDEED. SERVIMONT IS PART APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB HUT, PART mountaineering museum, and part family farmyard. A century of climbing paraphernalia, photographs, posters, patches, and stickers from various American outing clubs hung from walls and ledges around the dormant vats, massive brick furnace, and steam-powered boiler system of the former soap factory.

Outside, blooming calla lilies and poinsettia bushes perked up the otherwise gray courtyard. The lodge dominated one wall of the enclosure. Several four-wheel-drive vehicles purred by the heavy metal doors, picking up or dropping off climbers. Clangs emanated from the workshop by the entrance, where everything from climbing gear to the trucks and household items were repaired. The dog kennel for the Gerardo's three gentle Dobermans stood next to several empty animal stalls across the neatly mowed grass. Other stone-paved passageways led to a woodpile, a former candle factory converted into another guest room, the Reyes' family quarters, the kitchen, and a garden.

The compound has been in Gerardo's family for 150 years. His grandfather José was the first to summit Pico de Orizaba by the north route. During the 1930s José guided others up the route, using horses to travel to the base of the mountain. In the 1940s, Gerardo's father, Francisco, also guided climbers, and now Gerardo runs the mountaineering business, which also rents gear to climbers.

“We stored corn here,” Gerardo said as he sat in the dining room one evening. “Corn filled this room to the ceiling. It’s all been refinished.”

I glanced up. Large, hand-hewn pine beams supported the whitewashed ceiling. Three saddles filled the far corner next to a table adorned with a photo of Gerardo’s mother, food, and calla lilies in the Mexican tradition of the Day of the Dead holiday. His grandmother’s orange and black clay cooking pots hung above the door to the kitchen, and a bright yellow Aztec pattern framed the oversized portal into another sitting room. There was no evidence of earthquake damage.

“Servimont has 2-foot-thick walls,” Gerardo said. “The vehicles moved back and forth, but the buildings got only a few cracks.”

After dinner, while we sorted gear in the common area, a poster for the 2004 Mexican-Ambulance Climbing Project caught my eye. The poster featured Phil and Susan Ershler, the first couple to climb the Seven Summits (the highest peaks on each continent). It publicized their presentation at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center to help raise money for an ambulance operating near Tlachichuca. By no coincidence, John and Tom had climbed Pico de Orizaba together the same year. When I questioned John, he revealed a remarkable story.

In 1999, John hiked a section of the Appalachian Trail from North Adams, Massachusetts, to Grafton Notch, Maine, with Arthur “Sonny” Demers, a legendary Nordic skier from Eastman, New Hampshire. After their multiday backpacking trip, John and Sonny wanted another challenge.

“We decided against trekking in Nepal, and Sonny wanted to reach a summit,” John said. “Mexico was more affordable. We wanted to do something humanitarian, too. We ended up in a flooded region that got 30 inches of rain in 36 hours. We could see huge mud scars in the valleys when we were climbing. We were scared of the shadows, but we went to a warehouse to sort food and clothing donated through Rotary. It was surreal. You could see it on TV, and there we were.”

John and Sonny also learned that it would cost \$2,000 to rebuild each of the homes damaged by the flood, a modest amount by American standards but an impossible sum for most Mexicans, particularly in rural areas. Upon returning to the United States, they raised more than \$2,000, giving slide shows of their successful climb up Pico de Orizaba and the flood damage they saw. They sent the \$2,000 to Mexico but didn’t know what to do with the little bit of extra money they had raised.

“I went back to Mexico, using my own money, and met with Gerardo,” John said. Gerardo showed John a letter from the Mexican Red Cross appointing Gerardo director for the agency’s north slope of Pico de Orizaba, “but the title came with no money, no personnel and no ambulance.”

The idea of providing an ambulance for Gerardo’s search-and-rescue efforts held great appeal for John. If he could get a group together to climb Orizaba and build a donation of \$250 per person into the cost of the trip, it would be enough to buy a used one. But the ambulance had to be a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle that could navigate the washed out, steep two-track road that wound up the lower mountain.

A climbing couple appealed to the Dartmouth community for funds to buy an ambulance.

“I thought it was a crazy idea at first, but once you say you’re going to do it, it’s public,” he said. “I talked to a few people, and they said yes! Sixteen people came on that trip. Then Gerardo got a lead on a Unimog in Arizona that we thought would work. I took out a banknote to cover the balance we didn’t raise.”

Unimogs were developed by the Germans during World War II as all-terrain vehicles. They resemble covered, square-backed pickup trucks. The name *Unimog* is an acronym for the German term *Universal Motor Gerät* (“Gerät” means “machine”). The circa-1960 Unimog for sale in Arizona had been used as a construction trailer. It could handle the terrain around Orizaba but needed to be converted into an ambulance. It also needed a water pump, new tires, brakes, and other repairs. The tires alone cost \$1,200. The presentation at Dartmouth by the Ershlers spurred the donations to help cover these additional costs.

After John and Gerardo purchased the Unimog, Gerardo and his family drove the vehicle across the border. When the Unimog finally reached central Mexico, however, it did not go to Tlachichuca. The keys ended up at the Red Cross headquarters in nearby Serdan, where it remains today and where it is used primarily for rescuing injured migrants.

“I thought the Unimog was going to be used both for mountain rescue and to help migrants,” John said. “At first I was annoyed, but now I’m happy to see the ambulance is being used basically as I envisioned, helping local people.”

The next morning, the Unimog arrived at Servimont to take us to Serdan. At Red Cross headquarters, the firefighters spread the medical gear on a long table. The Red Cross personnel were like kids on Christmas when they saw the piles of stethoscopes, heart-rate and blood monitors, tourniquets, finger clips, and other much-needed ambulance necessities. The room emanated with joy and gratitude. No surprise. If the Unimog was any indication, the Red Cross in Serdan was severely undersupplied. The ambulance contained only a stretcher, a few bandages, and one canister of oxygen, quite a contrast to the emergency medical vehicles in the United States.

After going through the medical supplies, we adjourned to a small outdoor courtyard where John set up one of the solar ovens. A group of Red Cross youth volunteers joined us to learn how to cook eggs without water. As John



John Markowitz shows Red Cross volunteers and staff how to use a solar oven.

LISA DENSMORE BALLARD

and Charlie entertained the crowd, I noticed a teenage boy in a wheelchair apart from the others. He sat under a tree with a tall, middle-aged woman. The boy had no legs below his knees. His name was Mertir. The year before, at age 17, he'd jumped on a train in Honduras with his brother and cousin. They got off at San Andres, a deserted depot near Serdan where the Red Cross maintains one of its seven migrant shelters; the next night Mertir fell while trying to climb onto another train. A woman who lives near the railroad tracks (and who has helped migrants her entire life) found him and called the Red Cross. Vowing to stick with Mertir, his brother and cousin got off the train as soon as they could, but the authorities immediately deported them back to Honduras.

After Mertir's surgeries, Mariana, the woman with him at Red Cross headquarters, agreed to be his foster mother until he was deemed fit enough by the Mexican authorities to go home.

"There is no American dream," Mariana said. "The migrants believe it but don't realize it's not a promise. It's difficult to make it in the United States when you have no education, no family there, and no contacts."

With Mariana's encouragement, Mertir was learning how to function in a country that has no disabilities laws, and he was learning carpentry and music, giving him a chance to earn a living. He can stay in Mexico until he heals because he has a full-time caregiver acting as a foster parent. Mariana hoped to raise money to get prosthetic legs for him, though that would be a huge hurdle in such a poor part of the world.

"He has such spirit," Mariana said, proudly. "It's a miracle he's alive. I have a passion for helping migrants. Some people pretend [migrants] don't exist even if they're hurt. I just can't leave them."

Later that day, we rode in the Unimog to San Andres to see the Red Cross shelter. Immediately on observing the wool blankets on the cold stone floor, the firefighters decide to build bunk beds, which turned into a multiday project and allowed Mertir to show his skill with a saw.

It was also the first of five days, loitering around the shelter, waiting for trains and looking for migrants in need of aid. The days were long and hot, and the train "schedule" really amounted to wishful thinking—yet the Red Cross personnel never wavered. At the sound of a train whistle, they were ready to toss water bottles to thirsty stowaways. If the Unimog started (it was as unreliable as the trains), we sometimes raced alongside the tracks or over farm roads to reach another deserted platform before a train got there.

Periodically, we spotted abandoned clothing or bedding on a grate between the cars or on the back of a caboose, evidence of migrants who likely fell off, their whereabouts and their condition an unsolvable mystery.

“Waiting for trains is like waiting for a fire call,” observed Tom, gazing at Pico de Orizaba from the tracks outside the San Andres depot. “You might be at the station for six hours without a call. It’s so unpredictable.”

WE HAD NOT FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE GREAT VOLCANO. ON OUR DAY off, we welcomed the chance to hike to base camp on Pico de Orizaba. Our destination is formally known as the Piedra Grande huts. There are two of them, a small yellow Quonset hut with sleeping shelves for eight, and a larger stone building, with large sleeping platforms for 30-plus, and a rough counter on which to set a cookstove.

After breakfast, one of Gerardo’s drivers took us from Servimont into the national park surrounding Pico de Orizaba. En route to the trailhead, we stopped in the remote village of Miguel Hidalgo at 10,670 feet. Word of our arrival spread quickly. Soon the entire village poured into the field where we had parked. Charlie distributed soccer balls, Halloween candy, and school supplies to kids. John delivered a box of knit hats to Carlos, one of Gerardo’s guides who lived in the village.

Carlos accompanied us on our hike. We drove another hour slowly up a road so eroded I felt seasick from the bumping and jostling, but once on the trail, I reveled in the exercise and fresh air. We ascended steadily for two miles through an airy forest of Montezuma pine. The bunchgrass on both sides of the path made the footing uneven, but not so much that I couldn’t gaze up now and again at the stately 80-foot tree trunks. Though past the growing season, pink and prickly coneflowers adorned the meadows among the trees.

We broke out of the timber onto a rough dirt road then followed a more obvious path, climbing higher and higher. The peak loomed above us. It seemed to grow as the air thinned. About a quarter-mile below the huts, the route continued atop an old concrete aqueduct of marginal integrity. Exposed rebar and cavernous holes demanded more and more of my attention the closer we got to the huts, but finally, we arrived.

A group of skiers from Alaska were packing up their tents and skis as I swung my day pack off my back.

“How was it?” I asked.

“Worst snow I’ve ever skied,” one of the Alaskans said. “The conditions were really icy.”

November is perhaps the worst time to ski Orizaba because it receives little snow over the summer and fall, and what’s there frequently freezes and thaws. In fact, the mountain showed an even less friendly side a mere two weeks after our visit. Gerardo informed us by email in late November 2017 that an American climber had died trying to ski down the icy glacier from the top.

“He fell 2,500 feet to his death, on the west face,” Gerardo wrote to me. The climber had been with an American guide. Servimont staffers found his remains the next day. Gerardo’s note went on: “Sunday, two more fell. Carlos [and two other Servimont guides] brought them down, but [those two suffered] only injuries. A lot of work and expenses that nobody pays for. Fortunately, none of my customers were injured. Thank God.”

Gerardo is like many climbers in his willingness to help others in the mountains. In 1970 the mountaineer H. Adams “Ad” Carter (1914–1995) recruited a dozen of his alpinist colleagues to go to the Cordillera Blanca in the Peruvian Andes to rescue victims of an earthquake that had buried 25,000 people under a massive landslide. The Carter Glacier there was named after him to honor this humanitarian effort. In 1998, high-altitude filmmaker David Breashears used proceeds from his Imax film, *Everest*, to bring electricity to a Sherpa village in the Himalaya. The Alex Lowe Foundation, founded in 2003 by Lowe’s widow, Jennifer, supports the Khumbu Climbing Center, where, to date, 1,000 indigenous people have learned climbing skills, English, mountain search-and-rescue, and first aid.

Climbers often find themselves touched by the struggles of those who live in the mountains. In 2008, while climbing Kilimanjaro, I met a fireman who trekked up that entire 20,000-footer in his heavy, flame-retardant firefighting uniform, including the hat, to raise money for burn victims. I once sent soccer balls, a pump, schoolbooks, dictionaries, and two-dozen T-shirts to a village in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains after trekking up four 14,000-footers there. Closer to home, almost every rescue on any New England peak is staffed by an army of local volunteers willing to lend their energy and outdoor skills to those in need. And this is only a handful of examples of the innumerable humanitarian efforts by climbers during the last 150 years.

Helping others is how many mountaineers are wired. Unquestionably climbers tend to be highly focused and goal-oriented, sometimes beyond

reason and safety, when ascending a mountain. It's on the approach to that peak and especially after the feat that their humanitarian sides emerge. Does that urge to help well up because some of the biggest peaks are located in parts of the world where residents live with much less than Americans do? Or is this willingness to give back simply one's duty as a human being? It's certainly as rewarding as reaching any summit. Maybe more so.

"In the mountains, you're close to the earth," John said. "There is a grounded-ness to that, a sense of awareness. You see local people when you climb, like farmers who get their hands in the dirt. Climbers get their hands in the dirt, too. You're in tune with the weather and the elements, like they are. Nature speaks to you. It makes you feel alive, and with that comes a sensitivity to other people's needs."

A longtime member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, LISA DENSMORE BALLARD is an award-winning writer, photographer, and filmmaker. She splits her time between Red Lodge, Montana, and Chateaugay Lake, New York, when she's not exploring a wild part of the world. Learn more at lisaballardoutdoors.com. See her story on an adventure with her son on page 56.

Herons at Sapsucker Woods

Their wide woven bowl of sticks sails
high in a white oak snag. She has sat
for hours, and honks in answer to his returning
honk; scraping, jubilant sounds
they exchange to claim each other.

Long ago, their earliest kin
traded two limbs for wings. As he settles,
she sidesteps along a branch,
hops to another, leaps, lets those wings
(the color of sky before thunder) take over.

The other side of the pond, she wades
on two stilts hardly there, with a gait, at a pace,
you might use for a funeral march
or a wedding. So it lasts?
To make no ripple: to provide.

No arms, and no bag but her belly
to hold fish pincered from the shallows.
Inside her now, fish stew. She flies to the snag,
where chicks beg; her neck arches
with effort to haul the catch back.

One nestling gets less; she chopsticks
a last chunk his way. She has squatted
above them in snow, in wind, in rain.
Now she stands with wings outspread,
heron as sunshade, queen.

Polly Brown

POLLY BROWN, of the Boston-area Every Other Thursday Poets, is the author of *Each Thing Torn from Any of Us* (Finishing Line Press, 2008) and *Pebble Leaf Feather Knife*, to be released by the Cherry Grove imprint of WordTech Communications in 2019. She has written about war and peace at the University of Massachusetts Boston's Joiner Institute and has organized plein air poetry events on her Massachusetts hillside.

Continuing Adventures of Buffalo and Tough Cookie

Sometimes a family goes deeper than blood

Janelle Mylott and Dan Szczesny



WE MET UP IN A SIMPLE RANCH-STYLE FUNERAL HOME THAT looked like an old house. Nearly five years to the day that we finished our epic hiking journey of discovery through the mountains of New Hampshire, we came together on a cool October evening to mourn the loss of Sara Mylott, the woman who started all this.

We are Dan Szczesny and Janelle Mylott (trail names: Buffalo and Tough Cookie), and in 2011 we began a hiking adventure of unexpected depth and length that resulted in our becoming minor celebrities in New England thanks to Dan's book *The Adventures of Buffalo and Tough Cookie* (Bondcliff Books, 2013). It tells how we climbed 52 New Hampshire mountains in one year and six days—in all weather, terrain, and in every free moment.

When this project began, Dan was 45 and Janelle was 9. We were not related but quickly learned that sometimes being a family goes deeper than blood—sometimes it just means caring for each other. Janelle, her twin brother, Aaron, and her grandparents had moved next door to Dan and Dan's wife, Meena, the year before. Our two families got closer. Then in February 2011, Janelle's grandfather died. Then Meena lost her job. We were all in crisis. Meena and Dan started finding connection by taking the kids hiking. Over the days, months, and years, those initial bonds grew deeper and became something else entirely. We became father and daughter.

Sara Mylott, Janelle's grandmother, first saw that connection, gave us her blessing to begin the project, and cheered us on all along the journey. Her passing brought us together again years after our hiking journey had concluded. And in sadness, we were able to think back and consider fully the depth of our adventure.

This summer marks the five-year anniversary of the release of the book that changed our lives, and Sara's funeral gave us the opportunity to reconnect and think about how this all came to pass. In Sara's passing, our journey thus far had come full circle, because it was Sara's own grief, five years earlier, that allowed us to first come together.

In many ways, the yearlong hiking odyssey was Janelle's inspiration. Dan and Meena, just married and newly returned from a trek to Everest Base Camp, packed Janelle and Aaron into their Subaru and drove 100 miles to the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Our first mountain was in Franconia Notch State Park, Bald Peak, an easy mile-long scramble up rock to a

Dan Szczesny and Janelle Mylott celebrate on North Baldface Mountain, partway through a 14-mile trek over four peaks. COURTESY OF DAN SZCZESNY



Janelle Mylott and Dan Szczesny still get together when they can. Here they are in winter 2017 on Mount Major in Alton, New Hampshire. COURTESY OF DAN SZCZESNY

wide-open summit. The weather held; the views of Cannon Mountain were stupendous; Janelle and Aaron ran and pushed and jumped. They ate candy and trail mix, they got dirty, there were bruises—in other words, it was great.

But Dan was surprised afterward, when Janelle approached him with a request. Could we do that more often? Could we hike again? Dan assured her they could, that they'd arrange more hikes with the kids and coordinate with his wife. But Janelle had other plans: "That's OK. You can just take me."

For Janelle, only 9 at the time and with almost no outdoor experience, the adventure was born from a deeply personal event: the unexpected death of Janelle's grandfather Jim. Sara sank into depression and sadness. Janelle lost Sara in the process of grieving.

As Sara reached out to her neighbors for support during those difficult months, the kids began gravitating more toward Dan and Meena, and the two families started to gel into one. Homework, dinners, and errands became mutual. The two houses began having open-door policies toward each other, and eventually the twins found themselves sleeping over more and more.

By the time of the Bald Peak climb, Janelle, who was desperate to find a way to deal with this loss, suddenly had an outlet in the outdoors, in general, and the White Mountains, more specifically. Here's Janelle:

Being outside was a way to distract myself from my own misery. Looking back on those first few days we shared together in the mountains has made me realize that's when I started to become who I am.

Janelle is 16 now, an environmentalist and an animal lover. Two years ago, she became a vegetarian. That first hike, and a few others in those first couple of months, allowed Dan and Janelle the opportunity not just to explore the outdoors but to experiment with two roles that had eluded both of our lives until then: that of being a father and a daughter.

EARLY IN OUR HIKING JOURNEY, BEFORE WE BEGAN TO TACKLE MOUNTAINS, we found ourselves confronted by police during a small hike near a pond in our hometown of Manchester, New Hampshire. Someone had called to report a strange man and a young girl in the woods alone. When the police arrived, Janelle (remember, just 9 at the time) felt anxious and confused, as Dan tried to explain their situation.

We were walking on a beaten trail with backpacks and water bottles. On one hand, someone was concerned enough to “report” us, presumably with



The duo stop for the view below the summit of Mount Waumbek.

COURTESY OF DAN SZCZESNY

Janelle's safety in mind. On the other hand, it was a stark reminder that the adventure we were about to set off on was unusual.

This moment could have ended our hiking adventure before it began, but instead it was a crossroads for Dan, who became a caretaker and father, or at least a father figure. Dan wondered if he would have been stopped had Janelle been a boy. But such a question was not important; what mattered to us was to build both a working, and safe, environment for the two of us to hike.

The situation with the police was sorted out via a phone call to Janelle's grandmother Sara, but going forward, Dan always carried a certified letter from her, verifying guardianship.

For Janelle, something much deeper and stronger grew out of that moment, though it has taken years to see this. Janelle and Aaron's parents were not in their lives. After their grandfather died, Janelle felt surprised when a new adult friend followed through on promises. Here's how Janelle puts it: "Most of my life, I'd been familiar with disappointment and I wasn't expecting much. I was taking a risk and diving into the deep end by learning to trust that he and Meena would consistently show up."

For Janelle, the biggest risk was learning to trust someone again, never mind the challenges of hiking up mountains. "I just assumed we would hike a few times here or there. But then my mind went from, Well, that's something that might be fun but probably won't happen, to, Wow, we are actually doing this."

So, after dozens of little hikes to build our mountain legs and get to know each other, on November 5, 2011, a frigid but clear day, we—Buffalo and Tough Cookie—set foot on Winslow Trail in Wilmot, New Hampshire, and headed up the first mountain on our list, Mount Kearsarge.

The "52 with a View" list was created by a hiking group from Sandwich, New Hampshire, called the Over the Hill Hikers. Back in the early 1990s, the list was fairly obscure. The idea behind the list is that all 52 mountains have a grand view somewhere along the way, whether at an outlook or on top. The mountains range in height from about 2,500 feet to just under 4,000 feet, and they are located all over the state, not only in the White Mountains.

We each faced wildly different challenges. Janelle had no experience following a trail. Here's how Dan puts it: "I'd been all over the world, Nepal, the Grand Canyon, but hiking with a 9-year-old forced me to slow down. Janelle would ask me about tree names or fauna, and I'd have no clue. I had



Buffalo and Tough Cookie rest on the open ledge of Sugarloaf in Groveton, New Hampshire. MEENA GYAWALI

to learn right along with her, become more of a naturalist, and it made me a better hiker.”

In the book, Dan calls this micro-hiking. On our hike up Black Mountain in Jackson, the weather was wet and overcast, fog obscured our views, and the trail followed a ski hill—not the most exciting hike. But somewhere along the way, as we sat down in the middle of the trail for a snack, we became a team. First Janelle pointed out a patch of ferns and started talking about them as a forest within a forest, each ecosystem within the larger natural world as distinct and unique.

Here’s Dan again: “I’ve never looked at the forest in quite the same way since our adventures. Being with her made me aware of so much more detail.”

Janelle, meanwhile, knew that hiking one mountain a week for a full year would be hard and would scare away a lot of kids. But hiking wasn’t necessarily about summiting. It became a way to step outside of sadness and put the pieces back together.

Janelle remembers it this way: “Maybe I didn’t logically know it at the time, but intuitively I think I realized I needed outside time, physical activity,

and time with Dan and Meena. All I really knew was that I was sad and angry at the world. But when I was hiking, I wasn't sad or angry."

Hiking for Janelle was like exploring Narnia, that magical world of C. S. Lewis. "When Dan and I hiked, it was like walking through a wardrobe into a snow-covered world full of mythical creatures. Everything was brand new to me, and there would always be an adventure waiting around the corner."

We hiked in every season, in all types of weather (except in thunder and lightning) and at all times of day. At first, Dan carried most of our food and gear, but by the halfway mark of our journey, Janelle was hauling 20 to 25 pounds. Our goal pushed us forward. We were very quickly a team. We wanted to finish the quest in one year, and even when the days shortened and snow fell, we knew we were well on the way.

Then along came a little storm named Sandy and an unexpected test atop a famous mountain.

ON OCTOBER 28, 2012, WE SET OFF ON A LOOP TO HIKE MIDDLE SISTER and Mount Chocorua. We had seen the forecast that Hurricane Sandy was moving north, so we were hustling to check off as many of the remaining mountains as we could beforehand. We were already veterans. Mount Chocorua was to be number 45 of our 52. The wind was heavy and moist with the coming storm, but Dan remembers, "That perfect joy from being up high in the mountains was with us."

There was 30 solid minutes of trail dance as we made our way slowly up Chocorua's bald summit crown. The wind made it hard to hear, but we didn't need to. Janelle led, picking the proper scrambles and negotiating the ledges, so all Dan had to do was stay below in case of a slip. It was even more windy by the time we reached the summit, but nothing we weren't prepared for. What we didn't expect was the hiker at the top who thought kids shouldn't be climbing "adult mountains."

"Guess you're going to be mad at your dad for dragging you up here," he told Janelle.

Janelle didn't answer. Dan tried to laugh it off, saying that actually it was Janelle who usually did the dragging. But the man wouldn't leave us alone. He followed us around, suggesting we leave the summit for a safer place. Dan thought the man's criticisms had ruined the whole day. Not Janelle: "There was something wrong with him, not us."

Janelle was growing up. That encounter and the whole hiking project inspired a new way of life, one of finding new challenges.

During Dan's book talks, audience members often ask, "How did you convince a 9-year-old to hike a mountain a week for a year?" That question implies Dan had anything to do with it. Dan always says a person can drag a child up exactly one mountain. Any more than that, if she doesn't want to go, is miserable for everybody. And Janelle knows climbing mountains brought alive something ambitious that already lived inside her.

Janelle had a deep desire to challenge herself; she set expectations high. She always says, "It's because I want to do things I enjoy and be accomplished in life. I want to live a better life than what was given to me. Even when things are really hard, like now with schoolwork, I make myself do it because I know I can."

Much of that confidence was born out of hiking, and the idea that getting to the top was never the goal. The journey was always the goal.

On November 11, 2012, one year and six days from when we started, we touched the summit of Mount Starr King. It had snowed most of the evening before, and the mountain was heavy and wet. We climbed that day with friends who made an arch out of their hiking sticks near the top so that Janelle could walk through it.



Over time, Dan noticed a strength of character developing in Janelle. PETER NOONAN

We covered about 230 miles over the course of the year. We had picked Starr King as the final mountain because it offered a meaningful extra mile: After summiting our 52nd mountain, we continued 1 more mile along the ridge to tag Mount Waumbek, making that Janelle's first 4,000-footer.

The door closed on one adventure, and a door opened to another.

Dan saw a depth of strength that had grown in Janelle. "I knew she had become strong physically, but there was and is something more with Janelle. It wasn't just muscles that were needed to do what she did; there was a strength of character there that I think we often underestimate when it comes to kids."

Janelle's year of hiking was a turning point, a way to come to terms with all the sad changes the previous year had brought, and a way forward. "The way I looked at life began to change for the better."

AFTER WE COMPLETED THE LIST AND DAN'S BOOK CAME OUT, WE SPENT the next year speaking at libraries, schools, and bookstores. We talked about empowerment for kids and how to hike big mountains safely.

One of our favorite events took place in Sandwich, where the Over the Hill Hikers invited us to a potluck dinner and presented us with our own "52 with a View" patches.

We kept hiking, to be sure. Making good on Dan's promise, we hiked on a frozen lake, stayed in the Appalachian Mountain Club's Lonesome Lake Hut, and won a contest in which we became Grape Nuts cereal outdoor ambassadors for a year. We made a memorable hike up Mount Moosilauke, where Janelle handed out little cereal boxes to passing hikers. The New Hampshire Public Television Show *Windows to the Wild* filmed an episode with us, in which, on a memorably rainy fall, we hiked Mount Magalloway with Willem Lange and played with gray jays at the summit. We hiked Mount Tecumseh and Mount Major.

But as Janelle entered middle school and Dan and Meena began preparing for the arrival of a long-hoped-for daughter, hiking began to take a back seat. Janelle joined the track team and started running and competing in the long jump. And as time wore on, Sara, Janelle's grandmother, fell into ill health. The family finally made the difficult choice to move south to Grafton, Massachusetts, where the twins could be with their aunt and Sara would get the care she needed.

This was a hard time for Janelle. "Moving to Grafton made my depression manifest," Janelle says. "Without hiking as a challenge and a distraction, my anxiety and sadness were more prevalent."

In late 2017, as we gathered together to celebrate Sara's life, it occurred to us that Sara was again bringing us together, once again giving us a fresh start. Dan's daughter is walking and talking now and better able to travel. Janelle has straight A's at school with college right around the corner. We're talking about the future. And much to our surprise, it seems bright again.

A few weeks after Sara's funeral, we sit in a coffee shop in Worcester, Massachusetts, talking about ways to move forward, and we discover that hiking, while a means of bonding and tackling a long-term goal, certainly isn't the only way to remain friends and continue to grow our relationship.

We can write together, find crazy food, and take Dan's daughter out on shorter hikes, perhaps at some of the National Wildlife Refuges around New England.

No matter where we go and what we do, we're still Tough Cookie and Buffalo. From our most recent conversation:

Tough Cookie: "My grandmother didn't know what she was getting into when she took me and my brother into her life, but she just welcomed us with open arms anyway. Just like I didn't know what truly mattered until after she was gone, and that was that I gained an everlasting friendship.

"I've decided to push myself to do mentally challenging activities for the time being. And I realize now that it's OK to not know exactly where you'll be down the road and that it's about the journey anyway."

An espresso machine fizzes away behind us. The world awaits us once again. Janelle shrugs.

"I don't know what will happen next, but I'm sure it will be just as life-changing," Tough Cookie says. "And you'll be right by my side, right?"

Buffalo: "Always. How about another smoothie?"

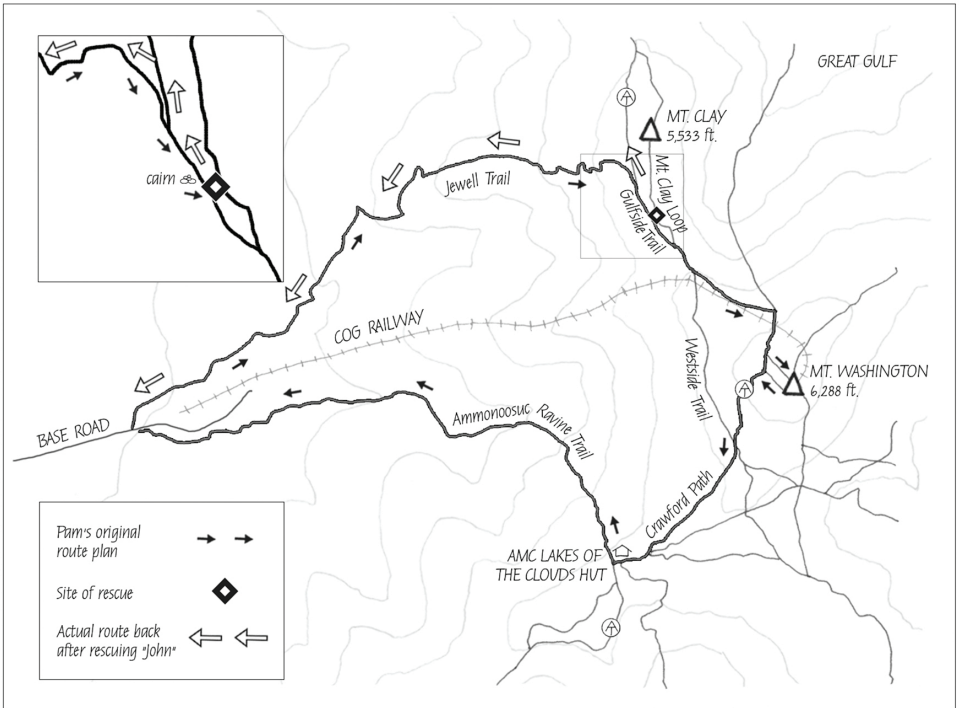
JANELLE MYLOTT is a junior at Grafton High School in Massachusetts. She enjoys writing, painting, listening to music, and spending time with her pet fish, Blue. She loves to run and hike.

DAN SZCZESNY is a writer and journalist living in Manchester, New Hampshire. His books include *The Nepal Chronicles* (Hobblebush Books, 2014), *Mosquito Rain* (Folded Word, 2016), and *The Adventures of Buffalo and Tough Cookie* (Bondcliff Books, 2013). His newest book, *The White Mountain* (Hobblebush Books), which explores a year on New Hampshire's highest peak, is due out this year.

Emotional Rescue

A hiker becomes a benefactor as she follows a set of sneaker prints

Ty Gagne



PAM BALES LEFT THE FIRM PAVEMENT OF THE BASE ROAD AND STEPPED onto the snow-covered Jewell Trail to begin her mid-October climb. She planned a six-hour loop hike by herself. She had packed for almost every contingency and intended to walk alone.

She'd left a piece of paper detailing her itinerary on the dashboard of her Nissan Xterra: start up the Jewell Trail, traverse the ridge south along Gulfside Trail, summit Mount Washington, follow the Crawford Path down to Lakes of the Clouds Hut, descend the Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail, and return to her car before some forecasted bad weather was to arrive. Bales always left her plans in her car, and she left copies with two friends, fellow teammates from the all-volunteer Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue Team.

She'd checked the higher summits forecast posted by the Mount Washington Observatory before she left:

In the clouds w/ a slight chance of showers

Highs: upper 20s; Windchills 0–10

Winds: NW 50–70 MPH increasing to 60–80 w/ higher gusts

Bales knew that the forecast promised low clouds with some wind, but based on her experience, her plan of going up Jewell to the summit of Washington and then down the Ammonoosuc Trail was a realistic goal. Her contingency plan, if needed, was either to turn around and descend Jewell, or if she was already deep into her planned itinerary, she would forgo Mount Washington's summit and take Westside Trail to Crawford Path and down Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail.

She was eager to get out and connect with the mountains and had been waiting for a weather window, however brief, that would allow her to complete the loop. Bales knew the nuances of the Presidentials' rugged terrain and could hear the weather's early whispers hinting at an approaching howl. She had packed extra layers of clothing to better regulate her core temperature as conditions changed; the observatory had described conditions on the higher summits as "full-on winter."

This map shows the route Pam Bales planned and the route she ended up taking. What she envisioned as a solo loop hike over Mount Washington turned into an out-and-back rescue after she followed a set of sneaker prints off Gulfside Trail and found a man in trouble. ABIGAIL COYLE/APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

The hike up the lower portion of Jewell was pleasant. Bales felt excited, and her joy increased as she walked up into snowy paths. At 8:30 A.M., still below treeline, she stopped and took a selfie; she was wearing a fleece tank top and hiking pants, and no gloves or hat because the air was mild. The sun shone through the trees and cast a shadow over her smiling face. She had reconnected to the mountains. Thirty minutes later, at 9 A.M., she took another shot of herself, after she'd climbed into colder air and deeper snows. She had donned a quarter-zip fleece top and added gloves. An opaque backdrop had replaced the sunshine, and snow shrouded the hemlock and birch. She still smiled. Above her, thick clouds overloaded with precipitation were dropping below Mount Washington's summit, where the temperature measured 24 degrees Fahrenheit and the winds blew about 50 MPH in fog and blowing snow.

At 10:30 A.M., as Bales breached treeline and the junction of Jewell and Gulfside Trails, the weather was showing its teeth. Now fully exposed to the conditions, she added even more layers, including a shell jacket, goggles, and mountaineering mittens to shield herself from the cold winds and dense frozen fog. She made her way alone across the snow-covered ridge toward Mount Washington, and began to think about calling it a day. Bales watched as the clouds above her continued to drop lower, obscuring her vision. She felt confined—and she noticed something. She stared at a single set of footprints in the snow ahead of her. She'd been following faint tracks in the snow all day but hadn't given them much thought because so many people climb the Jewell Trail. She fixated on the tracks and realized they had been made by a pair of sneakers. She silently scolded the absent hiker who had violated normal safety rules and walked on.

Now, at 11 A.M., Bales was getting cold even though she was moving fast and generating some body heat. She knew she should add even more layers, so she tucked in behind a large cairn on Mount Clay. She put on an extra top under her shell jacket and locked down her face mask and goggle system. Good thing she packed heavy, she thought. And then, hunkered behind the cairn, she decided to abandon her plan to summit Washington. She would implement her bailout plan by continuing to the junction of Gulfside and Westside, turn right onto the Westside Trail and over to the Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail, where she could head down the mountain. Having spent thousands of hours in those beloved mountains, Bales knew when to abort a plan. For her, summiting was just an option, but returning to her SUV was not.



Pam Bales took this photo of herself just before she decided to follow her bailout route. And then she noticed the sneaker prints. PAM BALES

Strong gusts of wind screamed as they exited the fog at full charge and attacked her back and left side. The cloud cover had transitioned from canopy to the equivalent of quicksand, and the only thing keeping Bales on Gulfside was the sneaker tracks in the snow. How ironic that the unsafe practices of one person should increase the safety of another. At the time, the observatory was noting “ice pellet showers” at the summit, and just north of there, Bales was being assailed by heavy sleet. As she fought with the full conditions on the ridge, her eyes searching for the increased certainty and security of the next cairn, the set of tracks ahead of her made a hard left-hand turn off trail.

Now she felt genuinely alarmed. She was sure the hiker could not navigate in the low visibility and was heading straight toward Great Gulf. Bales stood there, stunned, as she tried to steady the emotional weight of this sudden intersection of tracks. The temperature and clouds were in a race to find their lowest point, she could see just a few feet in front of her, the winds were ramping up, and darkness was mere hours away. If Bales continued to follow the tracks, she’d add risk and time to the itinerary she had already modified to manage both. But she could not let this go. She turned to the left toward Great Gulf and called out, “Hello!” into the frozen fog.

Nothing. She called out again, “Is anybody out there? Do you need help?”

The strong westerly winds carried her voice away. She blew into her rescue whistle. For a fleeting moment she thought someone replied, but it was just the wind playing games with her mind. She stood listening 0.3 mile from the junction of Jewell and Gulfside and about a mile from Westside Trail. She turned and walked cautiously in the direction of a single set of tracks in the snow; her bailout route would have to wait.

As she carved through the dense and frozen fog, Bales continued to blow her rescue whistle. Wind gusts now exceeding 50 MPH rocked her center of gravity. Even with her MICROspikes on, she struggled to remain upright on the rime ice-covered rocks. She remembered that the observatory’s forecast had advised hikers to be careful with foot placement that day, as the new snow had yet to firm up between the rocks, so punching through would be an added danger. Bales had also heeded that warning by wearing spikes, but even still, a single misplacement of her boot could put her into serious jeopardy.

She followed the tracks gingerly for 20 to 30 yards. She rounded a slight corner and saw a man sitting motionless, cradled by large rime-covered boulders just off the Clay Loop Trail. He stared in the direction of the Great Gulf, the majesty of which could only be imagined because of the horrendous visibility. She approached him and uttered, “Oh, hello.”

He did not react. He wore tennis sneakers, shorts, a light jacket, and fingerless gloves. He looked soaking wet, and thick frost covered his jacket. His head was bare, and his day pack looked empty. She could tell that he knew she was there. His eyes tracked her slowly and he barely swiveled his head. She knew he could still move because his frozen windbreaker and the patches of frost breaking free of it made crinkling sounds as he shifted.

A switch flipped. She now stopped being a curious and concerned hiker. Her informal search now transitioned to full-on rescue mission. She leaned into her wilderness medical training and tried to get a firmer grip on his level of consciousness. “What is your name?” she asked.

He did not respond.

“Do you know where you are?” Bales questioned.

Nothing. His skin was pale and waxy, and he had a glazed look on his face. It was obvious that nothing was connecting for him. He was hypothermic and in really big trouble. Winds were blowing steadily at 50 MPH, the temperature was 27 degrees Fahrenheit, and the ice pellets continued their relentless assault on Bales and the man who was now her patient.

The thought of having to abandon him in the interest of her own survival was a horrifying prospect, but she'd been trained in search and rescue, and she knew not to put herself at such risk that she would become a patient too. She knew she didn't have much time. She went right to work. As he sat there propped up against the rocks, semi-reclined and dead weight, she stripped him down to his T-shirt and underwear. Because he wouldn't talk and she was in such close contact with him, she gave him a name: "John." She placed adhesive toe warmer packs directly onto his bare feet. She checked him for any sign of injury or trauma. There was none. From her own pack, Bales retrieved a pair of softshell pants, socks, a winter hat, and a jacket. He could not help her because he was so badly impaired by hypothermia. She pulled the warm, dry layers onto his body. Imagine for a moment the extreme difficulty in completing that task in that environment.

Bales next removed a bivouac sac from her pack. She held it firmly so the winds would not snatch it. She slid it under and around his motionless body, entombing him inside. She shook and activated more heat packs that she always brought with her into the mountains, reached into the cocoon, and placed them in his armpits, on his torso, and on each side of his neck. Bales always brought a thermos of hot cocoa and chewable electrolyte cubes. She dropped a few cubes into the cocoa and cradled the back of his head with one hand, gripped the thermos with her other, and poured the warm, sugary drink into his mouth.

All this took an hour before he could move his limbs or say anything. Slurring his words, he said that when he had left Maine that morning it had been 60 degrees outside. He had planned to follow the very same loop as Bales. He had walked that route several times before. He told her that he had lost his way in the poor visibility and just sat down here. Even as he warmed up, he remained lethargic. He was not actively working against her, but he wasn't trying to help her either.

Bales recognized that he would die soon if they didn't get out of there. She looked her patient squarely in the eyes and said, "John, we have to go now!" Bales left no room for argument. She was going to descend, and he was going with her. The wind roared over and around the boulders behind which they had hunkered down during the 60-minute triage. Bales removed her MICROspikes and affixed them onto John's sneakers. She braced him as he stood up, shivering, and with a balance of firmness and genuine concern she ordered, "You are going to stay right on my ass, John." This wasn't the

way she usually spoke to people, but she knew she had to be forceful now. He seemed moments away from being drawn irrevocably to the path of least resistance—stopping and falling asleep. Bales vowed to herself that this was not going to happen on her watch.

She figured that the only viable route out was back the way they'd come, back to the Gulfside Trail, turn right, head back to Jewell Trail, and then descend. That seemed like an eternity, but a half-mile to the top of Jewell was much shorter than the two and a half miles over to Ammo. Bales did not want to head onto Westside Trail or up Mount Washington, where she feared the storm was even more severe. There was something really unsettling about the sound the high winds made as they roared past them and, off in the distance, slammed headfirst into the western slopes of Washington's shrouded summit cone. She had absolutely no interest in taking them closer to that action.

Visibility was so bad as the pair made their way along the ridge that they crept, seemingly inches at a time. Bales followed the small holes in the snow her trekking poles had made on the way in. She wished she could follow her earlier footprints, but the winds had erased them. Leaning into the headwinds, she began to sing a medley of Elvis songs in an effort to keep John connected to reality—and herself firmly focused. She was moving them slowly from cairn to cairn, trying hard to stay on the trail, and trying even harder not to let John sense her growing concern. He dropped down into the snow. She turned to look and saw that he seemed to be giving up. He curled in a sort of sitting fetal position, hunched down, shoulders dropped forward, and hands on his knees. He told her he was exhausted and had had enough. She should just continue on without him. Bales would have none of it, however, and said, "That's not an option, John. We still have the toughest part to go—so get up, suck it up, and keep going!" Slowly he stood, and Bales felt an overwhelming sense of relief.

They had traveled just under a half a mile when Bales, and her reluctant companion, arrived back at the junction of Gulfside and the somewhat safer Jewell Trail. It was sometime around 2 P.M. when they started down. The sun would set in three hours. Although the trees would protect them from the wind, it was darker under the canopy. Bales switched on her headlamp as they continued their tortuous descent of the trail's tricky curves and angles. With only one headlamp between them, Bales would inch her way down a steeper section, then turn to illuminate the trail so he could follow. To help him along she offered continuous encouragement, "Keep going John; you're doing great," and sang a dose of songs from the 1960s. Their descent was arduous,

and Bales dreaded that he would drop in the snow again and actively resist her efforts to save him.

Finally, just before 6 P.M., after hours of emotional and physical toil, they arrived at the trailhead, exhausted and battered. Her climb up to the spot where she located John had taken about four hours. Six hours had passed since then.

Bales started her car engine and placed the frozen clothing she had taken off John high on the mountain inside so that the heater could thaw them. She realized he had no extra clothing with him.

“Why don’t you have extra dry clothes and food in your car?” she asked.

“I just borrowed it,” he told her. Several minutes later, he put his now-dry clothes back on and returned the ones Bales had dressed him in up on the ridge.

“Why didn’t you check the weather forecast dressed like that?” she asked him again as she had up on the ridge. He didn’t answer. He just thanked her, got into his car, and drove across the empty lot toward the exit. It was right around that time, at 6:07 P.M., the Mount Washington Observatory clocked its highest wind gust of the day at 88 MPH.

Standing there astonished and alone in the darkness, Bales said to no one, “What the @\$% just happened?”

Bales would not get an answer until a week later, when the president of her rescue group, Allan Clark, received a letter in the mail, and a donation tucked between the folds.

I hope this reaches the right group of rescuers. This is hard to do but must try, part of my therapy. I want to remain anonymous, but I was called John. On Sunday Oct. 17 I went up my favorite trail, Jewell, to end my life. Weather was to be bad. Thought no one else would be there, I was dressed to go quickly. Next thing I knew this lady was talking to me, changing my clothes, talking to me, giving me food, talking to me, making me warmer, and she just kept talking and calling me John and I let her. Finally learned her name was Pam.

Conditions were horrible and I said to leave me and get going, but she wouldn’t. Got me up and had me stay right behind her, still talking. I followed but I did think about running off, she couldn’t see me. But I wanted to only take my life, not anybody else and I think she would’ve tried to find me.

The entire time she treated me with care, compassion, authority, confidence and the impression that I mattered. With all that has been going wrong in in my life, I didn't matter to me, but I did to Pam. She probably thought I was the stupidest hiker dressed like I was, but I was never put down in any way—chewed out yes—in a kind way. Maybe I wasn't meant to die yet, I somehow still mattered in life.

I became very embarrassed later on and never really thanked her properly. If she is an example of your organization/professionalism, you must be the best group around. Please accept this small offer of appreciation for her effort to save me way beyond the limits of safety. NO did not seem in her mind.

I am getting help with my mental needs, they will also help me find a job and I have temporary housing. I have a new direction thanks to wonderful people like yourselves. I got your name from her pack patch and bumper sticker.

My deepest thanks,
—John—

Bales was deeply moved by the man's gesture and his reference to the fact that she made him feel that he mattered. Bales's selfless act and genuine humility struck a chord elsewhere. Ken Norton, the executive director of the National Alliance of Mental Health—New Hampshire, is a recognized expert on mental health issues who speaks nationally on the topic of suicide. Like Bales, he is also an avid White Mountain hiker. When I shared this story with him, he captured the gravity of Bales's intervention on the ridge.

“John borrowed a car, got in the car, drove from Maine to Ammonoosuc Ravine, hiked to this spot where he felt like he was going to be past the point of no return, contemplating this the whole way, and along comes this guardian angel out of nowhere who force marches him down the mountain,” he said. “It is important for Pam and others to know that 90 percent of those who attempt suicide don't go on to die by suicide. John drove away that day and didn't drive over to the other side of the mountain to go up the other side and finish what he started. He drove home, and a week later, he felt the need to write in an anonymous way to the president of Pemi Search and Rescue to share his immersion back into society and his life. His story represents hope and resilience.”

In the eight year since Bales saved John, she has become something of a White Mountain legend. A title she has never sought nor wanted, but certainly one she has earned.

SOME PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME IF I TRIED TO FIND JOHN. THE THOUGHT of searching for him felt wrong. As I've reflected more on this story and its relation to the issue of mental health, my response to the question about finding John has evolved. I have in fact found John, and he is very close by me. John is my neighbor, he is my good friend, a close colleague, a family member. John could be me.

At some point in our lives, each of us has found ourselves walking with a sense of helplessness along a ridgeline and through a personal storm. Alone, devoid of a sense of emotional warmth and safety, and smothered by the darkness of our emotions, we've sought that place just off trail where we hoped to find some way to break free of our struggles and strife. Sadly and tragically, some do follow through. Many are able to quietly self-rescue, and others like John are rescued by others like Pam Bales. The most valuable lesson I've learned through this powerful story is to be more mindful of caring for myself and seeking out rescuers when I sometimes find myself on the ridgeline, and to be more like Pam Bales when I sense that those tracks I see ahead in the snow, regardless of who may have made them, appear to be heading deeper into the storm.

TY GAGNE is the chief executive officer of Primex, a New Hampshire grouping of local governments for workers' compensation and liability insurance. He volunteers for Androscoggin Valley Search and Rescue and wrote a book about Kate Matrosova's death and rescuers' recovery of her body.

Editor's note: A review of Ty Gagne's book appears on page 156. Bales's late mother, Gale Gardner Burak, also known as Dorothy May Gardner, was president of AMC's New Hampshire Chapter. She wrote essays for Appalachia about her many trips out west. Her June 1944 story, "On Arizona's San Francisco Peaks," appeared in the mountaineering anthology No Limits But the Sky (Appalachian Mountain Club, 2014).

The Resourceful Teen

A broken stove awakens ingenuity

Lisa Densmore Ballard



MY SON, PARKER, CONTRACTED TEENAGER-ITIS AT AGE 15. A conscientious student, he fought it quietly for a year, then I noticed two telltale symptoms. On school vacations, he slept until noon, and he exhibited uncharacteristic anxiety on the rare occasions the Wi-Fi in our house didn't work. I tried to be sympathetic, but his condition irked me.

We're an outdoor family. His teenager-itis complicated our lives. Before this affliction, he embraced nearly every outdoor pursuit. He came along on hikes as soon as he could fit in a child carrier. We attached tiny skis to his snow boots when he was 16 months old. He could paddle a canoe by age 7 and a kayak a year later. A confident swimmer, he'd gleefully leap off a cliff into water whenever I gave the nod. By age 12, he had slept in every Appalachian Mountain Club hut in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and he owned a drawerful of junior naturalist notebooks.

Then puberty hit and, by no coincidence, teenager-itis. Curing him coincided with yet another backcountry adventure, one that didn't go smoothly.

Parker started ninth grade at the Holderness School, a boarding school in New Hampshire, in September 2010, just after we had moved from Hanover, New Hampshire, to Red Lodge, Montana. During summer vacation between his sophomore and junior years, when he seemed the most listless, I suggested a mother-son overnight backpacking trip to Lake Mary in the Absaroka–Beartooth Wilderness near our new home. Lake Mary is an alpine lake located at 9,960 feet elevation. Several outdoorsy Red Lodge locals had told us they treasured it as a backcountry destination. Perhaps the outing would cure my son.

The 940,000-acre Absaroka–Beartooth Wilderness lies on the Montana–Wyoming border on the northeastern side of Yellowstone National Park. Granite Peak (12,799 feet), the highest mountain in Montana, crowns this craggy expanse speckled with hundreds of remote tarns. Backpackers consider these high lakes the premiere destinations in the region because reaching most summits in the Beartooths requires rock-climbing gear. Lake Mary appealed to me because we hadn't been there before, and it sounded like a comfortable overnighter, 6 miles each way.

The route to the lake begins about fourteen miles from Red Lodge, at the West Fork of Rock Creek trailhead. As we sorted gear before locking the car, Parker, who now stood several inches taller than me and weighed about 20

Parker Densmore, perhaps not yet aware of his own strength, sets out with his mother through the Beartooth Mountains. LISA DENSMORE BALLARD

pounds more, offered to carry the tent, stove, and fuel. I paused, pleasantly surprised. Until that moment, I had been the family Sherpa, lugging 50-plus pounds to any given trip's pick-your-backcountry-spot. My boy had humped his clothes, sleeping bag, pad, and water for years, but I had dared not give him more. For him, I adhered strictly to the backpacker's rule of not carrying more than a quarter of one's body weight. For myself, I ignored that rule. Now his offer to carry more weight was a revelation. I handed him all that he requested, plus half the food.

As we shouldered our packs, I noticed Parker sliding his cell phone into the top of pack.

"You won't need that," I said.

"What if there's an emergency?" he countered, testily.

"There's probably no cell signal where we're going," I replied.

He shoved his phone in his pack anyway. Not wanting to start our backpacking trip on a bad note, I didn't push him further.

The first 5 miles to Lake Mary were delightful. The trail gained only 1,000 feet as it passed a succession of cascades framed by towering rock walls. We walked through an old burned area, where the scorched, stubborn trunks of



Asking, "How much farther?" soon ended with this triumphant gesture near Lake Mary.

LISA DENSMORE BALLARD



A broken stove, a dinner campfire. LISA DENSMORE BALLARD

old lodgepole pines tickled the sapphire sky above the emerald boughs of new saplings, spurred to germinate by the bygone wildfire.

The path traversed a talus field, then continued through the timber to Quinnebaugh Meadows, a sizable clearing below the Silver Run Plateau. Many backpackers camp at this lovely, wildflower-laden lea, though we found neither people nor wildflowers there on that late-summer day.

From Quinnebaugh Meadows, the spur to Lake Mary left the main trail, heading north and uphill. In fact, the last mile to the lake felt vertical, ascending 1,200 feet on a narrower path.

“How much farther?” Parker groaned as we rested atop a dramatic cliff. Then we looked back down the path we had just trekked, and he seemed to gain energy from the view. In a moment of inspiration, he stepped onto a rock perch and stretched his arms as if to hug our epic surroundings. At that moment, I could have sworn he grew a little more, too.

Parker and I reached Lake Mary by midafternoon. He gathered firewood and made a ring of stones for a campfire while I set up our tent. Our conversation turned to Hobbit movies, the math teacher Parker didn't like, and his chances of making the varsity soccer team in the fall, topics we never discussed at home. We rarely conversed at home, period, due to a constant influx of messages on electronic devices.

"I like when we get to do these trips together," said Parker, nursing the campfire into a steady blaze as daylight waned.

"Me too," I agreed. "But not when the camp stove doesn't work!" I couldn't start it. The top of the fuel canister was damaged, preventing the burner from screwing onto it. Hungry and tired, I wondered how I would make a hearty enough dinner for us out of a few granola bars.

"We can cook over the fire," Parker declared. He leaned over and reworked the rocks in the fire ring so our little pot could heat over the hot coals. I swear I saw a gleam in his eye. A half-hour later, we had boiling water.

At that moment, I knew Parker had transformed. In his case, the physical challenge of carrying a heavy pack and his resourcefulness at overcoming our cookstove challenge contributed greatly to his cure. It was also a revelation for me. My son was a young man, skilled and confident in the outdoors. If need be, he could take care of others now, and indeed he does. Today, Parker is a student at St. Lawrence University, entrenched in that college's outing club, where he leads trips year-round into the Adirondacks. And I confess, it's sure nice to have another Sherpa in the family.

LISA DENSMORE BALLARD, an adventurer, writer, photographer, and filmmaker, contributes often to *Appalachia*. See her story on humanitarian climbers in Mexico on page 24.

Brief History on the Black River

I read Brad Angier in a
pensive mood. I wear less
wool. My kids urge me
to try the technical side,
so I buy a new sleeping
bag. Warm and wrapped, drifting
off, I hear the icy spill
and splash at the beaver
dam; further down, under
cold stars, in slower water
an elk crosses where once
a huge brook trout, ghostly,
rose to my #12 Ginger Quill
tied on a string, tied
to a stick of tag alder.

Russ Capaldi

RUSS CAPALDI has published poems in *Rosebud* and *Dunes Review* and essays in *Traverse—Northern Michigan's Magazine*. He makes his living as a carpenter and cabinetmaker in northern Michigan, where he lives with his wife. They enjoy hiking, camping, skiing, and snowshoeing just a few miles from the North Country Trail.

Problembär

Germany's first bear in 170 years

Brendan Curtin



IN EARLY MAY 2006, A 220-POUND EURASIAN BROWN BEAR KNOWN as JJ1 wandered across the Dolomite Mountains of northeast Italy, traversed the Austrian Alps, and became the first bear to set foot on German soil in 170 years. By the end of June, he'd been shot and killed by Bavarian hunters.

The Eurasian brown bear, *Ursus arctos arctos*, was largely extirpated from the Alps by the early 1800s and now survives only in isolated pockets of Slovenia, Italy, and the Austrian alpine lake region called Carinthia. JJ1—nicknamed Bruno by the local media that picked up his story even amid the racket of the German-hosted World Cup—was the son of Jurka, a bear released as a collaborative conservation effort between Austria, Slovenia, and Italy to reintroduce the species to its historical range.

But Bruno roamed farther than anyone expected and developed habits displeasing to the *Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwel* (Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment): robbing beehives, ransacking chicken coops, and harassing livestock. At final count, he killed more than 30 sheep and goats, and a handful of chickens, doves, and rabbits. He spoiled nine beehives, damaged at least four silage bales, fence lines, and deer troughs, and snacked on one German family's pet guinea pig. The first bear to enter Bavaria in nearly two centuries, Bruno didn't know to keep his interests to morels. He saw only a smorgasbord of fat mutton and succulent honey. There was no orchestra or choreography—only meat. Everywhere he turned.

Of concern to the *Staatsministerium* was that Bruno's hunting habit was not just for food. In a behavior known as surplus killing, he left bloodied corpses of livestock uneaten and bloated on meadow slopes. First, the government tried to capture Bruno alive. But whether they would have returned Bruno to Italy or shipped him off to the Mönchengladbach Zoo, we will never know. He dodged U.S.-built grizzly traps and nipped back into Austria whenever chasers closed in. The state flew in a team of expert trackers from Finland, but the slippery bruin eluded the posse until their Norwegian elkhounds collapsed from exhaustion.

SURPLUS KILLING IS NOT BEHAVIOR EXCLUSIVE TO BEARS. IN 2004, 9 wolves in Idaho killed 70 sheep in a single night. Weasels in northern Alaska

The bear should have found a mate and lived a long life. Instead, he wandered across the border and ended up in a museum. FABIAN RUPPRECHT



The bear nicknamed Bruno wandered from the Dolomites in northeast Italy, across western Austria, and into the Mangfall Mountains, where he was shot. LARRY GARLAND/
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

hunt voles in excess. My aunt's cat leaves soggy goldfinches on the doormat several times a week.

The goldfinches are flicked—with the toe of a house slipper—into the mulch beneath the hydrangeas, the cat dismissed back to the yard, but the wolves, all nine, were executed by federal agents, and Bruno the bear was pursued through the Mangfall Mountains and shot to death.

In the wild, surplus killing is no tragedy. If predators cull more than they can eat—a survival tactic to exploit opportunity in particularly harsh seasons—the spare meat is sometimes cached in deep snow or shallow graves to be returned to when prey is scarce. If not, there is no shortage of scavengers to clean up the scraps. The tragedy occurs when humans flood hillsides with livestock and reconstruct the law of the jungle from survival of the fittest to survival of whichever we decide.

Thirty sheep may seem excessive until we realize that not only are we moving the bear (after removing, replacing, returning, and then removing again), but that, globally, humans are the largest surplus killers of any species. *National Geographic* reports that American sport hunters imported more than 1.26 million wildebeests, black bears, ducks, leopards, rhinos, snow geese, and other exotic game trophies through U.S. Customs ports in the last decade alone.

FOR A WHILE IT SEEMED BRUNO WOULD DEFEY THE ODDS, BURGLING farmers and paddling alpine ponds until he decided to wander on—maybe to Belgium or the hills of southern France. Aided by hard weather and false sightings called in by panicked civilians, Bruno evaded his pursuers for almost two months. Mountain bikers, hikers, and motorists glimpsed the bear hundreds of meters off, flitting between valleys and dashing across roads. Most proof of Bruno's prowling was limited to day-after evidence of slaughtered lambs and crippled bee houses, some of which was fabricated or caused by wild dogs.

But then Bruno was spotted outside Kumpflalm Hut, near Rotwand Mountain, and Bavarian hunters were dispatched to the location overnight. Just before 5 A.M., in the early light of June 26, the first bear to visit Germany since 1836 was shot twice in the body. "The bear was killed immediately," Otmar Bernhard, an official in the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, told the press.

Bruno is now stuffed and displayed in the *Museum Mensch und Natur* (Museum of Man and Nature) in Munich, eternally poised on the wrong side of a fence, mouth full of honeycomb, ravaging a beehive. He's paused mid-chew, tufted ears perked, as if he hears something coming in the distance. His new black glass eyes glimmer dully under the bulbs in the museum, as though his 2-year-old brown bear mind is puzzling over the word reflected backward on the walls of his case: *Problembär*.

BRENDAN CURTIN is a triple-crown backpacker (Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, and Continental Divide Trail) who grew up in the snowbelt of Ohio and the sheep pastures of New York. A 2013 graduate of Hiram College, he entered the MFA in Creative Writing and Environment program at Iowa State University in 2017. He loves bears, owls, and the smell of old sleeping bags.

Editor's note: In 2010, Spiegel Online reported that German officials had released a management plan for brown bears should hikers ever run into one, but no bear is known to have crossed the border since Bruno. The article, "U.S. Diplomats Analyzed Death of Bruno the Bear," was about WikiLeaks documents on U.S. diplomats' response to Bruno's shooting.

Hiking the Florida Panhandle in March

a snapping turtle family below the bridge
treads water, lifting heads to watch us watching back

a copperhead curled in sun on a mudflat
blinks once as our shadows pass

we lift our glasses to that stroke of gold in the marsh —
a stick becomes a bittern, motionless and fishing

two knobby green-gold streaks in the weedy water —
alligator backbones, ending in eyes and snouts

in the pale blue sky, maples leaf out, their tongues
of red flame flickering

Robin Chapman

ROBIN CHAPMAN is the author of nine poetry books, most recently *Six True Things* (Tebot Bach, 2016). She is recipient of *Appalachia's* 2010 Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared recently in *Flyway*, *Poetry East*, and *Terrain*, among other journals.

Sequoias and Redwoods in a Hotter World

*When trees as high as 30-story buildings die
“on their feet,” something’s wrong*

Christopher Johnson



THE GENERAL SHERMAN TREE EMERGED LIKE SOMETHING fearfully beautiful—something out of a dream. I had just parked in a lot at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, on the western slopes of California's Sierra Nevada. I followed a winding concrete walkway that led into a thick and quiet grove of sequoias. A multitude of tourists gathered around one tree—the thickest, widest tree I had ever seen. The General Sherman tree, named after Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, towered 275 feet above me, measured nearly 103 feet in circumference, and weighed 1,385 tons. The trunk faced me like a behemoth, and the base of the tree resembled enormous elephants' feet planted against the earth. I felt small.

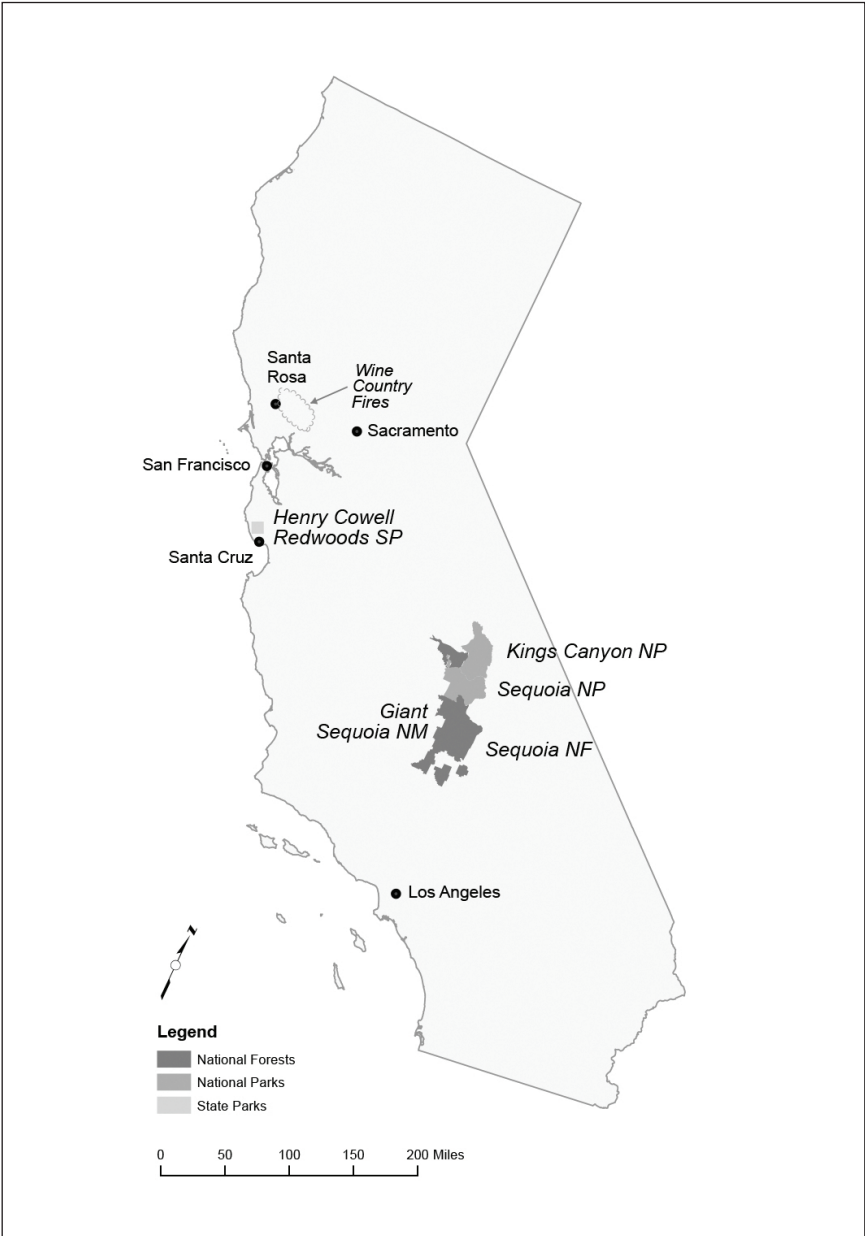
A few days later, I visited Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, less than five miles north of the coastal town of Santa Cruz, California. The park's famous 40 acres of old-growth coast redwoods stand packed more tightly together than the sequoias. Redwoods' trunks are slimmer, deep ridges gully their bark, and the crowns soar some 300 feet high into the beckoning sky.

I called my trip the big-tree tour. I would inquire how the magnificent giant sequoias and redwood forests have survived California's devastating 2012–2016 drought and explore whether these forests will survive as the earth grows hotter and drier over the next century. Most climate scientists expect global temperatures to increase by at least 2 to 4 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century.

What started me on this journey was my stark realization over the past year that the world's forests—which absorb 8.7 billion tons of greenhouse gases per year, or almost one-third of what humans emit—are in crisis mode due to climate change. In 2010, Craig Allen, a research ecologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, and several colleagues documented 88 forests around the world that have been devastated by drought and heat stress. On nearly 25 million acres of forestland in western North America, numerous species of trees have died since 1997. Drought, disease, and insects have killed millions of trees in southern Europe. In Central and South America, widespread drought has exacerbated the catastrophic destruction of rainforests caused by logging and unregulated development.

Are the horrifying effects of climate change threatening California's ancient sequoias and redwoods—arguably the most iconic trees in the world?

University of California, Berkeley, scientist Wendy Baxter climbs a redwood. Back in the lab, researchers study small branches for the drought's effect on the trees. ANTHONY AMBROSE



Redwoods have thrived over a wide area of coastal California, from west of Sequoia National Forest to about fourteen miles north of the California–Oregon border. The author visited Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park near Santa Cruz. The giant trees escaped damage from the 2017 wildfires in wine country near Santa Rosa. LARRY GARLAND/ APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

These are trees with enormous aesthetic, recreational, and spiritual value. The oldest of them date back more than 3,000 years, linking our present to the ancient past. Giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron gigantea*) grow in 75 groves on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada at altitudes between 5,000 and 7,000 feet, where the snowpack typically builds up to about 45 inches and can last into early summer. Although the sequoias are not as tall as redwoods, they still tower above the earth, and their trunks bulge wider and thicker than those of the redwoods.

The amazingly diverse ecosystems in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks nurture more than 2,000 species of plants, plus 194 species of birds, 85 mammals, 13 amphibians, 25 reptiles, and 9 fish. The parks' most important waterways, Kings River and Kern River, feed water to the rich farmlands of the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) grow in a narrow belt along the West Coast, extending from the southern border of Monterey County to about fourteen miles north of the California–Oregon border. They're the tallest trees on Earth, topping out at about 360 feet. They require ample moisture, and during California's dry summers and autumns, they depend on fog along the coast. The "fog drip" can provide between 25 and 50 percent of the water that the trees absorb.

Redwood forests support more than 200 plant species, ranging from the large—Douglas firs and western hemlocks—to small plants like the tiger lily, the Pacific starflower, and the Pacific bleeding heart. These forests also provide habitat for more than 200 vertebrate species and numerous invertebrates. One of them, the bright yellow banana slug, crawls along the forest floor at Henry Cowell State Park. The University of California at Santa Cruz made Sammy the Slug the school mascot!

Scientists in two pioneering research projects are examining how a hotter and drier climate affects redwoods and sequoias now and in the future. The researchers work for the Redwoods and Climate Change Initiative (RCCI), which combines five organizations: Save the Redwoods League, which has been protecting redwoods since 1918; Humboldt State University; the University of California, Berkeley; NatureServe (a group established in 1994 originally called the Association for Biodiversity Information); and the Sempervirens Fund, which was founded in 1900 to protect coast redwoods.

The RCCI scientists established a baseline of forest conditions between 2009 and 2012, when they studied several plots of old-growth redwood

forests. Since then, they have returned to the same plots every year to gather data about the survival rate of trees, changes in local weather, fluctuations in the production of wood, rates of carbon storage, and evidence of biodiversity in the forests.

The U.S. Geological Survey has initiated another effort, the Leaf to Landscape Project, in collaboration with the Integrative Biology Department at UC Berkeley, the Carnegie Institute for Science at Stanford University, and the National Park Service staff at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. Through this initiative, botanists map areas of the sequoias and redwood forests that show signs of stress, particularly from California's most recent drought.

The RCCI researchers study the sequoias and redwoods in three ways. First, researchers climb the trees. The pioneer in this remarkable enterprise is Dr. Steven Sillett, the Kenneth L. Fisher Chair in Redwood Forest Ecology at Humboldt State University and the subject of the 2007 bestseller *The Wild Trees* (Simon & Schuster), by Richard Preston. Climbing trees is very different from climbing rocks. Tree climbers use a system of ropes and a harness to pull themselves up into the canopy of a tree, moving as lightly as possible on limbs. They wear soft-soled shoes to avoid damaging the tree as they ascend. Sillett and other researchers observe, take notes, collect samples, make measurements, and take photographs. They have discovered that redwood canopies teem with complex communities of lichen, mosses, mites, and other flora and fauna. Yet Sillett fears that redwoods may be an endangered species. "They [redwood forests] were reduced to scraps by us," he told Preston. The length and breadth of redwood forests has shrunk dramatically, making them more vulnerable to the potential ravages of a warming climate.

UC Berkeley scientists also climb trees. Dr. Anthony Ambrose, a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Integrative Biology, leads the team, which includes Wendy Baxter, a staff research associate. "Berkeley was advertising for someone who was interested in climbing tall trees," she says, "and that appealed to me." Baxter is a scientist, yet she speaks with the touch of the poet when she describes what it's like way up there. "With the giant sequoias, the forests are very open, and the limbs are similar in a way," she says. "They're these massive big limbs going in bizarre directions. Sometimes you feel like you're in multiple trees.

"With the coast redwoods," she continues, "it's quite a bit more dense. It's just very beautiful and complex. It's the same with the structural complexity



Wendy Baxter at work. The researchers do not reveal the whereabouts of the trees they study. ANTHONY AMBROSE

of the older trees. They get all these reiterated trunks and interesting weird burls coming out of them. In some ways, the coast redwoods are a bit more interesting up in their canopies just because of how much can grow in them.”

The researchers snip small branch cuttings, bring them down to the ground, and place them into a pressure chamber to measure the amount of stress from drought. Researchers then carry branches back to the lab to measure more closely the water content and other chemicals indicating the level of stress a tree is experiencing.

The second mode of research is gathering and monitoring data. Leaf to Landscape Project researchers study large tree populations over long periods of time—30 separate plots, some for as long as 34 years. The data provide a baseline for understanding the changing conditions in the forest ecosystems.

Third, USGS uses remote sensing and mapping to monitor the changing conditions of forests. From airplanes, researchers use remote-sensing technology to create three-dimensional maps of the crowns of trees and to collect data about the water content of the crowns. In those maps, colors indicate

the water content. Warmer colors, such as red, signify lower water content. By using this technology, researchers can measure more precisely the water content of sequoias and identify which stands of trees may be vulnerable in a hotter, drier future.

RESEARCHERS ARE CALLING CALIFORNIA'S RECENT FIVE-YEAR SPAN OF dry weather a "hotter drought"—one that's longer, more intense, with higher temperatures than was typical of droughts in the past. Dr. Nate Stephenson, a research ecologist since 1979 for the USGS at Sequoia & Kings Canyon, has embraced the term, which researchers first coined in 2015. Stephenson's hair and beard are graying, but he looks as if he could walk twenty miles through wilderness without breaking a sweat. He speaks carefully and precisely, reflecting his scientific training. "If, indeed, these warmer temperatures are human-induced, the severity of this drought was pushed into new terrain by warmer temperatures," he says. "You can say that was a signal of climatic change."

So, how did the redwoods and the sequoias fare during California's recent hotter drought? Baxter answers, "What we found with our work is that the giant sequoias weathered the drought pretty well in comparison to a lot of the species. We think that some of that has to do with how insect-resistant they are and how big and old they are. They've developed pretty extensive root networks that can help them during dry times."

The finding is consistent with data showing that redwoods and sequoias have actually increased their growth rates in recent decades as mean temperatures have edged upward. According to Emily Burns, the science director for Save the Redwoods League, "The pattern that has emerged in the last century is that most redwood trees are growing faster than we would have expected, especially in the later decades of the twentieth century. The wood production rates have been higher."

Yet as the researchers have delved deeper into the health of the forests, their findings paint a more troubling picture. Emerging data indicate that sequoias and redwoods could face serious challenges—and even dangers—over the next 50 to 100 years. Stephenson, for example, expected that if any trees showed signs of stress during the drought, they would be seedlings. "I was wrong," he confesses. "I crawled on the forest floor looking for effects of the drought, and the seedlings all looked happy. But the mature sequoias—some of them—were starting to shred foliage in a smart response to drought.

They wanted to reduce their leaf area to reduce water loss. A lot of sequoias were shedding their older leaves.”

Burns interprets the foliage dieback as a sign of danger for the future. “If our water resources start to decline,” she explains, “all of a sudden these trees will experience much longer periods of water deficits. That’s when we have to figure out when they will reach a threshold when they don’t have enough water. We’re not seeing that now. But when I think about long-term, that’s the number one concern.”

Coast redwoods absorb water from the fog that rolls in along the California coast. “The fog is really important for them,” Baxter says. “It provides an additional water subsidy. It also cools the temperatures down to create a less stressful environment for them.” A study published by UC Berkeley in 2010 found that fog along the coast has declined significantly over the past 100 years. The loss in summer fog has ranged between 56 percent and 42 percent, meaning a loss of about three hours of fog a day. According to Todd E. Dawson, the co-author of the study, “If the fog is gone, we might not have the redwood forests we do now.”

Researchers are also alarmed that insects could infest the big trees in the near future. Insect infestations have already wrought havoc with other tree species. Since the early 1990s, bark beetles have destroyed millions of trees in the western United States, and the U.S. Forest Service has concluded that warmer summers and shorter winters have created conditions more susceptible to beetle outbreaks. Beetle infestations have slowly moved north from the American Southwest into the Sierra Nevada. Stephenson explains that since the beginning of the California drought in 2012, Sequoia & Kings Canyon have lost 60 percent of their large pines. “The severity of the drought stressed enough trees that these beetles could build up huge populations,” he says.

Stephenson warns that even though sequoias have so far resisted insect infestations, warmer temperatures could make the trees more vulnerable. Giant sequoias, which can survive for upward of 3,000 years, typically die when the weight of a tree causes it to become unstable and topple over. Stephenson explains, “In my entire career up until 2014, I’d seen only two giant sequoias die on their feet. During this drought, I’m aware of fourteen others in the park that died standing on their feet. Another four died on their feet in the nearby national forest.” The culprit might be the native cedar bark beetle. “It looks to us as though this beetle has riddled the trees that died



Looking straight up into the redwoods: The centerpiece of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, near Santa Cruz, California, is its 40-acre grove of old-growth coast redwoods. The trees reach heights of about 300 feet and are between 1,400 and 1,800 years old.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

standing,” Stephenson says. The deaths of those fourteen sequoias point to the potential consequences of a warmer future.

Perhaps the most ominous new threat is the growing frequency and intensity of wildfires—a threat burned into the public consciousness by the horrendous fires that tore through California in 2017. Joe Fontaine, a retired high school physics teacher, Sierra Club activist, and longtime champion for the big trees, took me out onto the 300,000-acre Giant Sequoia National Monument—a protected segment of the larger Sequoia National Forest. Pointing to the bark of a sequoia, which can be as much as two feet thick, he explains, “It insulates the tree. When fire comes through, it doesn’t burn the cambium.”

Sequoias depend on low-intensity fire to open their cones and drop their seeds, expose soil so that seedlings can grow, and open up the canopy to allow sunlight to reach the forest floor. However, for nearly a century, forest

managers suppressed fires, and according to Stephenson, “Sequoias pretty much went through a century of no reproduction during fire exclusion.” Since the 1960s, forest managers have used low-intensity prescribed burns to encourage successful sequoia reproduction.

Yet wildfires are growing more intense, partly because of drier conditions and the buildup of undergrowth. As a result of these conditions, wildfires decimated thousands of acres of forestland in northern California and southern California during the dry summer and autumn of 2017. Five wildfires spread across Yosemite National Park, choking the park with smoke. One of those fires raced south to Nelder Grove, a stand of 100 giant sequoias, and scorched the trunks of numerous trees. Scientists are concerned that as the climate grows hotter and drier, wildfires will grow hotter, more intense, more destructive. “One of the things I worry about,” Baxter says, “is a big fire coming through and because there’s such a large fuel load, it could actually kill some of those big old trees.”

Aside from drought, insects, and wildfires, scientists worry about forest fragmentation—the division of forests into smaller segments through road building, logging, and conversion to other uses. According to Burns, “Fragmentation is bad. We’ve studied what happens to trees on the edge of a forest, and everything from the weather conditions to the types of rain are very different on the edge of a forest versus the interior.” The larger the forests are, the healthier they are.

Yet fragmentation is a very real threat because of logging and conversion of forestlands to other uses. The sequoias in the national park are protected, but those in the national monument are at risk. In early 2017, the Trump administration ordered a review of the status of 27 national monuments, including Giant Sequoia National Monument. The review could mean reducing the amount of protected forest—and opening the sequoia forests to logging. Fontaine warns, “If you log, then you reduce the canopy. More sunlight hits the forest floor and melts the snowpack.” Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke excluded this monument from boundary or rules changes in September 2017, but the status could still change.

The coast redwoods, meanwhile, face growing pressures from residential development, commercial development, and conversion to vineyards. According to Save the Redwoods League, approximately 25 percent of the original redwood forests—about 625,000 acres—have been converted to other uses. “Redwoods have a role in fighting climate change,” Burns emphasizes.

“They grow so quickly. They sequester carbon in this amazing wood that doesn’t decay easily. So we need these forests to thrive and to bring back the forests that have been harvested.”

The multiple threats of climate change have prompted extensive planning by the National Park Service and other federal agencies. According to Stephenson, the NPS is entering a third era of natural resources management. The first era, which coincided with the founding of the National Park Service in 1916, emphasized tourism and spectacular vistas such as the Grand Canyon. The second era, heralded by the publication in 1963 of *Wildlife Management in the National Parks* (National Park Service)—also known as the Leopold report after its lead author, Starker Leopold (the naturalist writer Aldo Leopold’s son)—emphasized entire ecosystems and the protection of natural processes. The Leopold report stated that a national park should preserve “a vignette of primitive America.”

In 2012, another seminal report, *Revisiting Leopold* (National Park Service), asserted that national parks are entering a third era. Stephenson writes that in this rapidly onrushing era, “Rapid, unprecedented global changes—particularly climatic changes—preclude key aspects of the Leopold vision, most notably the maintenance of natural resources in conditions that resemble those of the past.” *Revisiting Leopold* posits that agencies should manage forests and other natural areas for “ecological integrity” rather than the preservation of the past. Species are going to move, some species will decline in population, and others will become more populous. Yet as much as possible, forest managers should maintain “regional native biodiversity.”

The NPS staff at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks has played out four different scenarios and their impact on the sequoia ecosystems. “What would a warmer, drier future look like?” Stephenson asks. “What would a warmer, wetter future look like? What would a much warmer, much drier future look like? They created some scenarios and gamed out an array of possible futures. How can we manage today to maximize our options given the uncertainties?”

Forest managers plan several strategies to strengthen the ecological health of these forests. They will burn sections. In addition to encouraging tree reproduction, prescribed burns reduce fire hazards—the fallen branches and the undergrowth that feed wildfires and make them burn hotter. The NPS has a regular program of prescribed fires at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, but Sequoia National Monument, which is managed by the

U.S. Forest Service, is another matter. “The problem is not that the Forest Service doesn’t want to do it,” Fontaine says. “They’re not given the money to do it. Logging does not reduce the fire hazard. In fact, it makes it worse. Since 1970, I’ve advocated for prescribed burning as the way to reduce fuel.” For years, though, the Forest Service has had to shift money from other parts of its budget, such as prescribed burns, to pay for fighting wildfires.

Forest advocates believe that protecting more land will prevent forest fragmentation, and help plant and animal life survive as mean temperature rises. Burns says, “For wildlife, there are many species that only live in the center of a redwood forest. If we can grow our forests to be larger, we’re going to expand habitat for many species.” Consequently, the league is buying land where old-growth forests grow. Burns adds, “We’re buying the connecting forests, which may have already been harvested and are within giant sequoia and redwood watersheds. We recognize the connection between where you find old trees and the surrounding habitat, which may have become very altered in the last 100 years but still are really critical to the future.”

Forest advocates are mobilizing a new strategy: assisted migration, or human intervention to establish species outside their traditional geographic ranges, giving them a better chance of adapting and surviving a warmer climate. On December 10, 2016, for example, the Archangel Tree Archive Project initiated a program to plant 300 coast redwoods in Seattle and other cities around Puget Sound. The organization propagates saplings from cuttings taken from the stumps of old-growth redwoods—so-called “mother trees.”

WHAT CAN CITIZENS DO TO HELP THE SEQUOIAS, THE COAST REDWOODS, and the forests in our own backyards survive the changing global environment? Volunteer for training as a citizen-scientist to help gather data about forests. Advocate for adequate budgets for the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service to provide the stewardship that our precious forest resources deserve. Support the continued acquisition of protected forestlands to combat habitat fragmentation. Learn more about assisted migration of species.

Climate change poses multiple threats to these wondrous trees—the oldest living beings on Earth. When I last wrote about climate change in a national park, I focused on Glacier National Park (“High-Altitude Melting,” *Appalachia*, Winter/Spring 2017). There, the climate-related changes were stark and unavoidable: the shrinkage of glaciers. In the sequoia and coast redwood

forests, the changes are subtler. Yet Baxter paints a blunt picture. “We’re looking at more than two degrees Celsius increase in temperature,” she says. “All bets are off once we start getting into the 2- to 4-degree increases. I don’t think we can expect that the plants and animals that live there now will live into the future.”

Baxter gives voice to an essential truth. Local actions have global consequences. Climate scientists have described for years what people need to do to slow climate change: transition to renewable energy sources. Make buildings and transportation sources far more efficient, as both sectors remain major emitters of carbon. Reverse deforestation and restore forestlands and grasslands, not only because they sequester carbon but also because they provide native habitat for diverse species. These forests speak to us as we wind our way through them and drink in their unparalleled beauty. The redwoods and sequoias seem permanent, indestructible—yet they also issue a warning about a vulnerable future.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON is a writer specializing in conservation, forestry, and history. He wrote *This Grand and Magnificent Place* (University Press of New England, 2006) and, with David Govatski, *Forests for the People* (Island Press, 2013). Johnson is a frequent contributor to *Appalachia*. Visit him at chrisjohnsonwrite.com.

Elegy for What Hasn't Passed Yet

Just because there are beech trees
 welling up along Loup Run, where bear
in spring stretch their long bodies
 and push claws into the smooth bark
to mark this place as their own,
 don't think there always will be.

Todd Davis

TODD DAVIS, a frequent contributor to *Appalachia* over the past decade, is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *Winterkill* (2016) and *In the Kingdom of the Ditch* (2013), both published by Michigan State University Press. He teaches environmental studies at Pennsylvania State University's Altoona College.

An Injury Changes the Story

Encounter with a baby stroller

Elissa Ely



I HAD OVER-PREPARED FOR THE CANADIAN ROCKIES. EARNEST BUT excessive training efforts had led to the very tendonitis they were meant to prevent. Misery and head-slapping regret!

Now we would have none of those high-elevation, grand summit stories we had anticipated. Instead, we chose a lower trail—the Ptarmigan Cirque, a 2.8-mile loop in Alberta’s Kananaskis country—and started to limp up. Two modest waterfalls, a few dry stream crossings; a bit of disappointment. We passed a black dog the size of a black bear and a busload of Asian tourists wearing winter gloves and hats in July, solemnly photographing one another.

We made it to the junction of a small path cutting to the left, up the rock face of Mount Arethusa, 9,551 feet. Wildflowers turned to scree and green to relentless gray. The backs of those heading up bent low; they had lost all color. They could have been on their way to Hell, except that they were walking in the wrong direction.

Gingerly starting down, we met a girl on her way up. Maybe she was 5, wearing a party dress. On each of her sandals, a purple plastic flower sprouted out of the big toe, and with each step, she caught some part of her hem. Over and over, she stopped to free herself. When we leaned down to offer a hand, she shook it away.

Behind her, a young woman in athletic shorts pushed a double stroller with three wheels and enough room inside for two children, although I could see no one inside. It was the kind of vehicle one parent commandeers on a Sunday morning run while the other parent sleeps in: like a mini-condo, without the mini-refrigerator. The woman was pushing it up at least 700 feet of rock and root. My injured ankle had barely ascended this stretch; three wheels and a small condo would never manage the narrow switchbacks.

Beneath netting, the soles of two small sneakers faced outward. Now above those sneakers, I thought I could make out the same resigned expression I’d noticed in other bounced children on Sunday mornings.

—You need help, Mama? the girl asked, using her hands to tug her hem out from under her party sandals. This required lifting her feet from the ground, which required scrambling for balance.

—No thank you, Merin, her mother said, cheerfully.

The Ptarmigan Cirque loop trail crosses a meadow surrounded by relentless scree-covered rock faces. KAREN UNG/PLAYOUTSIDEGUIDE.COM

The path was barely wide enough for two people much less a double stroller, and a small crowd of downward walkers had backed up. We waited, witness to a phenomenon.

Had she missed that sign back at the beginning to take the self-guided interpretive nature trail? Was she an ultrarunner? Was this a small bit of insanity? Someone, probably an engineer, called down to suggest that if she persisted, it might be better to pull her carriage from above, instead of pushing it from below. She smiled and kept on pushing.

Merin watched from nearby. She seemed philosophical.

—I better dig a hole, she said to no one in particular. A *big* hole.

She grabbed a strong root that poked into the air like a free stick and began to tug at it. Impossible goals seemed to run in the family.

Her mother stopped, peered over the stroller, and came around.

—Not working well, she murmured. She tugged the stroller over to the edge of the path and crouched down by the front wheel. When that happened, downward hikers flowed forward. Merin's mother jiggled the wheel a few times, and after a minute, turned the stroller onto the path and upward again.

A mountain makes its own weather, and its own stories. One of them—inexplicable and absurd—starts its climb. Because injury prevented the route we would rather have taken, we had come upon it.

The story continues to climb, no matter what the elevation. It cannot be stopped and is no less compelling for being lower to the ground. And then, unless it is our story, it disappears from view.

ELISSA ELY is a Boston-based community psychiatrist and writer.

Along Inlet Waters

Sea scorpions, leggy weeds,
and black lichen
inhabit a length of stony clefts
here on the inlet.
Clusters of sanderlings feed
on the ivory shore.
When the tide advances, waves
lap over periwinkle shells.
Whelk inhale the color of the sky.
It takes a mallard's feather
or the scent of salt marsh
to unlatch a sea of unknowns.

Prints in sand tell one story.
The moon withdraws the tide
where kelp rocks
as if asleep forever.

In centuries to come,
the stones and dark habitations
will wear away.
For now, above the stones,
the pennywort and rock weed.
Shadows sweep across the mirrored
surface. Remnants of rain tick
the stones a lucid silver. Blades
of beach grass shine
with a luminous green.

Kay Mullen

KAY MULLEN'S work has appeared in various poetry journals: *Floating Bridge Review*, *American Life in Poetry*, *Cross Winds Poetry Review*, and others. She earned an MFA from Pacific Lutheran University and has been a multiple Pushcart nominee and Best of the Net nominee. She currently lives and teaches in Tacoma, Washington.

The Last Gift

Months before a father's tragic death, he encourages his son to seek challenges

Douglass P. Teschner



AS A YOUNG BOY, I LOVED SUMMER CAMP BUT WAS MUCH LESS SURE about climbing mountains. Perhaps this hesitation started when I was in the Cub Scouts in my hometown of Westborough, Massachusetts; when we hiked up little Mount Wachusett, it seemed so hard, so long. But at age 13, thanks to my father, I gained a whole new perspective that would have a profound impact on my life.

In 1960, at age 10, I had been sent by my parents to the Worcester YMCA Camp Blanchard in Sutton, Massachusetts, for two weeks. The counselor said I would never see my family again as the Russians were going to send a nuclear missile any day, but I got over that soon enough and loved the camp experience. Camp was pretty magical—all those fun activities, mostly outdoors, and the camaraderie and bonding with a bunch of boys my age. I sent home a proud postcard when I was named officer of the day.

I went back to Camp Blanchard every summer for five more years after that first one, but, in 1963, I was nervous anticipating the coming fourth summer. The 13- and 14-year-olds lived in tents in “Woodsmen’s Village” on the edge of camp and went on infamous backpacking trips to the distant White Mountains. I was intimidated by stories I had heard of those tough climbs and told my parents I preferred to “stay back,” living in a normal cabin with the 12-year-olds, even if I was older.

The day my parents dropped me off at camp, my father wandered off unexpectedly. When he caught up with mother and me later in the day, dad said that he had been to Woodsmen’s Village and really thought that was where I belonged. I acquiesced and made the move. As my father predicted, I fit in fine and, a week or so later, we campers were on our way to the Whites, under the leadership of the legendary Bill Chandler.

To transport the kids, camp had a big flatbed truck. After putting wooden slats on the side, all the rucksacks were loaded, then the campers climbed on top and off we went in the open air! I know today’s vans with seat belts are a lot safer, but certainly not as much fun (except when it rained and we were forced to inhale serious exhaust fumes trapped under a canvas tarp).

The first day in the mountains was easy, a flat mile to Dry River Shelter Number 1, where we thrived, skinny dipping in the refreshing pools. Some

The author—on a 1965 hike in the Great Gulf below Mount Washington—became a backpacker because of early encouragement from his father.

COURTESY OF DOUGLASS P. TESCHNER

slept in the shelter, and the rest buttoned together army surplus shelter halves to form crude two-person tents with no ends or floor. At breakfast, we all waited our turn for a pancake as the frying pan on the camp fire (no one used camp stoves much back then) only made one at a time. Eventually we were packed up and headed off, over the suspension bridge toward Dry River Shelter Number 2, four miles distant. Back then, before they rerouted the trail to improve safety, there were seven challenging river crossings that required leaping from rock to rock.

Chandler, our leader, had a much-admired homemade aluminum pack frame with an attached plywood box for his belongings. The campers were issued canvas army surplus rucksacks with internal steel frames. I had brought from home a simple Boy Scout aluminum frame pack (with a small canvas bag), which had much less space than the army surplus models the other campers were using. With no room in my pack, I was assigned to carry a loaf of French bread in the sweatshirt pouch across my stomach. At one of the difficult river crossings, I handed the bread across to a fellow camper, but it broke and fell into the river, a total loss.

I was convinced we must have somehow missed the lean-to as we had surely walked more than 4 miles. Then there appeared a trail sign that we had gone only 2 miles! That was my introduction to distance in the mountains. Eventually we reached Dry River Shelter Number 2 on a small island and set up camp. The next day we summited Mount Washington, and I remember well the mystical feeling of being above treeline for the first time and looking way down at the Cog Railway base station that I had visited several years before with my grandparents on a weekend White Mountain road trip. On the fourth day, we triumphantly hiked back to Crawford Notch and took the truck back to camp where we proclaimed our mountain success!

I was having so much fun in Woodsmen's Village that I wrote my parents to ask if I could stay for the final two weeks of the summer; fortunately, they agreed, and camp had space. As was the Chandler tradition, we made another White Mountains trip, this time setting up a base at Dolly Copp Campground near Pinkham Notch. Our first attempt at Mount Washington was aborted in Tuckerman Ravine by an epic thunderstorm. The day after, we were successful, climbing through the mist via Boott Spur.

The next day, we packed up the truck and headed south toward camp, but somewhere, perhaps in Intervale, Chandler pulled off the road and announced that, this being the final camp session that summer, it would be our last look back at the White Mountains that year. In that instant, a powerful feeling

welled up inside me, like nothing I had ever felt before. I just knew I would be back. I was hooked.

THE FOLLOWING WINTER, MY FATHER WAS KILLED IN A CAR ACCIDENT IN Swanzey, New Hampshire, while on a business trip with his boss. My mother was left alone to raise three young boys. The Westborough community rallied around us in a special way that I only came to fully appreciate many years later.

The next summer, 1964, I was back at camp for a fifth year, but much to my dismay after dreaming of mountains all winter, Chandler was gone. Fortunately, one of the new Woodsmen's Village counselors, Brian Fowler, was a hiker, but I still had to convince others that a mountain trip was preferable to the planned beach outing. Brian led several of us up over the Kinsmans, my second and third 4,000-footers. At Lonesome Lake Hut, I bought my first Appalachian Mountain Club *White Mountain Guide*, which I studied intently thereafter, dreaming about future mountain adventures.

I didn't know anyone in my town who was a hiker, except for another high school friend also not yet of driving age, but Fowler told us about the Worcester Chapter of the AMC. I made the connection and began going on chapter hikes during the school year—including helping Cecil Jones and others build the first trail up North Hancock, bypassing an unpleasant landslide previously used for the ascent.

In 1965, at 15, I was back at Camp Blanchard for the sixth and final summer, hired to be on the kitchen dish crew: \$100 for the summer plus a \$10 bonus! At the cost of giving up my remaining days off, I talked my way on to a backpack trip to the Great Gulf and Mount Washington. I was beginning to almost feel like a veteran hiker. I soon acquired a much cherished Kelty pack, my first pair of real hiking boots from Asa C. Osborn in Boston, and got the two signatures needed back then to officially join the Appalachian Mountain Club. By November 1966, with the help of the Worcester Chapter, I had bagged all 46 New Hampshire 4,000-footers. (Galehead and Bondcliff were added later to make today's 48.)

I graduated from high school in 1967 and then worked as a counselor at another Worcester YMCA facility, Camp Morgan in Washington, New Hampshire. On a day off, two other camp staffers and I hiked up the Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail to visit my former counselor, Brian Fowler, who was working as a croo member at Lakes of the Clouds Hut. We camped right in the krummholz—perfectly legal back then!—and ate breakfast with the croo.

The huts looked like great fun, living and working in the mountains all summer, so Fowler suggested I apply to work on the hut closing crew after camp finished up for the season. Huts manager Bruce Sloat wouldn't accept me at first because I would have to start classes at the University of Massachusetts sooner than he wanted. I wrote another letter that proved convincing, offering to work for only room and board. I was thrilled to head to Pinkham Notch and became part of hut camaraderie, if only for a couple of weeks, carrying iron bars to Zealand that would secure the winter shutters. (The huts closed right after Labor Day back then.) This led to three summers in the huts during my college years. I worked in 1968 and 1970 at my favorite Zealand Falls Hut, and in 1969, the summer of Woodstock and the moon landing, I was assigned to Mizpah Spring Hut.

A growing craving for challenge and adventure led next to joining the Peace Corps. A new college graduate, I was sent to do forestry work in Morocco, which opened my horizons to international work and travel, including many mountain adventures in Africa, Europe, and throughout North America in subsequent years.

None of these things would have happened if I hadn't joined those older campers in Woodsmen's Village back at age 13. It is hard to imagine what a different path my life probably would have taken and who I might be today. My father was only 38 when he died in 1964, a loving, caring man who gave me so much as a child. But convincing me to go to Woodmen's Village in 1963 is the special gift I remember the most.

DOUGLASS P. TESCHNER of Pike, New Hampshire, mentioned this story to *Appalachia* editor Christine Woodside, who insisted he write it up as a kind of prequel to the many adventures he has published in this journal over the past five decades (most recently "Africa Mountain Journal: 1971–2015" in the Winter/Spring 2017 issue). Teschner was the guest speaker at the AMC Worcester Chapter's 100th anniversary kickoff dinner in November 2017, which he called "a special opportunity to thank them for getting me into the mountains as a kid after summer camp had given me that first spark."

Poem for the Season

On a forest trail

leaves on near bare trees
are red and golden words
suspended in sunlight.

An autumn wind rustles them
to the ground where I assemble
the many leaves and with them

write this poem.

John Smelcer

JOHN SMELCER is the last living member who can read, write, and speak the Ahtna tribe of Alaska's severely endangered language. He is the author of 50 books, including the poetry collection *Indian Giver* (Leapfrog, 2016).

Early Logging in the Southern Maine Woods

The woods produced shoe blocks, spruce gum, and more

William Geller



THE SOUTHEASTERN VIEW FROM THE LOOKOUT ON LITTLE BOARDMAN Mountain rolls over acres of trees and down the broad valley of the East Branch of the Pleasant River. At the end of the valley, the river flows between Cedar Mountain on the north and Big Wilkie on the south as it spills into the valley running north from Brownville to Upper Jo-Mary Lake. If I'd been standing here on October 8, 1825, I would have witnessed an uncontrollable inferno that blackened 832,000 acres of forest. The fire started 65 miles south, at Guilford, Maine, where the Piscataquis River bends east. Strong winds fanned the multiple land-clearing fires of local farmers into a single conflagration. It burned east 40 miles to the Penobscot River and beyond, and north in the eastern shadow of the Borestone, Barren–Chairback, White Cap, and Boardman mountain ranges, jumping the West Branch of the Penobscot River at what then became known as Burnt Land Rips (now East Millinocket), 95 miles from its starting point. The fire influenced the logging in the Piscataquis watershed east of the mountains for the next 100 years.

I have only recently begun to appreciate what that fire meant and how its aftermath played out. For more than five years, I have been searching Maine's North Woods for traces of its logging history and writing about it in *Appalachia*. The land looks wild today, but as early as 1830 roadless watersheds south of Katahdin were filled with the noise of the timber industry and the shouts of the workers sending the logs downstream. This story begins piecing together what I have found along the East Branch of the Pleasant River. This area starts at Upper Ebeemee Lake, 12 miles due north of Brownville, and heads northwest into the great valley between where I'm standing on Little Boardman Mountain and White Cap Mountain, the north end of the southern half of the 100-Mile Wilderness and the Piscataquis watershed.

In December 1824, Berry Brown and Nathan Mayhew, loggers from the town of Milo, came 25 miles up the East Branch from Brownville, passing through previously cut areas to log on the river 4 miles below where I now stand. Others had been cutting pine along the edges of the lower portion of the river for twenty years. Some of them worked without oxen and used simple skids to move their logs off the river's banks and into the water. In

A hunter crosses the West Branch of the Pleasant River in the late 1880s by riding in a box-like structure suspended by cables. The contraption was William P. Dean's "aerial ferry." WILLIAM P. DEAN/UNIVERSITY OF MAINE FOGLER LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

1806, someone built the first dam and sawmill in Brownville. From there, men rafted milled lumber downriver.

The northwestern edge of the 1825 fire burned east of the area Brown and Mayhew cut in 1824, and loggers continued on upriver in subsequent years. The river was so rocky that in some low-water springs, like 1827, loggers were unable to drive their selectively cut pine logs. Undeterred, they continued moving upriver for they knew of the vast wealth of pine in the river's headwaters in the valley below me.

I dropped into the valley on the Appalachian Trail and left my pack at the East Branch Lean-to. I walked to the riverbank and the remains of the old log-driving dam. In 1853, lumbermen started making river improvements and building dams; 53 years later, twenty dam sites remained. The uppermost dam prevented water from flowing west into the Kennebec River watershed.

One of the difficult spots 12 miles downriver was at Gauntlet Falls. Sometime around 1860, in the spring, Joe Levesque and Charles Cole were working the drive at the Jim Thistle Dam guiding one large log at a time into the sluice built to bypass the 20-foot Gauntlet Falls and chasm. Levesque's pick pole became stuck in a log that shifted and pulled him into the water and then into the sluice. Cole tried to save Levesque, but Cole, too, was pulled in. Somehow both men grabbed onto a log and rode through the sluice without getting crushed up against its sides. Other drivers quickly gathered near the end of the sluice and along the river below and extended long poles for Levesque and Cole to grab. Levesque missed, went under, and was never seen again. Cole made the grab.

I camped away from the shelter near soothing noises of the woods, but I knew that if I had been here at any time between roughly 1800 and 1950, I would have heard the steady sounds of a log industry that defined this area. I would have heard ax blows and, eventually, the zipping sound of crosscut saws. I would have heard the booming and shouting of the log drivers, the building and repair of dams that increased the flow of the East Branch so logs would easily move downriver, and the hum of steam-driven sawmills. Between 1832 and about 1884, I would have awakened to horses snorting and jingling their harnesses while the teamsters called out on their journeys north from Bangor to Chamberlain Lake on the Chamberlain Lake Tote Road. Endless loads of long logs left this area, and the first loads of shorter logs bound for paper mills (called pulpwood) went downriver in 1882.



The Hollingsworth and Whitney Logging Camp No. 1 stood on the west side of White Cap Mountain. COURTESY OF ERIC STIRLING AND FAMILY/FIRST WEST BRANCH POND SPORTING CAMPS

Between 1927 and 1934, a dry sluice made of boards funneled logs down Boardman Mountain. The noise reverberated through the valley. The Great Northern Paper Company used gas-powered Lombard log haulers to move the wood over to Upper Jo-Mary Lake, from where the loggers could drive them to their mills in the town of Millinocket.

These Lombards operated continuously, day and night, hauling at least 26,000 cords of wood per season over a specially built road to the lake's ice. Once these loggers left, other lumbermen resumed driving the East Branch until the mid-1950s.

The industry defined this land. Now, it's mostly memories.

THE SUN ROSE, AND I LEFT THE EAST BRANCH LEAN-TO. I THOUGHT OF Charles Cole, who had survived the sluice ride and went on to live the rest of his life in this area. I headed up the Appalachian Trail to White Cap Mountain, remembering that 40 years after his ride, Cole's grandchildren had

listened to his story of almost dying in the sluice, told as he sat on his porch four miles downriver from here.

Cole also told his family about Juliana Philbrook who in 1833, with her husband, Weld, had run Cole's house as the Philbrook Shanty, an overnight way station for teamsters toting logging supplies to the wilderness logging operations. Weld Philbrook negotiated with the Massachusetts state land agent for 80 to 90 acres of land on which he would make improvements and pay a dollar an acre, as he was able. In 1833, the family moved to the site and began raising crops and hay for themselves, loggers, and teamsters. During the logging season, Juliana was usually cooking for 10 to 40 men a day. After Weld's death in 1838, Juliana continued to educate her three children (Weld, Sarah, and Rufus) and operated the farm with their help and that of a hired man, Bert Rankins. She overcame her husband's \$441 debt, and on February 26, 1845, she gained ownership to the land (100 acres), her log home, and her stables through a petition to the Massachusetts state land agent. In her petition, she wrote that her husband had paid for the land, was in the process of seeking the deed, but became ill and then died. She noted that the dollar per acre he paid was three times the value of area lands with no improvements, that they had improved about 40 acres, and that her farm served a valuable function, being a public service as a tavern for loggers. Joining in support of Juliana were ten prominent Brownville men, who filed a letter on January 29, 1845. The land agent recommended 100 acres at no cost, and the legislature and governor approved. Juliana's daughter and sons continued to support her and the shanty. Apparently, Juliana hired someone to run the shanty beginning about 1853, and the whole family moved to a farm they purchased closer to Brownville. It was not until 1862 that she sold the shanty, which continued to provide services for the next 30 years.

Juliana Philbrook was a perfect example of the incredibly capable and unacknowledged women who worked in the wilderness, many as logging camp cooks in the old days. Every day they cooked four meals for up to 50 men. These women's words were law in the dining area. I thought about this as I climbed White Cap. From the summit, I looked down at Silver Lake, home of another incredible woman, Sara Green. She lived down there from 1890 until 1968, the year before her death. Her husband died in a freak Katahdin Iron Works sawmill accident in 1929, but she stayed right there logging, farming, running a boarding house, driving a horse team (later a jeep and a kind of bus known as a jitney) and—

I'll bet—guiding hikers to where I climbed. Sara Green was known as “the mayor of Katahdin Iron Works,” and her three children—Pauline, Audrey, and Harry—worked with her. She was so admired and respected by the loggers and driving crews that the lumber company gave her 10 acres and the Hermitage, a sporting camp at the foot of Gulf Hags. She operated the camp for years and donated it to The Nature Conservancy shortly before her death.

From the White Cap summit, I could only imagine the structures of the iron works, a village with a train station, eleven charcoal kilns, and a furnace. What a coincidence that two of the three key iron production ingredients—hardwood and ore—were found in one spot. The available hardwood was in part a result of the 1825 forest fire that burned through the trees growing immediately east of the lake. From 1841 to 1889, the forest provided as many as 10,000 cords of hardwood per year, as cut during the winter by 300 men. Seven years after the iron works closed in 1890, Perkins & Danforth Spoolwood Company moved in and cut only birch, another product of the 1825 fire, until the company exhausted the supply in 1913.

At the foot of White Cap, I forded the West Branch of the Pleasant River. If I had been crossing in the late 1880s and early 1900s, I'd have used William P. Dean's suspension bridge or his replacement “the aerial ferry” as the locals called it or—as the river drivers named it—“Dean's roller coaster.” Not far upriver is the sculpted rock mouth of Gulf Hags, where the current spit out logs like toothpicks. Until the early 1800s no logger had been known to harvest above the gulf, but in 1843, a group of men, lured by the vast wealth of pine there, formed the Pleasant River Company with plans to dam and drive the river. They either never followed through or failed. Nine years later, the West Branch Pleasant River Company built the first dam, a 40-foot high, 825-foot-long dam at the head of the gulf, and a logger known to us only as D. Morrison directed the difficult drive in spring 1853. But the challenges of the gulf continued to deter most lumbermen. J.W. Palmer and Sons took up the challenge in about 1880, when they blasted an 8-foot-wide section of the waterway's opening to 25 feet wide. In spring 1882 a 250-person crew drove 9.5 million board feet through the gulf. Other loggers followed.

As the loggers moved upriver and into its tributaries over the next three and a half decades, they built another dam in the area near Little Lyford Ponds, then one a few miles above that and then one at the outlets at Big Lyford and First and Second West Branch Ponds. Even though loggers did

not cut every year, these dams were key in driving as many as 350,000 logs a season. By 1897, loggers were driving pulpwood, which they continued until 1941 (with one more cleanup drive in 1942).

I wondered what Morrison faced inside that two-mile-long throat. After Bob Pederson and I had made an unsuccessful attempt to climb through the mouth, we returned the next August with single-person inflatable dinghies, in which we floated through the throat starting below Billings Falls. At low water, the current runs very slowly. Anyplace the river drops creates small falls easily descended by foot on open rocks. I was surprised how little evidence of blasted rock lay about. My only conclusion was the narrowness Palmer blasted open was only at the top edge of the gulf, but that narrowness had prevented other lumbermen from seeing what was transpiring below.

I lay back in my dinghy and looked up to the rim, 130 feet above. I felt as if Mother Earth had put me at the bottom of an upside-down funnel. Here, cross logs had once spanned these narrow sections of the river, and log drivers had lowered each other on tethers into the abyss. They had nothing to hold on to; their only steadying surface was the logjam onto which they rested their feet. I imagined how loggers must have felt dangling above the ferociousness of the spring runoff, then shooting into a narrow channel as if pumped through a fire hose. Although after 1879 they unlocked jams with dynamite, before that loggers picked the jams apart by hand. The dam at the head of Gulf Hags could temporarily slow the water and maybe shift the jam or release enough water to force the jam apart.

After I crossed the river, I climbed to the open rock ledges of Chairback Mountain. I looked back across the valley to White Cap and its seven surrounding peaks. Here, men had picked spruce gum that was sold between the late 1800s and 1948. Those pickers also collected the gum from the higher elevations of the ridgeline south of me to Barren Ledges. These heights once contained the last of the old-growth spruce.

In the mid-1890s, Dave Hutchinson, a picker, lived in a cabin on the shoulder of a mountain immediately east of White Cap. The peak was then called Saddlerock, but on maps today it is one of several mountains in Maine known as Saddleback (different from the Saddleback Mountain on the Appalachian Trail near Rangeley Lake). Here's how Hutchinson harvested spruce gum: In the spring before the sap began to flow, he scored the red spruce bark with an ax so that the sap would bleed. Over the ensuing months, the sap oozed out and formed nodules. He could collect 10 to 15 pounds of the nodules each day. At the time, Monson's Harry Davis, the self-proclaimed

“spruce gum king,” paid about 100 pickers 50 cents a pound. For nearly 42 years, Davis’s operation bought and processed roughly twelve tons of this gum a year. By about 1925, only about twelve to fifteen pickers were working for \$2.50 to \$4 a pound. When Davis closed in 1948, newspapers wrote that it was because he could not sell the gum at a profit. What they did not state was that he could not compete with loggers who had started cutting the high-elevation forest from White Cap and Saddlerock south to Barren Mountain in the mid-1940s. Scattered small clusters of spruce still stand. I passed through a few of them as I hiked the AT nine more miles south along the top of the ridge. From the Barren fire tower site, I looked at the top of the sluice that carried logs down to Lake Onawa.

In the saddle on the south side of Third Mountain, I turned onto a side trail that descended to Indian Pond on the north side of a great oval-shaped valley, five miles long and nearly three miles wide, where I knew an unusual logging practice had gone on for five years, from 1912 to 1917. Before that time, loggers and river drivers in this watershed had built dams, cut softwood in the winter, and driven logs down the waterway in the spring. In 1912, lumberman Joseph Ray abandoned the waterway and constructed a six-plus-mile-long rail line from the Canadian Pacific tracks into the depths of this valley. He built a hardwood mill and a softwood mill, a boarding house, twenty houses, and a school on the railroad line near the south edge of the bowl. The train was necessary because, after the 1825 fire, the logs were mainly birch, which did not float and so could not be driven on a waterway to market. In October 1916, the mills burned, and a lack of remaining merchantable timber caused the investors to soon abandon the operation. Following the abandonment, the American Thread Company moved in to cut the birch, which teamsters hauled down the old rail bed to the Canadian Pacific tracks.

AFTER A NIGHT AT THE POND, I HIKED BACK TO THE SADDLE AND continued on to Barren Ledges, where I looked down across Lake Onawa to Sebec Lake. Here, loggers had found hardwood. Behind me on Long Pond Stream and Long Pond, they found softwood. I was now 20 miles due north of where the great fire of 1825 had started in Guilford. The fire passed between Onawa and Sebec Lakes and jumped Sebec Lake in places as it raced north. Over the next 55 years, that birch grew back, and by 1880 the forest had rejuvenated enough for three major hardwood logging operations, thread spools, shoe blocks, and ships’ knees and ribs.

The Willimantic Linen Company of Connecticut opened a spool mill in 1879 at the head of Sebec Lake. Their loggers cut on a tract between the two lakes and depleted its birch by 1902 but kept cutting to the east for the next 30 years. Below where I stood, on Lake Onawa, the great canoes of the shoe block loggers had passed back and forth from logging camp to landing carrying supplies going out and hardwood bolts coming back. Other loggers were cutting yellow birch in such a way as to preserve the curve in the log where the tree worked into the root system. They called these “ships’ knees” because they were made into ships’ prows. These loggers also harvested the maple for ships’ ribs. Loggers rafted these unfloatable hardwood logs with pine and floated them through Sebec Lake to Bangor.

I now climbed out of the Long Pond Stream valley, where the log drives had begun in the 1830s, reached the top of the ridge, crossed a freight railroad line (which has been there since 1889) and dropped down the hillside to Big Wilson Stream. Its placidness belies what is upstream. Elliot Vaughn arrived at the stream three miles below me in 1828 and erected a sawmill and a gristmill. The mill cut clapboards and floated them down the gentle Big Wilson Stream and through Sebec Lake and on to the Bangor market. Upstream from my crossing, the steep valley sidewalls extended seven miles to the Wilson ponds and made access for logging and driving the valley exceedingly difficult. Attesting to this, no lumberman sought a dam charter for the stream above me until 1893, suggesting that, at best, only small quantities of logs traveled down this stream. The last long log drive on the Big Wilson was in 1921.

I followed the AT over the next ridge and down to the stream on the floor of Little Wilson Stream valley. At the crossing, I looked upstream into the mouth of an intimidating gorge. Extending for nearly 1,800 feet behind the 10-foot-wide mouth were steep sidewalls I could not climb nor walk under unless I wished to swim and scale waterfalls to reach the 60-foot waterfall at the head of the gorge. What possessed Nelson Savage in 1823 to build a dam and sawmill above this waterfall and drive clapboard-length logs? Many of the logs split, but somehow the workers were able to break the jams at the foot of the falls and in the gorge. Poor farmland above the falls and in the general area meant the farm owners cut all the merchantable trees and abandoned the area by 1848. The forests grew back, and by 1883, loggers were again clearing, widening, damming, and driving Little Wilson Stream. Drives on the stream ended by 1921. I wish I knew how they broke the jams in the gorge.

Over my last few miles on the AT into Monson, I remade my list of questions about what I'd seen and wanted to investigate, and of places for future explorations along or near the AT. Still on my list is an ancient mystery. The American Indian tribes from Down East Maine camped regularly at the head of Lake Onawa on their way to and from Moosehead Lake and Mount Kineo, their source of flint. As bullets began to replace arrows, the Indians had another reason to use the site. They supposedly discovered a source of lead on the back side of Barren Mountain but never revealed its location. Perhaps I'll find it someday on a bushwhack, but if you find it first, I'd be pleased to have a few hints on the exact location. I'm going to find it.

WILLIAM GELLER, a retiree who explores in the outdoors in every season, lives in Farmington, Maine, with his wife, Anne. His research and writing are available at his website Mountain Explorations, sites.google.com/a/maine.edu/mountain-explorations.

Accidents

*Analysis from the White Mountains of
New Hampshire and occasionally elsewhere*



THE DRY, TEMPERATE SUMMER PAST FOUND ME INDOORS AND OUT OF the hills a good deal more than I like to be—a book project (*Critical Hours: Search and Rescue in the White Mountains*, University Press of New England, 2018) and other responsibilities saw to that—and, when I got out and about, it was on local, coastal trails, or on the trackless sea. So my mountains were often those of memory, with some small mountain running and walking on the sharp and stony paths of Connecticut's Sleeping Giant and New Hampshire's midstate Cardigan valley interspersed. When reports of White Mountain trouble filtered in, I relied on that memory to see the trail or brook or uptick of land where they took place. In that way, I still returned to the Whites often.

There, the cool, dry summer encouraged the usual, expansive turn toward the trails. The days of long light and dry rock ask us into the hills. That those milder days arrive first in the lowlands and later in the uplands often brings us stories of two seasons in late spring's shoulder season. That was true as 2017's days grew longer and spring purred forth, carrying with it this column's two significant search-and-rescue stories.

School Is Out

Two Calls from Lafayette. June promises summer, and, whatever our age, we feel a fillip of excitement as the school year comes to a close. It doesn't take much to imagine the current of freedom that ran through the Achigan School group as they approached a year-end day hike of the Falling Waters Trail—Old Bridle Path loop over the Franconia Ridge on June 3.

Having driven down from L'Achigan, Quebec, the 47 students and 7 adult chaperones from the secondary school must have developed a kind of momentum when they arrived at the trailhead. How else to explain their decision to ignore advice from trail stewards in the parking area and climb away into a day that featured cold rain and gusty winds? The nearby Mount Washington Observatory reported an average temperature of 31 degrees (11 below normal), 40-MPH winds from the northwest (with a top gust of 70), with more than a half-inch of liquid precipitation in addition to an inch of snow and ice on June 3. By the time the school group neared and crossed Lafayette's summit around 2 P.M., they were spread out along the route, and four of the teens, carrying

A thunderstorm retreats from the exposed Franconia Ridge. SANDY STOTT

minimal gear and supplies and hiking in the fog without any adults, missed the turnoff for the Greenleaf Trail, continuing straight onto the Garfield Ridge Trail. By the time they ran into some other hikers who turned them around, they had slipped to last in their group. Experienced readers of this column can surmise what comes next.

At 7:30 P.M. two calls for help issued from the thick, wet, oncoming night. First, New Hampshire Fish and Game learned from the Appalachian Mountain Club that a 36-year-old woman was having extended trouble descending the Old Bridle Path from Greenleaf Hut. Michelle M. had covered only a mile in eight hours since leaving the hut. A 911 call also reported that the group of four girls from the Achigan School was missing somewhere on the Mount Lafayette slopes. I'll separate the two incidents here while also offering a reminder that NHPG's Lt. Jim Kneeland was working the phones to understand and to summon responses for both.

Michelle's dilemma turned out to be a simple (albeit elongated) one in both genesis and resolution. On the evening of June 2 at around 10 P.M., she had departed with a group of coworkers for a night hike up the Falling Waters Trail to see the sunrise from the ridge above. Then, the group planned to cross the Franconia Ridge and descend via the Old Bridle Path. Both Michelle and her husband (who was not on the climb initially) felt iffy about the demanding climb, but Michelle's work friends persuaded her to go.

By 11 A.M. on the 3rd, the group had reached Greenleaf Hut, where they paused for a break before beginning their descent of the Old Bridle Path at 11:30 A.M. During that break, Michelle called her husband and told him that she was very tired and would be descending slowly. She began making her way down with a coworker, while the rest of the group moved on ahead. At some point, Michelle's coworker injured his back and felt he should get down more quickly; he left Michelle alone on the trail.

When he'd not heard from his wife by 4:30 P.M., Michelle's husband, Michael, drove from southern New Hampshire to the trailhead and began climbing to find her at about 6 P.M.

After the 7:30 P.M. call, Kneeland had been trying unsuccessfully to make contact with Michelle and her husband via phone, but just after 9 P.M., he reached Michelle's husband, who had just met her on the trail. Michelle's husband asked Kneeland for some assistance getting Michelle down the final stretch of trail, and Kneeland sent Conservation Officer Robert Mancini up to help. Mancini arrived at 9:45 P.M., gave Michelle some fluids and warm

clothing, and then began guiding her down. The three got to the parking area at 12:45 A.M.

Comment: This incident brings to mind again Ty Gagne's assertion in the last issue ("Weakness in Numbers," Winter/Spring 2018) that sometimes there can be weakness in numbers when we go hiking. Our tendency to respond to peer pressure, to listen to others' voices instead of our own, can lead us to try what we wouldn't on our own. Surely that happened for Michelle when she was persuaded by coworkers to try one of the Whites' most demanding routes when she didn't feel prepared for its challenge. That this attempt would be an overnight hike simply compounded its demands.

That weakness in numbers grows even more prominent when Michelle ends up left on her own to manage her descent. As Kneeland said in a press release following these two incidents, "It perplexes me that hikers who start as a group do not finish as a group. By simply following the hiker responsibility code as set forth in the hikeSafe program, many of these mishaps could be avoided."

Back Up There. We return to the upper night slopes of Lafayette. The 911 call about the four missing teenagers set both COs and volunteers from the Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue Team in motion. As those rescuers drove toward the trailhead, and Lt. Kneeland coordinated support for Michelle, AMC's Greenleaf Hut crew ("croo") soon scrambled to search for one of the four missing teens. The hut full of guests had tucked in to dinner, when three of the teens arrived in tears and very cold. They had, they said, been left behind by their school group. One of the girls also had injured her arm by falling on the rocks. The fourth, Marianne (no last initial was available), the croo learned later, had been left behind somewhere up on the mountain when she had trouble keeping up. Because this was the students' first time on the Franconia Ridge and the weather was foul, and because translation from French to English was a barrier, the missing student's location wasn't clear beyond her being "up there."

Recognizing the threat of hypothermia on this rainy, 40-degree night, hutmaster Ryan Koski-Vacirca and visiting former hut croo member Jeff Colt, both veterans of a number of search-and-rescue incidents, conferred with their AMC supervisor via radio and received permission to search for Marianne. The pair climbed quickly to Lafayette's summit, where Colt recalled, they "started doing concentric circles and calling her name." A radio call from assistant hutmaster Ali Garvin, who had been helping warm and comfort the three

teens and working to keep order in the full hut, helped Koski-Vacirca and Colt refine their search a bit. Garvin reported that the missing girl had been between the summit and treeline when the others had left her.

Koski-Vacirca and Colt began descending, each 100 feet off the trail and calling Marianne's name; they ventured out a little farther to check on possible caves where the missing girl might have sought shelter, but the pair took care to maintain contact in the sightless night and rain. When they reached treeline, the searchers hadn't found the girl, and there they met two other searchers from the hut. Soaked and cold, the four searchers retreated to the hut for food and warmth. There, they talked further with the other teens and checked in with their supervisor.

Taking stock of their own fitness and resources, and fielding a request that they divide their numbers and check below the hut (in case Marianne had bypassed it in the dark and kept descending), the current and former croo members conferred. Being careful not to compound the emergency by sending out someone who might also get in trouble, the croo identified five who could respond: Hutmaster Ryan Koski-Vacirca, Thacher Carter, Asher Brown, Phoebe Howe, and Risa Fox. Ali Garvin, Joscie Norris, and Leslie Fink would stay at the hut to help the three girls and manage the flow of information and the guests (more on that later).

Above treeline, the Greenleaf Trail clammers across loose rocks and ledges near Walker Ravine and then jogs left and north to a sort of dogleg before wrapping around some prominent ledges and climbing straight to the summit. The dogleg's turn toward the south is easy to miss while descending, even in daylight. Parsing the three teens' descriptions of their ordeal and using their knowledge of the terrain, Colt and Howe suggested the area near that dogleg as the likely place where Marianne might be. Koski-Vacirca, Carter, and Brown would climb to the dogleg and begin searching the trail's sides, while Howe and Fox would climb through the dense krummholz on either side of the trail to treeline, searching the shelter of the trees as they rose, and then stay a hundred yards or so on either side of the trail and work their way up. Howe remembers checking continually for Fox's headlamp to be sure that the pair of searchers didn't stray out of contact and into their own trouble.

Just before midnight, Koski-Vacirca called down to the hut saying that they'd found Marianne about 100 yards south of the trail near the cliffs above the dogleg. She was worryingly hypothermic, but, after some warming and

assisted movement, ambulatory. Howe recalls that initially the rescuers had to support and carry Marianne, but that quite rapidly she regained mobility. The group reached the safety of the hut at around 12:45 A.M. At that point, Kneeland was able to contact and turn back NHFG conservation officers and members of PVSART, who were climbing the Old Bridle Path to look for the missing teen. Kneeland was also in touch with the chaperones from the Achigan School at their hotel. They expressed some relief that the girl had been found and made plans for two chaperones to hike up to Greenleaf the next morning to bring the teens down, while the rest of their group pursued another hike. Everyone agreed that the four girls would spend an unplanned night at Greenleaf.

Comment: The litany of error and irresponsibility by the Achigan School and its chaperones is self-evident. Had their stranded student died that night—a near certainty had the AMC croo not found and rescued her—the school and its students would have had to endure deep remorse and likely legal action.

Begin with the group's choice to ignore advice from trail stewards and climb into clouds, rain, and certain risk of hypothermia; add in the group's unwieldy size, inappropriate clothing, and apparent lack of plans for check-ins and intercommunication; and then arrive at a moment when four of the teens get left behind and swallowed by night high on Mount Lafayette. You have before you an example of bald, remarkable misconduct in the mountains. All afternoon, Howe reported to me, the Achigan school group's members had rolled through Greenleaf and kept going down the Old Bridle Path, until, as night came on, none remained on the mountain—except for the four girls. When asked if he wanted to stay at the hut and wait for the girls, the school trip's leader said, no, he thought not. Maybe they went down the Skookumchuk Trail, he said. And then he went down too. The chaperones didn't reappear until midmorning on June 4, when two of them hiked back to the hut to retrieve the girls. Throughout, those who had contact with the chaperones reported them to be concerned, but not overly so, unaware it seems of how close they came to losing a student.

How had the four girls come to be at the end of the Achigan School's line? As they reached Lafayette's summit, the girls were hiking alone and in the thick clouds. As Howe pointed out to me, they'd been told to follow the white paint blazes of the Appalachian Trail, and atop Mount Lafayette they missed the sign

for the Greenleaf Trail, but they found the next white blaze. That led them on to the Garfield Ridge Trail. Howe also said that, in her summers of experience in this area, that mistake is a common one, and, perhaps without overdoing it, the signs for the Greenleaf Trail could be bumped up in size and prominence.

Once headed north on the wrong trail, the four girls kept on until a fortunate meeting with some hikers, who first discerned the girls' mistake and then turned them back up Lafayette. By the time the girls summited again, they'd slipped to last in line.

Howe also noted that the girls were wearing leggings, cotton sweatshirts, and only thin ponchos for rain gear; in short, they weren't close to having the gear needed for a cold, wet day with strong winds on an elongated exposed ridge. The toll of that exposure, lengthened by getting lost, was clear when Marianne couldn't go on and crawled up close behind a rock, where she felt she was "waiting to die."

AMC's croo response, on the other hand, was swift, knowing, and prudent, even though for the Greenleaf Hut croo members, it was barely the season's beginning and they were just becoming acquainted with the hut and their work's rhythms. That the croo had also the resources of two experienced former hut people in Howe and Colt was a piece of luck for all involved.

Inside Story. All of that is dramatic enough, a ratification of the training that hut croos bring to their work, and evidence that sometimes even good skill also needs good fortune. But even as croo searchers plumbed the wet, windy night outside, there was much to do inside the isolated outpost of the hut to focus on supporting the three shaken girls and finding their missing fourth. This inside story draws upon the generous notes of Greenleaf's 2017 assistant hutmaster, Ali Garvin, as well as an account from Jeff Colt and a conversation with Phoebe Howe, and it gives a rare glimpse into some of the work behind the scenes of a rescue. Airlift yourself into the remaining hut croo's boots: What are you managing while the five searchers fight up through the darkness, and how will you do it?

The Greenleaf 2017 summer croo had just reached its first weekend of the season and had 48 guests, a number of whom had needed warming when they reached the hut. As Garvin recalled, "I remember the day of our first SAR as a croo, not only because it was the first pack day, but also because I had never seen a hut dining room more packed with people escaping the torrential downpour and winds that had been pelting hikers on the Franconia Loop all weekend. Throughout the day, hikers stumbled in trembling, shivering, and

seeking refuge, and a number had required treatment for mild to moderate hypothermia.”

Already the hut’s supplies of juice and towels were running low, and rumpled blankets needed drying too. Now, as the long twilight ran through its gray tones, all hands were turned to dinner. As is common in mountain huts, pre-dinner time is social, and stories of the day’s adventures fill the air. Kids, their energy reserves restored, race around, and adults often dip into wine or beer lugged along for just this time of day. It’s convivial and crowded, albeit a little rowdy and loud. Dinner gets served family style, and it’s easy to imagine that this really is a mountain family.

That family spell broke quickly when the three hypothermic girls stumbled into the room crying. Garvin wrote that the girls were “wearing cotton sweatshirts and skateboard sneakers underneath their thin plastic ponchos. Everything that followed occurred extremely quickly.” It’s common to say that emergency reveals us for who we are, and, as Garvin worked and watched in this room shot with crisis, that seemed especially true.

The hutmaster Koski-Vacirca, a veteran of a number of searches and rescues, shepherded the three girls to a bunkroom where he could both assess them and hear what they had to say. As Garvin notes, “The hut croos of the AMC are required to be Wilderness First Aid certified,” and Koski-Vacirca also brought the empathy of someone aimed toward medical school. But even in that more private space, he had to compete with a number of guests who had been jolted by the current of emergency running through the room. Some followed Koski-Vacirca and the girls into the room and shouted and hovered in their concern. The girls repeatedly told the croo that their concern was for the girl (Marionne) they’d left behind.

Out in the main room, there was also the sort of shouting and hurrying nowhere that emergency seems to summon, and Garvin and her croo tried to both “maintain calm and finish dinner service as quickly as possible.”

A sketchy sense of where the girls had been and where their fourth might be developed as Koski-Vacirca talked with them. One of the three was fairly proficient in English, but, of course, they were disoriented by their experience. The ad hoc rapid response plan had Koski-Vacirca and Colt headed for the summit to search, while Garvin and croo cared for the three girls and worked at what was now clearly crowd control.

Garvin wrote the following description, which contains behaviors familiar to many SAR veterans and outlines the challenge her croo faced:

Maybe it is helpful here to break down the guest behavior I witnessed throughout the evening. Immediately, as the girls stumbled over our threshold, adults sprang up and ran to the girls as they were rightfully concerned. But (I express this with trepidation about the placement of women in caregiver/homemaker roles) many of the women impeded Ryan from performing necessary medical assessments and getting information, as they hovered and often shouted over him in misguided attempts to calm the girls or convey the urgency they saw in the situation. Thus the adults not only amplified the already tension-filled atmosphere in the room, but they also impeded us from the tasks we were trained to do, by constantly questioning our sense of urgency and capability.

Furthermore, immediately as Ryan and Jeff began to gather their packs to head up to the summit, some visibly intoxicated dads shouted phrases like, “I’m going too!” or “They need a man up on that mountain looking for her!” after which the women yelled at me how ready their husbands were to head up that mountain. I explained that Jeff and Ryan were both mountain professionals, with the necessary experience, training, and skills to handle the situation, yet the adults barely shot a glance my way. As I turned around to continue communicating with our valley coordinator, Stefan, via radio, one of the female guests, who approached me with three other women, grabbed my shoulder. I guessed from her red face and furrowed brow that they weren’t there to offer help or any sympathy. Instead, she yelled at me full volume, telling me I had no right to have this job, as I clearly had no idea what I was doing. She was appalled with my audacity to “take my sweet time” to send out help, and as a mother, she couldn’t “fathom how cavalier” I was being with a young girl’s life on the line.

Earlier I pointed to the common wisdom that we reveal who we really are via emergency, and in this instance that seems on target. People expected flurried action, when what’s often called for is calm assessment and gathering of resources. Garvin then reported further collision between the situation and the guests’ expectations. Again, this will ring familiar to many emergency responders:

Not once did anyone question the capability of any male croo member. Of course the woman [who yelled at Garvin] could not have

understood the SAR process in that moment, and her anger was undeniably coming from a place of concern for someone's life, but the way the group of guests reacted and interacted with us during the SAR certainly felt differentiated by gender. As Jeff and Ryan ran out of the hut to a chorus of praise and awe at their heroism, a few guests murmured, "Thank God there's some guys, who actually know what they're doing," and, "Did you see the calves on that guy? Gotta be thankful for that kinda build in a situation like this." As Joscie, a female Wilderness First Responder-certified croo member, attended to one of the girls who had a sprained wrist, guests surrounded and hovered over her, talking over Joscie as she tried to speak with her patient. Guests came up to the front desk and asked only male croo members what was going on, implicitly expecting male leadership in backcountry spaces. Despite the legitimate confusion and concern expressed by the guests that night, their inappropriate behavior impeded us from doing our job efficiently, and exacerbated the stress levels for everyone in the hut, so that communicating with the girls became extremely challenging, and they became increasingly anxious about the trauma they had just experienced.

Emergency then is combusive—and revelatory. Its aftermath also provides opportunity for reflection, which can lead to learning. I'm grateful to Phoebe Howe, Jeff Colt, and Ali Garvin for their recollections and thoughts. Even as I have been in emergency's presence and felt its electric prod a number of times, I find that looking back at it helps me see first who we are and, better, who we might become.

Lost Then Lifted

Spring must have seemed increasingly distant for Randy W., age 53, after he set out on a planned four-day backpack in the Pemigewasset Wilderness around 1 P.M. on April 28. His route would take him in along the Wilderness Trail and then up to a traverse of the Bonds, Zealand Mountain, and the Twins before dropping down to Galehead Hut. From there, he would take the Franconia Brook Trail down into the Franconia Brook drainage, returning to his car at the Lincoln Woods parking area on the Kancamagus Highway by Monday, May 1.

Like many on-ramps to adventure, the Wilderness Trail is an easy saunter, and the work of climbing and navigating the Pemi area doesn't begin until the turn up toward the Bonds, nearly five miles from the trailhead. That initial walk, although somewhat sodden from snowmelt and the way water runs across sometimes still-frozen ground, would have offered little resistance, though an experienced hiker could not help but have heard the roar of the nearby river providing proximate reminder of all the hurried water in all of the valleys ahead. The mix of meltwater and cool-to-cold temperatures would suggest to that experienced hiker that crossing brooks safely and staying dry would be a priority.

Randy spent the first night on Mount Bond, but from April 29 on, his route becomes less clear. His recollections, given to NHFG's Sgt. Thomas Dakai on May 5, suggest that he climbed over Mount Guyot, may have diverged to Zealand Mountain, and then backtracked on the Twinway to keep on to South and North Twin. From there, it seems that he dropped down to Galehead Hut and then took either the Twin Brook Trail or Franconia Brook Trail to the intersection with the Lincoln Brook Trail. At some point in that area, Randy lost the trail. He then consulted his GPS, which he said did not have a mapping program. It told him that he was 3.5 miles west of Route 93; Randy decided to try to hike off-trail to 93. A quick look at a map (Randy told CO Dakai that he had lost his) reveals that Franconia Ridge stands between Lincoln Brook and Route 93.

Along the way, Randy fell into a brook, encountered deep snow, and the weather turned rainy and cold. On May 2 in midafternoon, feeling unable to continue, he called 911. The first call got dropped before any conversation could happen; the second lasted several minutes, and the 911 supervisor was able to provide NHFG with some information about Randy's route and two sets of coordinates from the two calls. But Randy clearly wasn't sure where he was, saying that the last mountain he recalled climbing was North Twin, and when NHFG tried calling back they got only voice mail identifying the phone's owner as Randy.

That call set off the season's largest search, one that didn't end until the evening of May 4, when a New Hampshire Army National Guard helicopter plucked the severely hypothermic Randy from the back side of Mount Lincoln and flew him to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. As NHFG's Colonel Kevin Jordan said to a reporter from the *Concord Monitor* on May 5, "He

might not have survived a carryout—that’s three hours. His pulse was 40, his core body temperature was in the 80s; he was hours away from death.”

Before that helicopter rescue took place, NHFG COs first had to find out who Randy was, a search that led them eventually to his brother, Dan. Dan was able to provide COs with a map of Randy’s proposed route, and, on May 2, after neither of the coordinates from the first two 911 calls turned out to be Randy’s location, NHFG planned for a more thorough search on May 3.

Dakai wrote, “The focus [of the 3rd’s search] was to cover the trail system of Randy’s itinerary left with his family.” And so a mix of COs and volunteers, a number of whom were ferried to their search areas by a NHANG helicopter, walked those trails. The helicopter also searched as best it could but was limited by the low clouds. No sign of Randy turned up, and so the rescuers devised a new plan for May 4. That plan, Dakai wrote, “would focus on covering the drainages that Randy might have gone into after getting off trail.” Improved weather allowed the helicopter to drop searchers above most of the drainages, meaning they could at least walk downhill as they searched. Between ferrying missions, the helicopter also could search, and on that day the Civil Air Patrol also had planes flying search grids over the area.

A 2 P.M. call from 911 alerted NHFG that Randy was back on the phone. (He said later that he finally had been able to recharge it with a solar charger.) Though Randy was unsure where he was, he did describe to Dakai that he was in a rocky, open area, and the 911 operator did provide new coordinates for his location. The call was then dropped. But now searchers had a smaller area to consider, and the NHANG helicopter helped get searchers into position to check on the new coordinates, which suggested that Randy was on the west side of Franconia Ridge, not far from the Old Bridle Path. Then the helicopter also resumed searching.

A little after 8 P.M., NHFG Lt. Scott F. Lacrosse texted Dakai from the helicopter. They had sighted Randy via the red light on his headlamp, and they were about to pick him up from a slide on the east side of Mount Lincoln.

Comment: Though early reports from Randy’s search classed him as “an experienced hiker,” his wanderings and decision making point to the opposite. One person who knows him said during the early stages of the search that, although Randy had hiked some in the past, he tended to be “reckless” when he did so. Events bore this description out. When Randy embarked on his hike, he said he was fully equipped for nights out. By the time he was found,

he had lost his tent, sleeping bag, winter hat, and map. (Sgt. Dakai found the latter on May 5 in the pocket of a bag Randy had been carrying.) Such loss of direction and shedding of gear might not cause dire trouble in high summer, but during the late spring, it put Randy in peril. It also indicates a disorderly approach to the often-critical work of staying warm in cool or cold weather. Here are the average temperatures from the nearby Mount Washington Observatory for May 1 through 4: 42, 35, 23, and 27; the total precipitation for those four days was as follows: 1.39 inches, 0.63 inch, 0.56 inch, and a trace. That's trouble-brewing stuff.

The search also consumed chunks of time from 22 NHFG COs, the NHANG helicopter crew, and pilots from the Civil Air Patrol. Then there were the seventeen volunteers from PVSART and Androscoggin Valley Search and Rescue, plus others from the Grafton County Sheriff's Department and the U.S. Forest Service.

A significant frustration for NHFG and the searchers lay in Randy's carrying a GPS but lacking the facility to give searchers his coordinates when he called for help. Although phone calls can produce coordinates, they are not always accurate, as has been clear in a number of incidents reported in this column. Thus, each device a hiker carries should be a "practiced" one, meaning the hiker has used the device often enough to do so, even under stress.

Following trails in late spring can also be much tougher than doing so at summer's height. Paths dip in and out of snow, water runs freely erasing tracks, and footing can be iffy. All that raises the stakes for a hiker, especially one who chooses a multiday solo trek that includes a number of watercourses.

To make such a choice, a hiker should be an expert. Randy clearly was not an expert. His ordeal and the subsequent huge effort to extract him from it began where most troubles do: in the little room where we assess our capabilities and make our plans. It's best to be humble there before stepping into mountains that can reduce one to a struggling speck.

A Few Shoulder-Season Snow Notes

The incident preceding this note, in which Randy encountered deep snow and postholed without snowshoes, occasions these few thoughts about spring snow.

Snow forms its own worlds, worlds so various that whole books get written about them. Here, I want only to think a bit about snow in its vanishing season and the ways it can shape our walking. Snow walking is, of course, an

art: one part analysis, one part intuition. Each snow surface you seek to cross is different, and your ability to “see” both the snow’s skin and its subsurface and know what it means can offer a measure of safety. Or, if you suffer the delusion that all flakes are the same, peril. If you would like to learn about snow more quickly than via floundering, a good place to begin is the USFS Snow Ranger’s Mount Washington Avalanche Center website (mountwashingtonavalanchecenter.org). And if your curiosity pushes you further, you might visit avalanche.org, the joint site of the American Avalanche Association and the USFS National Avalanche Center.

But spring’s remnant snow often asks for different parsing. The question often isn’t will it move? Rather, it’s will it hold me up? Attached to that question is a second: What should I wear on my feet? Or, how many footwear options do I need to carry when I go out? The approach and sun-slope trails may be bare and dry in the lowlands, but the dips and valleys turned away from the sun may still hold snow measured in feet. Because this snow is the residue of winter, it is often consolidated, sometimes near ice in density, and such snow can often support your weight. Even your weight with a full pack. This tempts hikers to leave the snowshoes at home.

That same consolidated snow can have weak points, however. Chief among them is undermining by water draining from the snowpack. Water-eroded snow can go from feet to inches thick in a stride. And punching through those inches can plunge you into a hole, leave a leg dangling, or smack your foot/leg into stone or wood. Also capable of generating weak points in a snow crust are stones and tree trunks hidden below the surface but warming more quickly than the snow. Having snowshoes, even when they seem unnecessary, can avoid much of this. And snowshoes, while slower footing than bare-booting, also avoid the exhausting work of postholing. Each of us with some hiking years underfoot probably has a postholing memory; recalling my own gets me to strap snowshoes to my pack whenever I might find snow in the shoulder season of spring.

Other Note: In a future column, we’ll look at the seldom delightful “mono-rail” that forms on trails when companion snows beside those trails melt.

Long Work Done Well

Late on the afternoon of May 5, 16-year-old Anna S. was part of a group of five nearing Imp Shelter when she broke through the packed snow on the trail and twisted her knee. Companions in Anna’s Summit Achievement group

(a residential treatment center in Stow, Maine) took her pack, and Anna hobbled with assistance the remaining half-mile over the next two hours. At Imp Shelter, Anthony L., an emergency medical technician and one of two group leaders, assessed her injury and found Anna mildly hypothermic. He was able to rewarm Anna, and she stayed comfortable in her sleeping bag throughout the night.

In the morning, ten additional staffers from Summit Achievement arrived and hiked to Imp Shelter to assist Anna. This group brought rescue gear, including a litter, and hoped to bring Anna out. She could not walk, and, after further assessing the weather and trail conditions and the length of carry needed, the group decided to call for help. NHFG's Sgt. Mark Ober got the call at around 11 A.M., and he set about getting help.

Ober called AVSAR and AMC asking for volunteers. He also called in NHFG COs Glen Lucas and Eric Fluette. Lucas was able to drive his all-terrain vehicle about 1.5 miles up the Stony Brook Trail to shorten the carryout. By 2:45 P.M. Lucas had driven in, parked his ATV, and then hiked up to where the Summit Achievement group was making slow headway coming down. Lucas reported the trail as slick, rocky, and treacherous, and said also that the demands of litter-carrying had been beyond four of the group's capabilities and so they had been sent out ahead. Lucas asked that a rescue-wheel that attaches to the underside of a litter also be sent up, and Ober found that AVSAR's wheel was available to go up with the next rescuers to arrive.

The difficulty of the carryout kept Ober on the phone searching for volunteers, and he found a trove of them at Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities, where a Wilderness First Responders Course was in session. At around 4:30 P.M., seventeen SOLO volunteers arrived, and they were joined by three more from AMC. By 8 P.M. the rescuers had reached Lucas's ATV, and by 8:30 P.M. Anna had arrived at the trailhead, where she got a ride to a nearby hospital for treatment. Ober accounted for all the volunteers and closed the rescue by 9 P.M.

Comment: I chose this rescue for the resilience of the injured hiker, her group's preparedness and willingness to take care of its own, and for their wisdom in seeing that, finally, they needed help. The rescue, an arduous carryout over a trail made doubly difficult by water, snow, and ice, was a classic White Mountain good story of generous volunteerism joined to professional competence. Two added notes: The tricky nature of spring snow features in this accident; also, all rescuers take on risk—one of the volunteers from AMC slipped during a stream crossing and injured his chest when he hit a log.

The River Reminds

Summer's often the season when we seek out water. Its cooling, cleansing touch seems like the perfect antidote to the clotted heat that bears down on us. That can be especially true in the backcountry, where time on foot summons sweat, and we look for streams to wash it away. Water then buoys us.

Until it doesn't. The following incident is a reminder that whenever we seek out water, we are seeking also the backcountry's most volatile element, and so it's good to approach cautiously. That, unhappily, wasn't 36-year-old Daniel M.'s approach to Franconia Falls on July 10. Around 4:30 P.M. that day, Daniel, his brother Jacob, and their parents arrived at Franconia Falls. They'd learned of the falls on the internet, and they arrived prepared to enjoy the cooling waters. The brothers got there first, and Daniel stripped to his swimsuit and took his goggles and jumped in.

When he surfaced, Daniel appeared to be struggling. An eyewitness later told NHFG COs that "something didn't look right," and Daniel floated over to the west side of the pool. After some seconds Jacob noticed a problem too, and he jumped in to help his brother, trying to hold his brother up and get him to the pool's edge and out. But the struggle to do so was too much and Daniel slipped under twice more and then didn't resurface. Others nearby came to help too, but Daniel had disappeared in the turbulent water. At around 8 P.M. NHFG COs were able to retrieve Daniel's body from the pool.

Comment: This incident offers a reminder that even with others around, few are capable of rescuing someone from difficult water. So, even though numbers of people at a swimming hole suggest a margin of safety, that's often an illusion. The river, in all its variability, reminds us that waters demand a cautious approach, especially when we are new to them. Water truly is the Whites' most volatile element. We run out of time quickly when drowning's the threat.

In Foreign Lands

On July 15, summer's heart, four Chinese citizens studying at Harvard University drove north from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to take a Sunday walk in the mountains. Around 9:30 that evening, NHFG CO Josiah Towne got a call from his sergeant, Thomas Dakai, asking him to drive to the Welch-Dickey trailhead, where the four hikers were reported to be stranded a mile up the trail without lights. Qiuying S., Zhuang G., Lubin L., and Xia Y. (ages not reported) had set out at around

5 P.M. to walk the 4.1-mile Welch–Dickey loop, an ambitious plan in face of an 8:18 P.M. sunset. Their rescue, effected by a Waterville public safety officer and CO Towne, consisted of providing lights and guiding the foursome down. Once they were at the parking area, Towne was able to inspect their two packs, finding that they had some water, snacks, first-aid kit, and notebooks, but no added clothing or other gear.

Comment: This final and usual incident offers a reminder too. Often, when we are in foreign lands, we don't have the familiar scaffold of context; then, even what seems a simple walk can become steps into trouble. This foursome made errors easily identifiable to even casual mountain hikers: late start, insufficient gear and supplies, etc. But a central dilemma in the Whites gets highlighted here. Our mountains are so easily reached, within a day's drive for tens of millions of people, that people can simply show up and go out. How to prepare such new arrivals for the mountains' foreign lands occupies the thinking of everyone associated with search and rescue in those uplands.

— *Sandy Stott*
Accidents Editor

Inky Cap Mushroom

As if each hooded thumb had known
how brief, how brusque its breath of time would be
free from the sleepy, subterranean world
of worm and grub, root and slumberous seed —

what springs above the platform
of silky moss and lichen on loam
wastes no time — well prepared for its swift retreat,
willing to leave nothing

but the remnants of autodigestion:
a weak and stained stalk, soon subsiding;
its pale cap—stale, dissolving,
withering down to an oily, shapeless smudge.

The beauty each toadstool gains with fervor
will quickly slip and drain away;
its blotted shape curtailed, drawn back
to the patient, passive, tomb-like womb of life.

Max Stephan

MAX STEPHAN'S work has appeared in numerous journals, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Cimarron Review*, *Louisiana Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Blueline*, and *Slipstream*. Stephan is an assistant professor, teaching poetry and creative writing at Niagara University.

Alpina

A semiannual review of mountaineering in the greater ranges

The Strange Science of Grading Climbs

How hard was that climb you just did? Hard? Easy? Wouldn't repeat it? Or, as the last page of the *American Alpine Journal* might report, A₃ W₁₄+M₅/6? Describing a climb's difficulty leads one into describing not only crags but also snow- and ice-covered hills. The climbing world has therefore invented ratings for all sorts of terrain and levels of risk. The result resembles the Tower of Babel. Countries, organizations, and regions have devised their own terminologies.

When I started climbing in the Shawangunks in 1952, we rated the routes all either 4 or 5. We had no guidebook. Traditional ratings of 1, 2, and 3 required no ropes, 4 and 5 demanded gear and strategy, and 6 was so difficult that climbers needed direct aid, usually rope loops attached to pitons driven into cracks. The system dates to the 1930s for rating hikes and technical climbs in the Sierra Nevada but is widely used throughout North America.

Finer distinctions were inevitable since so many of our climbs were rated similarly; we started to talk about easy 5s and hard 5s. Because nearly all the routes were 5s, we followed the practice of subdividing the 5 rating from 5.1 to 5.8, after the Yosemite Decimal System. It calls for adding a decimal point to distinguish them: 5.1 and up as they get harder. In those days the Gunks had almost nothing beyond 5.7. There was a tantalizing 5.8 at the Skytop crag, initiated by the great Fritz Wiessner. A single carabiner 20 feet up showed where he had been, but it was some time before anybody else got up there.

New equipment, more climbers, and competitiveness pushed limits higher. After 5.8 came 5.9, at one time considered about as hard as any climb available. It wasn't. Defying the conventions of mathematics, the next grade was 5.10, not 5.91. We are now up to 5.15, with sub-designations (a, b, c, d) for the harder ones. Even these are imprecise. They do not, for example, distinguish between a segment that has only one 5.9 move and one that is 5.9 all the way. Direct-aid sections have a scale of their own: A₁ through A₅.



Trekkers who see this view of Dhaulagiri from Pun Hill in the Annapurna region will now find public toilets. See "Sanitation," page 125. STEVEN JERVIS

These terms are now used only for climbs purely on rock. Other scales use M on mixed snow, ice, and rock and WI for water ice. Bouldering (ropeless climbing near the ground) has grades all its own.

How far can these ratings be pushed? Records are made to be broken. The fastest mile run in the nineteenth century was about four minutes and twelve seconds. It wasn't until 1954 that Roger Bannister broke the coveted four-minute mark. Since then, the record has dropped another sixteen seconds. Even high schoolers have run four-minute miles. Whatever one can do, another can some day do a little better. There is doubtless a limit, but no one knows what it is, although it is safe to say that no one is likely to manage a 3:30 mile.

Climbing is more subjective than running. Psychology plays a larger role. Climbers debate how to rate degrees of difficulty. Some climbers excel on slabs, others on chimneys, and others at overhangs. Rating risk, or danger, is another category. An easy rock climb can be hazardous if there is no way to thread the rope through protection; a gentle mountain may be prone to avalanche. American rock guidebooks have borrowed from the movies for a risk rating: G, PG, R, X. G is very safe; X means if you fall you may die.

International ratings have developed independently, producing the confusion outlined in the *American Alpine Journal*. The British, who for many years

eschewed pitons and declared that “the leader must not fall,” used such terms as “severe” and “hard very severe” (HVS). By today’s much loftier standards, HVS is pretty moderate, so the Brits have devised EI through EII for the newer climbs.

Whatever the scale, ratings will rise, at least for a time. Last September the 24-year-old Czech climber Adam Ondra claimed the first 5.15d, in a sea cave in Norway. 5.16 is coming!

But, finally, the best way to anticipate a climb is to talk with someone who has done it. That person should preferably be the same height, weight, gender, and temperament as yourself.

In Memoriam: Norman Dyhrenfurth and Fred Beckey

Climbers who survive the mountains often have long lives. Noel Odell, who had the last glimpse of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine before their disappearance on Mt Everest in 1924, died at 96. The great Italian mountaineer Ricardo Cassin made it to 100. Autumn 2017 furnished two more names: Norman Dyhrenfurth, 99, and Fred Beckey, 94.

Dyhrenfurth was a major explorer of the Himalaya. In 1955 he led a post-monsoon attempt on Lhotse (8,516 m), then the world’s highest unclimbed peak. The effort failed in cold temperatures and wind. But in 1963 Dyhrenfurth led the triumphant Everest expedition. It placed five Americans and a Nepali on the summit by two different routes, one of which remains unrepeated. Dyhrenfurth returned to Everest in 1971 as head of a large group composed of climbers from nearly ten countries. It was an idealistic venture that dissolved into nationalistic acrimony and did not reach the top.

Fred Beckey was the most prolific of American climbers, making many hundreds of first ascents and new routes. Although he rarely ventured overseas, he left a mark on virtually all the major ranges of North America. For many years every issue of the *American Alpine Journal* featured Beckey’s numerous ascents. He started early; in 1942, at age 19 he and his younger brother Helmy made an astounding second ascent of the highest peak in British Columbia, Mt Waddington (13,186 ft), following in part the route pioneered by Fritz Wiessner six years before.

After serving in the 10th Mountain Division in the Second World War, Fred returned to college, but mainly to climbing. For years he roamed the

country in his car, at one time a pink Thunderbird. He was fiercely possessive of his anticipated routes and was said to have stashed provisions at the base of some them. Said one climbing partner, "He had this mysterious thing that everyone called his little black book. This was a highly touted document of the mountains, climbs, and various routes that hadn't been done. He was always going through his book, setting up these trips." Among his greatest successes were the 1954 first ascents of Alaska's Mts Deborah (12,339 ft) and Hunter (14,573 ft) with Henry Meybohm and Heinrich Harrar.

Beckey always wanted to be there first. In 1959 Bob Page and I established a new route on Table Mountain (11,106 ft) in the Tetons. The very next day Fred did a much harder line. Don't tell me this was a coincidence. He must have somehow found out about us. Certainly he was single-minded about his climbing. He was famously flirtatious but never married, asserting that domesticity would be a distraction from the peaks. He was described as an "ornery old cuss"; I suspect he was the same way when younger. He was no expedition man. When he was on Dyhrenfurth's 1955 Lhotse venture, Dyhrenfurth was unhappy with his performance. "He risked the life of Dr. Bruno Spirig. Fred left him at Camp 4 without adequate assistance. Bruno was snow-blind and nearly died of cerebral edema.... Dr. Spirig didn't even have a sleeping bag, he didn't have down clothing.... The next morning, we got Spirig down and he recovered. From then on, people had no confidence in Fred Beckey, I'm very sorry to say." Unsurprisingly, Dyhrenfurth did not invite Beckey on his Everest expeditions.

Beckey scoured the United States and Canada, in his thirst for new climbs. A documentary film is being made about him called *Dirtbag*.

Fred was indefatigable; he was climbing and planning almost to the day he died.

In Memoriam: Hayden Kennedy and Inge Perkins

We are accustomed to young climbers dying, but a special poignancy attaches to the deaths of Hayden Kennedy, 27, and Inge Perkins, 23. Kennedy had great achievements, including same-season ascents of K7 (6,934 m) and the Ogre (7,285 m) in the Karakoram in 2012. Earlier that year he made a controversial climb of the Compressor Route on Cerro Torre (10,262 ft) in Patagonia. He and his partner destroyed many expansion bolts they had not used,

thus making the route a lot harder. Last October 7 he and his girlfriend/partner Perkins set out on skis for Imp Peak (11,202 ft) in Montana. They were caught in an avalanche. Kennedy survived; Perkins did not. After a three-hour search, Kennedy left the scene. He gave rescuers a detailed search map, which aided the recovery of her body. The next day Kennedy took his own life.

This devastating story received wide coverage in the press and on blogs. Consider a few points about that coverage:

- The accomplishments of Inge Perkins seemed slighted. She had climbed up to grade 5.14 and was a long-distance skier.
- The articles devoted much discussion to the hazards of the mountains and the morality of suicide.
- Perhaps most significant, they underscored the need for safety. The pair had not done a check of their avalanche beacons. Perkins's was found, turned off, in her backpack.

No matter how you look at this story, it is just terribly sad.

Yosemite

That soaring granite in Yosemite Valley is daunting, but it usually seems solid. That is not always so. Late last September a chunk of rock “the size of an apartment building” fell off El Capitan, killing one and injuring a second. (Neither was climbing at the time.) Yosemite National Park released a statement calling rockfalls “a common occurrence in Yosemite Valley,” estimating 80 per year, “though many more rockfalls go unreported.” And, as if to prove the park correct, another occurred the next day.

Despite such hazards, climbers flock to El Cap and climb it very fast. In October 2007 Jim Reynolds and Brad Gobright set a new speed record on the Nose route at 2 hours 19 minutes and 44 seconds.

Nepal Himalaya

Female Sherpas and women climbers from other countries have achieved a great deal in recent years. Here are a few of their feats.

Dawa Yangzum Sherpa has become the country's first certified female international mountain guide. In 2014 she climbed K2 (8,611 m) with an all-female Nepali team. Lhakpa Sherpa has now summited Everest (8,850

m) eight times, a record for women. News outlets widely reported that on May 21, 2017, Indian climber Anshu Jamsenpa became the first woman to reach the top of Everest twice within five days. She was the first Indian woman to climb Everest for the fifth time. The same day Vilborg Arna Gissurardóttir became the first Icelandic woman to summit Everest. Also on that day, Ada Tsang was the first woman from Hong Kong to climb the highest peak.

When George Mallory and his countrymen made their lonely attempts on Everest in the 1920s, they probably did not anticipate that one day it would be overcrowded. The summit has been reached more than 7,000 times, with most of the action in the last 25 years. Some expeditions have cleared garbage and empty oxygen bottles, but much of this waste remains on the great mountain. The grimmest signs of human activity are the corpses. Some 300 have died on the slopes of Everest, and most still lie there. The most famous is Mallory, whose body, with a rope still around his waist, was discovered in 1999, 75 years after his disappearance. He was left in place, with as fine a burial as could be improvised on that high, rocky terrain. Others have been treated less respectfully, left where they fell. Some of these bodies act as route markers. Friends and families would like their loved ones' remains, but retrieval of Everest bodies is dangerous and expensive. Three Indian climbers who died in 2016 were brought down a year later. The *New York Times* (December 19, 2017) devoted an entire sixteen-page special section to this effort. (See Sandy Stott's commentary, "The Big Meh," in Books and Media on page 147.) The achievement demonstrates that bodies can be retrieved, but that most won't be.

Since 1985, commercial guiding services have led clients up two of the many routes to the top. One is via the North Col (as attempted by the British expeditions of 1921 through 1938) and the other is the South Col route, first climbed in 1953. About 98 percent of Everest climbers use one of these. The most are done from the south in the last two weeks of May, which makes for considerable crowding. More than 500 ascended this way in 2017. The other lines are much harder, and there is limited incentive to repeat them. Only a few uncompleted routes remain. The most famous is the notoriously hazardous Fantasy Ridge on the Kangshung (East) Face. Most hard Himalayan climbing will likely be on lower peaks, some of which remain untouched.

Sanitation. The *Kathmandu Post* reports that public toilets are being built on Pun Hill (also called Poon Hill), a popular trekking area in the Annapurna

region. “Tourists arriving here are facing difficulty to answer nature’s call due to lack of toilets,” the Ghorepani Hotel Management subcommittee vice chair Sushil Pun said.

In Memoriam: Elizabeth Hawley, and a Note on Sources

Gone, alas, is *News from Nepal*, a newsletter out of Portland, Oregon. It was a one-man operation. Bob Pierce, the one man, died recently at age 92, leaving a message that “the entire editorial staff has been wiped out” and that there would be no more newsletters.

A great deal of information, often remarkably timely, can be found online. One of the best of the numerous blogs is that of Alan Arnette. But the prime source for Nepal Himalaya remains the *Himalayan Database*. Its vast data were first compiled by the redoubtable Elizabeth Hawley. Hawley was an American journalist who spent most of her adult life in Kathmandu. Although not a climber herself—she rarely ventured into the high mountains and never visited Everest Base Camp—she became fascinated by the expeditions that passed through Kathmandu. She interviewed their members and made meticulous accounts of their experiences. For many years, every issue of the *American Alpine Journal* featured her reports.

Hawley was a well-known and somewhat enigmatic figure. She did not marry and had no children. In Kathmandu, she drove around in her blue Volkswagen Beetle, relentlessly pursuing interviews. Her copious data were preserved in the *Himalayan Database*, thanks to the American climber and database expert Richard Salisbury and a Nepali woman who did data entry. This took eleven years. Salisbury now maintains the database, which is available online. It is an invaluable resource.

In January 2018 Hawley died in her adopted hometown, Kathmandu. She was 94. Read more about her in Bernadette McDonald’s 2005 biography *I’ll Call You in Kathmandu* (Mountaineers Books).

—Steven Jervis
Alpina Editor

Deer Park

after Wang Wei

Solitary on the mountain,
deep in the forest, no one for miles—

though voices from the valley
float up in the distance.

Returning to cast shadows, late sun
breaks through the pine boughs.

Reappearing again, the light illumines
the moss, green as jade reflections.

Wally Swist

WALLY SWIST's books include *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012); *The Daodejing: A New Interpretation*, with David Breeden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015); *Invocation* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015), and *The Windbreak Pine* (Snapshot Press, 2016). *The View of the River* (Kelsay Books) and *Candling the Eggs* (Shanti Arts) appeared in 2017. *Singing for Nothing: Selected Nonfiction as Literary Memoir* (The Operating System) will be published in 2018.

News and Notes

The Cog Railway Pushes Forward with Plans for a Luxury Hotel Near the Summit of Mount Washington

On a snowy evening a year and a half ago—on December 8, 2016—Mount Washington Railway Co. owner Wayne Presby sat before more than 40 members of the Coos County Planning Board in Lancaster, New Hampshire and announced his intentions of introducing more development on Mount Washington. The owner of the Cog Railway, a mountain train that has been taking passengers to the summit since 1869, is pushing forward with plans for a luxury hotel on the tallest and most iconic peak in the Northeast to mark the Cog's 150th anniversary. Calling the project Skyline Lodge, Presby proposes to build the 25,000-square-foot, 35-room luxury hotel and restaurant in the fragile alpine tundra at 5,600 feet of elevation, perched above the



The proposed hotel would stand here, at 5,600 feet in the alpine tundra below Mount Washington. ANNE SKIDMORE

cliffs of the Great Gulf headwall and along the historic Appalachian Trail. The hotel would be elevated above the 99-foot wide strip of land historically owned by the Cog Railway and encompassing the cog train tracks. Presby promises a place reminiscent of the old accommodations that occupied the summit for more than a century.

When the White Mountains were first being explored by settlers, the adventurous would travel to the top of Mount Washington on foot or (for a time) horse, via numerous paths, most notably the Crawford Path, which was completed in 1819. However, in 1861, when the five-year carriage road project was complete, the mountain suddenly became accessible for all. Hotels were built, and rebuilt, on the rocky and windswept summit all the way until 1980, when the last hotel was dismantled where the current visitor center resides. Mount Washington is widely considered one of the first tourist destinations in the country, and its popularity remains strong, with more than 300,000 visitors annually.

The Cog Railway construction was completed in 1869. For those who preferred the natural beauty of the higher summits, the development of the mountain must have been extraordinarily disheartening. As nineteenth-century hiker Charles Dudley Warner wrote about the Cog Railway operation in 1886,

Never again by the new rail can he have the sensation that he enjoyed in the ascent of Mount Washington by the old bridle path from Crawford's, when, climbing out of the woods and advancing upon that marvelous backbone of rock, the whole world opened upon his awed vision, and the pyramid of the summit stood up in majesty against the sky. Nothing, indeed, is valuable that is easily obtained.

Battles over ownership of the mountain frequented the New Hampshire court system. A telling sign of the mindset of that era.

When the news of the Skyline Lodge proposal broke in early 2017, it made both regional and national headlines. *The Wall Street Journal* headline read "Coming Soon: a Luxury Hotel With the Worst Weather You've Ever Seen." As time went on and word spread, opposition to the lodge became louder. A small group of climbers from the Mount Washington Valley region formed Keep the Whites Wild, a New Hampshire-based nonprofit organization. Their mission: "to preserve and protect the diverse biology, natural aesthetic, and intrinsic value of New England's White Mountain Region." They quickly

launched Protect Mount Washington, a campaign specifically designed to stop the Skyline Lodge proposal. The Protect Mount Washington campaign started an online petition just days after Wayne Presby spoke at the planning board meeting, and it has now received more than 19,000 signatures. The campaign hired an environmental attorney, Jason Reimers of BCM Environmental Land Law, to defend the recreational, ecological, and economic benefits that Mount Washington provides to the region.

In February 2017, two months after the announcement, six conservation groups, including The Nature Conservancy and the Appalachian Mountain Club, sent a joint letter to the Coos County Planning Board, arguing that the hotel plan would greatly undermine Mount Washington's important ecological, scenic, and cultural value as well as Coos County's own master plan.

The letter begins, "We write to express our deep concerns regarding the Cog Railway Company's publicly announced proposal to construct a hotel on Mount Washington, in the mountain's highly sensitive alpine zone...the developer [has provided] in public statements, in the media, and at your public meetings sufficient information for our organizations to express strong concerns about, and opposition to, the adverse impacts such a project would have on one of New Hampshire's most iconic natural and cultural resources."

In March 2017, the Protect Mount Washington Campaign submitted its own letter to the planning board, along with signatures from seven additional local and national conservation and outdoor recreation groups that included the American Alpine Club and the Access Fund. The letter states they will vigorously contest the siting of a hotel in fragile alpine environment and they support construction of a hotel at the Cog Railway Marshfield Base Station where "such a project could foster greater employment opportunity, will have less environmental impact and less strain on the mountain's infrastructure."

Today, we know more than we did in the hotel era about the alpine ecosystem's rarity and fragility. This is evidenced by zoning laws that protect Mount Washington and the alpine throughout the Presidential Range from development. These county ordinances

regulate certain land use activities in mountain areas in order to preserve the natural equilibrium of vegetation, geology, slope, soil and climate in order to reduce danger to public health and safety posed

by unstable mountain areas, to protect water quality and to preserve mountain areas for their scenic values and recreational opportunities.

This includes not allowing any use above 2,700 feet, including structures, that would be detrimental to those natural resources. The surrounding areas around the mountain were integrated into the National Forest system in 1918, but the Auto Road, Cog Railway corridor, and the summit of Mount Washington remained in private hands. Although the Cog Railway owns the land, zoning variances and special exceptions would need to be granted by the planning board if the Skyline Lodge building application were to be approved because of its place within the alpine zone.

The alpine areas of New Hampshire cover a little more than 4,000 acres, making up just 0.07 percent of the state's landmass. A majority of it lies in the Presidential Range, below the summit of Mount Washington and neighboring peaks. Approximately 70 species of plants are largely restricted to the alpine zones of the White Mountains, with three species (Alpine rattlesnake root, also called Boott's rattlesnake root, dwarf cinquefoil, and mountain avens) endemic or near endemic. The White Mountain fritillary and arctic butterfly, two species that are listed as threatened under the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan, rely on these plants for their survival. These species number only in the hundreds, and they exist solely in the narrow alpine elevation around Mount Washington.

The American pipit's only breeding spot in the White Mountains is Mount Washington. There, the pipits use alpine sedge meadow communities and fell-fields associated with cushion plants as their breeding ground. Scientists generally agree that plants do not recover quickly from damage in arctic-type ecosystems. Numerous studies have been done on the alpine plant communities around Mount Washington and the higher summits that focused on plant recovery after a disturbance event. Research has shown there is some recovery of the alpine plant community after a disturbance event, but the ecological value of that area is significantly diminished, as the variety of plants, especially rare plants, is not as rich as in the undisturbed plots.

As we went to press, Cog Railway had not formally applied for the hotel construction permitting through Coos County, but Wayne Presby told reporters that Skyline Lodge would move forward but not be built in time for the Cog's 150th anniversary in 2019. There is no evidence to the contrary, as

surveyors were seen in the proposed building area late last year. In December 2017, the railway company sent excavators from the base station up along their tracks and began moving soil, which could be interpreted as a step toward building the lodge.

Without any local or state permitting, the company cleared and widened an old utility trench scar that serves the summit buildings with the stated intention of driving passenger-carrying snowcat machines up and down the mountain.

The Cog Railway land is zoned as a “protected district” (PD6), and only certain recreational activities are allowed on that land without permits. This digging alarmed conservation organizations, and Keep the Whites Wild argued that the use of the land as a road intended to bring tourists to the summit of the mountain would be prohibited according to county regulations. Presby responded by stating he is well within his rights and told reporters that he had built a recreational trail, not a road, and didn’t need a permit. The debate sparked a letter from Keep the Whites Wild to the Coos County commissioners requesting that the commissioners cite the Cog Railway with violations and require it to restore the land that was disturbed. “This construction should have, by County definition, required similar permitting to Skyline Lodge on the local level, and a state level Department of Environmental Services Alteration of Terrain Permit,” Keep the Whites Wild wrote. The Coos County Commissioners forwarded the letter from KtWW to the planning board and asked for an advisory opinion. Planning board members asked Earl Duval, the attorney representing the Cog Railway, for more information concerning the road before a decision whether the Cog violated county regulations could be determined.

Winter relents to spring on the mountain, revealing budding alpine flowers that survived the long cold months. Delicate but hardy butterflies emerge, insects and spiders roam the lichen-covered rocks, and the American pipit returns to its breeding ground. In these warm months, hundreds of tourists and hikers reach the peak to experience the unique environment of Mount Washington. The peak’s history of tourism and development is the oldest and most extensive in the country. Its summit has seen generations of hotels and buildings, and its flanks are interrupted with an auto road, a railroad, and hiking trails. As the alpine environment feels the pressure of increased human traffic and our current age of climate change, it may be time to change history

to protect the diminishing resources that bring us up to Mount Washington in the first place.

—*Courtney Ley*

COURTNEY LEY is a climber, photographer, and writer who lives in Concord, New Hampshire.

Las Cruces, New Mexico: Three Hours Overdue and Late for Dinner

Some years ago, on a visit to the Southwest, I was taken with the low, spiry mountain range on the eastern edge of Las Cruces, New Mexico. The unusually formed pinnacles, visually arresting, especially around sunset, resemble organ pipes, hence their name: the Organ Mountains. Local stories described one of the peaks, the 9,000-foot-high Organ Needle, as both inaccessible and the toughest day hike in the United States. I was intrigued. I talked it over with my staunch Connecticut hiker friend, Amerigo “Mig” Farina. He wanted to go because we’d never trekked in desert terrain. And Aric Rindfleisch—one of my first rock-climbing partners, then living in Arizona—said he would like to join us.

As we thought of the best time for this climb, we considered that we wouldn’t have to worry about altitude acclimatization, crevasses, icy slopes, or freezing temperatures. We would not need crampons or ice axes. The problems instead would be heat, carrying enough water, loose rock, and rattlesnakes. We settled for late September, hoping it wouldn’t be too hot. There is a dry heat, everybody always says.

The evening we arrived, tired as we were, we drove out to the house of Dick Ingraham, a retired New Mexico State University professor, longtime mountaineer, and an authority on the Organs. He drew a rough map of the route. We must hike up steep, rough, and rocky terrain before the final scramble up the Needle (which actually is a rather blunt mountain tower). Our main concerns would be finding the way through thick brush following an intermittent faint trail and avoiding turning into the wrong canyon.

Looking east from Dick’s terrace, we saw the tallest summit near the right end of the massif, a trapezoidal-shaped peak with its twin protuberances, an “ear” on each side. He pointed out some significant landmarks, all with

picturesque names: Cuevas, Yellow Rocks, Grey Eminence, Dark Canyon. The Dark Canyon is the splinter of sky between the Organ Needle and its right ear. That ear is actually a high, practically impassable wall.

The next day, while Aric was driving over from Tucson, Mig and I set out to explore the first few miles of our route. The trailhead is at Dripping Springs, a state-managed natural preserve. Two office staffers tried to dissuade us, saying that under best conditions it took even strong hikers upward of ten hours to get to the top and back. We'd run into this kind of official resistance before. My view of it was they thought they were dealing with dilettantes or climbers too old for this (Mig was 71, I 63 at the time). They referred us to "the boss," an affable guide who was much more receptive to our plan. He showed us the start of the route where it went into a small box canyon. It followed the north side of an impressive outcrop called the Cuevas (caves). The Cuevas is shaped somewhat like an elongated circus tent. It runs perpendicular (west to east) to the Organs that soar above it. That next night the Cuevas profile would be our most important guidepost.

We hiked to the foot of the Grey Eminence, a broad appendage of the Needle itself, where we stashed three quarts of liquids and a climbing rope. Thinking we'd have plenty of daylight, we started later that next morning so we could park within the fenced enclosure. Weaving through the cactus growth was hot work. More sun-sensitive than my companions, I'd smeared my face with zinc oxide and was cloaked like Sister Wendy, hat brim pulled over a bandana worn babushka-style, shielding my neck and ears. Aric held up a long stick bearing a furry spider, wide as a man's hand, the only tarantula I've ever seen. We reached our cache in about two hours. I took the rope and exchanged a partly consumed bottle for a full one, leaving 2.5 quarts for the return trip.

We went to the right of the Grey Eminence. Although there's a discernible path and small cairn markers to the left, Dick had advised us to go right. It's a long, steep rock chute, talus all the way to the top of the Eminence. At the top of the chute, crawling over rock and through heavy brush, we came onto the saddle. Here were massive junipers and a great vista toward our destination. The smog and fray of the desert city were thousands of feet below us and temporarily hidden from view. A wonderful wilderness look and feeling about that place—it was a perfect lunch spot.

After our lunch break, heading from the saddle into another brush-filled arroyo (a dry watercourse), we heard voices echoing off the giant buttresses and towers: female and male voices, other climbers. We crossed the arroyo

on a series of open slabs. When we reached a canyon opening to the right, Mig and Aric were certain it was Dark Canyon. I disagreed, but we turned in there. As we progressed up it, following a clear path and occasional stone piles along the left side, I was heartened, convinced now that my friends must be correct.

Mig was worried about time. It was 2:30 P.M.; we'd been at it over six hours. He was implying we should turn back. Jesus, no, I thought; we had to be close. "Let's at least see where this goes," I said. At the high end of the canyon, they were ahead of me again. I heard Aric holler, "Ed, here it is!"

"Does it look doable?"

"Yeah, it looks easy."

It surely did. Mig was standing at the base of what we assumed was the standard way up. It looked to be just 100 feet or so of easy rock. Aric was already on it, impulsively climbing up unroped. Mig was dubious. He was not a rock climber; it didn't look simple to him. I assured him he'd be safe on belay, but he declined. Too bad, he was so close yet wouldn't see the summit. It would be worse when, shortly, we learned that the usual route, which he probably would've tried, was about 60 yards farther along.

Carrying the rope, I followed Aric. He'd left his pack on a ledge partway up. As I joined him on the summit, "the kids" (as we called them—three gals, two guys, students from a nearby college) were already heading down toward that easier gully.

The view from the Needle is striking. You are close to the tops of the adjacent pinnacles, looking down on them. The tower drops abruptly to the valley floor extending west, not all that far, to Las Cruces. The dramatic drop-off from the small summit spooked us some—the plateau seemed to move slightly as though shifting in a wind—a touch of acrophobia. Aric said one of the girls had been weeping, apparently overcome by the exposure, vastness, or her elation at having made the top. Perhaps all of these things.

We put on our harnesses and uncoiled the climbing rope, preparing to descend. Then we started down, belaying each other from one ledge to the next. Near the bottom I spotted Mig below us, descending into the canyon. I hollered for him not to proceed alone. He said he would wait farther down Dark Canyon.

But then, with just one short pitch to go, Aric wanted to climb back up and exit from that gully. Although he'd sailed up this, he was uneasy down-climbing it. I guess I thought that was foolish, as we were almost down, but

what the heck, we'd get to see the other route. Mig would have to sit there waiting for us. In our excitement Aric and I were oblivious of the time.

Back in Dark Canyon I took a quick standing break, munching a green apple, savoring the juice. Dehydration was overtaking us. Mig had waited perhaps 45 minutes at the head of the canyon. I asked if he thought we'd be caught in the dark. "It is inevitable." From the stiff reply I gathered he was pissed. But the mood lightened when we caught up with the other group at the saddle. The guys were carrying the kind of plastic gallon water jugs sold in supermarkets. One of them offered us some of his water; making light of the generosity, he said it would ease his load for the trip down. These nice kids were giving away their emergency rations. At the Eminence we parted ways. They went right, we to the left—down that seemingly endless talus slope.

By the time we got to our warm water and Gatorade, it wasn't nearly enough. I thought we should drink some water and conserve the Gatorade, but Aric wanted it right away, and we soaked it up like dried sponges. He'd saved a package of miniature carrots—not my idea of a terrific snack, but each tiny specimen held a few drops of delicious moisture.

Shortly after 7 P.M. the sun went down in front of us. We heard the kids' voices as they scooted off downrange. Then it turned dark fast. In daylight we'd have had about an hour to go. A crescent moon in a starry cloudless sky was the only illumination.

Heading toward the silhouetted Cuevas, we were in and out of arroyos, stumbling along as best we could, trying to avoid the rocks and thorn plants. Cactus needles in our legs left purplish welts for many months afterwards. In fatigue, Aric's style was to push hard for a quarter mile or so, then flop down exhausted. Mig kept calling for us to hold up, unable to locate us in the dark. We could have simply sat it out until dawn, then walked out easily. The notion of an impromptu overnight on the high desert had some appeal—it was pleasantly warm, and we were all weary enough to nap on a sandbar or slab of rock. If we hadn't been so thirsty, we might have done that. We talked about the night-feeding rattlesnakes but for whatever reasons weren't too worried about them.

Aric climbed the bank of a dry creek bed and encountered a wire fence. He announced there was a trail on the other side, a groomed gravel trail that seemed to lead toward the Cuevas. Helping Mig over the fence I wondered where his stamina came from—he keeps himself skinny as a stick. I hoped that at his age—eight years hence—I would have such spark.

We got to the car at 10:30, having been out more than fourteen hours.

Arriving in his pickup truck, the caretaker was understandably upset. He had talked to the kids about us, set his truck lights blinking in our direction, and seen my answering flashlight signals from above Fillmore Canyon. But he couldn't have known we were all right. Mig told him, "No one is more contrite about this than we are."

"OK, all right," he said. He led us up to the visitor center where we took turns guzzling from a water fountain. Then he drove back down to unlock the gate for us.

To atone for having gotten them into this, I treated Aric and Mig to a supper of sorts, beer and soup at a late-night bistro in the university area. On the way back to the inn, we made a second stop at an all-night supermarket, seeking cures for our dehydration. Aric bought a six-pack of Coca-Cola. A large plastic jug of the stuff wouldn't do; he wanted six separate bottles to take him through the night.

Psyched from the adventure—elated we'd made it up there, then walked out OK in the dark—I couldn't get to sleep right away. My sister Linda lives in El Paso, and we had planned to meet her for dinner. About seven hours before, while with sinking feelings we were watching the sun disappear behind the city, she and some of her friends had been driving in from El Paso to join us, the no-shows. It was much too late to call and explain things.

Still gulping in liquids at 2:30 A.M., I was re-doing the climb in my head, picturing each stage of our route. It wasn't any great mountaineering feat but in many respects more gratifying than being led, roped to a guide, to one of the world's more famous peaks. I loved the long physical day in that rugged landscape.

Later our hostess at the inn would insist, incorrectly, that we'd been "lost in the Organs." True, we had strayed from anything resembling a trail, but in that open land and with the lights of Las Cruces aglow in the valley, there was never any confusion about where we were heading.

The day Aric left Las Cruces, Mig and I went searching for a desolate dirt road leading to a trail to a lesser mountain known as the South Rabbit Ear. We had trouble locating it, and we stopped a woman passing in a pickup truck. Somewhere in her 60s, wire-thin, sitting erectly in the driver's seat and wearing a black cowboy hat, she knew where we could find the right landmarks: a stone hut and the entrance to an abandoned mine.

Sometimes at night, when waiting to fall asleep, I'll think of that trip to the Organs and go over the stages of the route, like counting sheep. And in my mind's eye I'll see the black-hatted woman in her truck, nodding in the direction of the old stone hut and simultaneously point-shooting her finger at where we were supposed to be looking. Something uniquely Western even in this gesture. "Nope, lower," she'd said, correcting our gazes. "You're lookin' too high." Of course we would be.

—*Ed Fischer*

ED FISCHER lives in Glastonbury, Connecticut.

New Hampshire Halts Northern Pass Lines Through White Mountains

The New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee charged with key permitting authority over the now-infamous Northern Pass Transmission proposal voted unanimously on February 1 to halt the project. The Appalachian Mountain Club and a contingent of partner organizations, local residents, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts from across New England are rejoicing at the decisive ruling.

The SEC indicated that Eversource Energy, the utility company behind Northern Pass, had failed to ensure that its \$1.6 billion proposal for 192 miles of transmission corridor, including 132 miles above-ground line using more than 1800 towers up to 165 feet tall, would not unduly affect the orderly development of the region.

AMC and thousands of citizens plus officials from 30 of the 31 impacted towns have opposed the project since Eversource first proposed Northern Pass in 2010. The SEC saw through what was a poorly planned project and application whose technical flaws were outdone only by its misinformation. Eversource officials said in a statement that they are "shocked and outraged" by the decision and have already vowed to appeal—a process that could ultimately find them in New Hampshire Supreme Court.

—*Susan Arnold*

SUSAN ARNOLD is AMC's vice president for conservation.

In Memoriam

Bruce P. Sloat

Bruce Sloat died August 11, 2017, at 86, after a series of strokes over two years. His wife, Mary, said the final one was accompanied by a stunning thunderclap over the Connecticut River in the White Mountains—a fitting coincidence, for Sloat himself had an overlarge, undeniable effect on the Whites, and on their principal nonprofit steward, the Appalachian Mountain Club. He worked for AMC more than twenty years, including, from 1966 to 1970, as hut system manager, succeeding George T. Hamilton.

Bruce Parmelee Sloat was born in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, on November 16, 1930. He sought the White Mountains in the 1950s as a skier and met huts manager Joe Dodge, who admired Sloat's mechanical abilities. Dodge had Sloat fix all things Pinkham and sent him on mountain assignments, one involving a short fill-in at Carter Notch Hut. Sloat, no cook, inveigled hut guests to prepare meals, an episode recounted in his unpublished memoir.

In spring 1951 Dodge hired Sloat to work at the former Tuckerman Ravine shelter. However, Sloat proved too valuable maintaining Pinkham Notch's hydroelectric plant, and Dodge sent another worker to Tuck instead. The



Bruce Sloat (right) was a superb leader. Here he and workers prepare 180-pound propane cylinders for helicopter transport to huts in 1969. AMC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

man accidentally burned down the administrative building (also known as “HoJo’s”). Dodge later sent Sloat to the Mount Washington Observatory, where Sloat rose to chief observer. He also tested jet engines atop Mount Washington and worked for the Cog Railway.

Sloat and fellow skier Mary Edgerton—later a Pinkham alumna—met in 1960, introduced by AMCers Jack and Ann Dodge Middleton. “Ann made the decision that Bruce and I *had* to be together,” Mary Sloat said. They married in 1962 and raised three sons (Ben, Willis, Stuart) on their Lost Nation farm, where the visionary and master innovator built two hydroelectric plants and the Sunnybrook Cider Mill. They created the Sunnybrook Montessori School. Bruce built a cabin on a nearby mountain and convinced the state of New Hampshire to rename it Mount Mary.

At least two consequential initiatives marked Sloat’s management: bringing the physical huts to higher ecological standards and expanding the guided hikes program. The latter was supercharged by the subsequent appointment of former Greenleaf hutmaster Tom Deans as AMC executive director, who built AMC’s environmental education programming to national stature.

Sloat directed the construction of Mizpah Spring Hut (1965), and renovated others, in ways sensitive to mountain soils, plants, streams. He believed AMC must practice environmental ideals it espoused. He upgraded water systems, eliminated gaboons (mountainside garbage pits), airlifting residues for proper valley disposal, ended gasoline-powered generators, and developed fly-out toilets (55-gallon drums), which replaced flush toilets. Colleagues at his retirement cited “Sloat Airways” for “honey-dipping and other jobs of rank.” Roasting Bruce’s engineering know-how, chief observer Guy Gosselin remarked, “Now, when you flush the toilets at Greenleaf Hut on Mount Lafayette, the bubbles come up in Star Lake on Mount Madison.”

A huts manager who never held a summer hutmastership or cooked a meal for patrons, Sloat was a superb leader, respected, liked by staff, a genius at keeping remote facilities running, and facile with numbers. He knew pennywise the comparative costs of having AMC burros (called “donks”) pack supplies versus using hutmen. “Two-legged donkeys,” Sloat said, “are less expensive than four-legged ones because you have to feed four-legged ones all year.” Applying a similar calculus to helicopters versus hut croos, he began greater chopper use to reduce tonnage costs and minimize packing injuries.

Sloat studied at the University of Vermont and at Syracuse. Innately an engineer, patently smart, he nonetheless had a medical problem that limited

his reading ability, frustrating him severely, and he left without a degree. Well after his retirement, doctors diagnosed it—dyslexia. The condition did not prevent high life achievements, including his work as a researcher at Sanders Associates in Nashua.

At services in Weeks State Park in Lancaster and Kendal at Hanover, a retirement campus where he and Mary lived parts of later years, friends shared stories, including contingents who worked under Bruce. One theme was frugality, such as his reluctance to install a shower at Zealand Falls, telling croo to wash in the stream. One OH (“old hutperson”) described Sloat’s buying massive quantities of hut toilet paper at a heavy discount from Groveton Paper Company. The fleur-de-lis motif offended some Canadian visitors, a cultural kerfuffle. Pragmatic Bruce, ever the economizer, stood by his plan.

—*W. Kent Olson and Douglass P. Teschner*

Joseph Brooks Dodge Jr.

Joseph Brooks Dodge Jr., an Olympic skier, mountain devotee, retired businessman, and the son of the Appalachian Mountain Club institution Joe Dodge, died at home in Jackson, New Hampshire, on January 17. He was 88 and was preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Ann Schaefer Dodge.

The younger Dodge was born in North Conway, New Hampshire, in 1929 and had a rugged upbringing in Pinkham Notch below Mount Washington with his father; his mother, Cherstine; and his sister, Ann. Brooks Jr., or Hiram, as his dad called him, began working on the AMC hut croo at age 13. From 1943 to 1946, he worked at Madison Spring Hut and was hutmaster in 1945 and 1946. Summers from 1947 through 1953 he worked on a construction crew throughout the hut system. He and the late William Putnam were the alleged pranksters who during that period “bearded” the crag on Cannon Mountain called Old Man of the Mountain by hanging pine trees from his chin.

Brooks Dodge was brought up in an era when alpine skiing was just taking hold in America. His passion for skiing began at an early age and ended up landing him in the U.S. Skiing Hall of Fame and with the reputation as one of the pioneers of extreme skiing. While still a teenager in the 1940s, Brooks completed several first descents in Tuckerman Ravine, including “Dodge’s Drop.” He added eleven skiable routes in Tucks by the 1950s.

Dodge raced through college on the ski team at Dartmouth College, where he studied civil engineering on a scholarship, washing pots on the side. He started with the class of 1951 but graduated in 1953 due to leaves of absence

for three semesters to compete in the 1950 Federation International du Ski and the 1952 Olympics.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1953 through 1955, and on his second assignment to Garmisch, Germany, he raced on the Army ski team. He participated in the 1952 and 1956 Olympics, achieving a sixth place in giant slalom in Oslo in 1952 and a fourth place in slalom in Cortina in 1956. In these years, he also helped develop innovations in tighter skiwear and safer bindings for racers. In the mid-1950s, he was part of a team that started developing the Wildcat Mountain Ski Area.

After his marriage, he earned a master's degree in business administration from Harvard in 1958. He worked for Polaroid and then many years for Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes, a commercial real estate development firm in Boston of which he became senior vice president. He and his wife continued to ski and lead trips to Europe. They also brought the first groups of skiers in 1965 to heli-ski in the backcountry of the Canadian Rockies with Hans Gmoser.

In middle age he flew gliders competitively, and he and his wife became licensed pilots, running a soaring center in Glen, New Hampshire. In 1978, though, Dodge suffered a serious accident during a glider competition. With his wife's help and encouragement, he started bicycling. Despite a fused ankle, he continued to ski and developed new techniques to accommodate his limitations.

His love for the mountains and the outdoors pervaded his life. He had an analytical mind, and he loved to create model railroads. He had a competitive spirit, always going after the elegant form.

Former AMC hut crew member Sheldon Perry adds,

Brooks's success in skiing came from a keen attention to detail. In his mind, skiing was less a sport and more a dance to be performed with grace, power, and precision. Before any run his routine would begin: relaxing and flexing his hands, then his arms and shoulders, casting away any tension in his torso. As music is to a dancer, the slope and the snow conditions before him became his choreographer: a few quick and light turns here, then an expansive and reaching arc to utilize the broader terrain, never stopping his performance until the slope itself justified it.

Brooks enjoyed mentoring teenagers (like me). He taught by example, skiing down first, and then stopping to see how he might have challenged them. In April and May, those fortunate youngsters often

followed him up the narrow, steep, and rock-walled chutes on Mount Washington. His initial descents down these no-fall gullies earned him the reputation as the first extreme skier. But his approach was smart and calculating, never daredevil, fully understanding the consequence of hubris. It was here, on the ridge with the chute before him, that Brooks would honor this dramatic landscape with his clear, crisp, melodic yodel, as if to say, “I live for this!”

—Sources: *Conway Daily Sun* and *Sheldon Perry*

David Hardy

The New England Trails community lost a champion when Dave Hardy died peacefully on November 6, 2017, surrounded by family and friends after a year of battling cancer. Since the early 1990s, Dave served the trail community of the Northeast, the majority of that time spent as the director of trails programs at the Green Mountain Club, a position that is the epicenter of trails for the Green Mountains but also deeply connected to the entire region.

In his role at GMC, Hardy served as a protector and maintainer of the Long Trail. He always had the best interests of the trail in mind and took his role seriously. He was able to take a long-term view and had the patience to navigate complicated projects involving a diverse set of partners and constituents. He touched almost every mile of the Long Trail, through treadway, shelters, and outhouses. The extensive GMC system of historic shelters remains partly due to his drive to preserve them. Hardy’s reputation throughout New England’s Appalachian Trail management community was one of practicality and camaraderie, and he had an ability like no other to parse out, and tear apart, new regional or national trails policies.

He leaves an extraordinary trail legacy. It includes the monumental achievement of the Long Trail relocation through the Winooski River Valley, realizing a 100-year-old vision for the trail, including the construction of a 224-foot steel suspension bridge. It includes restoration of historic shelters and lodges, including Taft and Butler Lodges on Mount Mansfield. It includes trail relocations through Smugglers’ Notch, Stratton, and the relocation of the Appalachian Trail in the Thundering Falls area. It includes implementing new designs for accessibility into trail boardwalks and the first accessible backcountry outhouse in the Northeast. It includes editing multiple editions of the *Long Trail Guide* (Green Mountain Club). It includes mobilizing and training staff and volunteers to maintain and manage the Long Trail.



Dave Hardy on the trail. He managed trail relocations, shelters, bridges, and caretakers and was a friend to the Appalachian Mountain Club. COURTESY OF GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB

During the time I managed the Appalachian Mountain Club's Backcountry Campsite Program, Dave Hardy was a helpful colleague, my friend over in the Greens. He shared staff applications and boosted my confidence in advocating for higher wages for caretakers. The year I was without leadership for senior positions, Hardy shared two of his best incoming staffers with me. Dave's mindset was one of abundance, one of supporting and compensating the staff he worked with, and of stewarding all mountains and forests.

Hardy's impacts extend to quiet corners of the AMC world. Visitors to Cardigan Lodge in Alexandria, New Hampshire, will see a series of wooden

signs hanging in the hallways, depicting Cardigan Lodge crews over the years. If you look closely, you will find Dave's face among them from the years he served as the assistant manager.

The mountains ache for the loss of Dave Hardy. He led in a practical way rather than philosophically. He could just get stuff done in a club that relies so heavily on volunteers. He was uniquely formed for the place he served. I already miss knowing that over in Vermont is this honest, shy, thoughtful, dedicated, and sometimes stuck in his ways person.

Hardy's family and the GMC formed the Dave Hardy Memorial Fund to support the trail he loved. To paraphrase Mike DeBonis, executive director of the GMC, there is no better way to remember Dave than walking the Long Trail in his memory. Buffalo check wool jacket and purple shirt optional.

—*Sally Manikian, with Jocelyn Hebert and Pete Antos Ketcham*

Frank Carlson

Francis Elliott Carlson, 97, whose essay "The Great Bicycle Expedition: 1936" appeared in *Appalachia* Summer/Fall 2017, died July 8, 2017, at home in Hingham, Massachusetts. He was a life member of the Appalachian Mountain Club and a former croo member at what was then called Pinkham Notch Camp (1939), as well as at Carter Notch Hut (1940) and Lakes of the Clouds Hut (1941). Frank cofounded AMC's Washington, D.C., Chapter (now Potomac Chapter), serving as its chair and a hike leader for several years. He was also a member of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, one of the groups that helps maintain the Appalachian Trail.

He hiked into his 90s on many trails in the United States, Europe, and Scandinavia. He was also an accomplished artist and often depicted the Appalachian Mountains in his works. He was born in Winchester, Massachusetts, in 1920. He graduated from Harvard College in 1942. He served in the U.S. Army in four European campaigns and was awarded two Silver Stars, the Bronze Star, and the Croix de Guerre. Two days after his death, his family was notified that he had been awarded the French Chevalier d'Honneur for his World War II service. He was a certified public accountant and worked as audit manager at the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C., until his retirement. He also worked in the Office of the Comptroller of the Navy and in private practice in Boston. He leaves two sons, Francis Jr., of Steinmaur, Switzerland, and William of Derwood,

Maryland; two daughters, Julia of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Amelia Maddock of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his first wife, Marguerite Moll Carlson, in 1987, and his second, Patricia Wagner Stallsmith Carlson, in 2012. Memorial donations can be made to AMC.

—*Christine Woodside*

Books and Media

Essay: Life in the Big Meh

THE TITLE COMES FROM MY RESPONSE, or the absence of it, to John Branch's exhaustively researched and richly illustrated piece in the December 19, 2017, *New York Times*. Branch writes about the ill-starred dream of four Bengali climbers—three men and a woman—all of modest or little resources, who scrimped and saved to pursue their dreams of climbing Everest. They signed on to a budget expedition, and through various high-altitude mishaps, got stranded above 26,000 feet with uncertain support from their guides. The three men died; the woman was rescued in the mountain's South Col and survives.

I am used to reading climbing stories and feeling a good measure of empathy; the current of linkage runs medium to strong between me and whoever is caught up and out there. Not so much with this story. I emerge from its thousands of words with a shrug and a slight feeling of depletion. I feel sorry, as always, for their survivors (no one climbs on his or her own), but the four knew where they were headed, even as the glitter of their long dream rose before them.

Their dream seems a very modern one. It is, among the 7 billion of us, just another dream sought along a track beaten by many fore-climbers. It seems evidence of our expansive multitudes that even this far extreme of earth is peopled by any number of dead and missing, and that our tattered encampments there shred and fade and live on in the wind and sun and storm. Everest and those who climb it now seem apt symbols of our utter inability to live lightly on the earth. Instead we die as part of a general litter we leave.

“Deliverance from 27,000 Feet”

By John Branch

The New York Times

*Published December 19,
2017, online;*

*December 24, 2017,
in print. [nytimes.com/
interactive/2017/12/18/
sports/everest-deaths.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/18/sports/everest-deaths.html)*

My reaction, “Meh,” is disconcerting. It feels as if some reliable constant has been scooped (or scoped) out of me. I have always relied on the decency and empathy that seems common to adventurers, even as many are ego-driven. The bad apples seem few, and they have not spoiled the barrel. But now the barrel seems not so much spoiled as empty.

Recently, I’ve written about the effects of the trend toward extreme adventure on our regional search-and-rescue culture, and, by extension, on the adventure lands themselves, where the rescuers are the dominant cultural force. Now I wonder if one of the effects of the trend runs parallel to our current politics, where an inclusive caring for “the other” seems to be fading, replaced by an impatient animosity with that “other.” Those who press into the geography of no-go terra do so in numbers and with willfulness that saps our sense of brother- and sisterhood, I think. “Really?” we think or say with some exasperation . . . and then we turn away. What’s next here in the Big Meh, we seem to be asking.

Tweet me to the moon.

—Sandy Stott

White Mountain Guide

*Compiled and edited by Steven D. Smith
Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2017.*

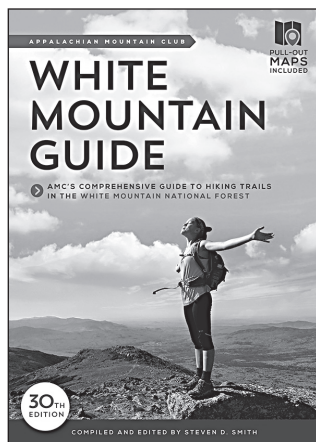
656 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-934028-85-8. Price: \$24.95

(paperback with pull-out maps. A hardcover with waterproof maps and journal is available at outdoors.org/amcstore.)

IF YOU’RE PLANNING A HIKE IN THE mountains of New Hampshire, you need the ten essentials, including backpack, sturdy boots, food, water, extra clothes—and the 30th edition of the *White Mountain Guide*.

As all of us who venture among the peaks and valleys of the Granite State have long known, the Appalachian Mountain Club’s *White Mountain Guide* is the hiker’s bible. Simply put, no other resource is more comprehensive, informative, authoritative, and indispensable.



Every few years since the first edition rolled off the presses in 1907, AMC has updated its iconic guide, and its staff and Steven D. Smith, who compiled and edited this most recent 30th installment, deserve huge kudos for achieving the near-impossible: improving what already seemed to be the perfect reference volume.

The maps are easier to read, trail descriptions clearer, distances and other statistics recalibrated, information better organized, and most important, sections rewritten to account for rerouted trails and other changes made necessary by damage from Hurricane Irene in 2011.

The boxed guide includes more than 500 trail descriptions; six full-color, GPS-charted, pull-out topographic maps; useful advice on planning excursions, safety, shuttles to and from trailheads; and a list of recommended hikes ranging from the easy (Crystal Cascade in Tuckerman Ravine) to strenuous (the tallest: Mount Washington).

As one who years ago nearly tumbled down the long-closed Adams Slide Trail after foolishly consulting an out-of-date edition of the *White Mountain Guide*, I can't recommend more strongly that hikers acquire Smith's revised book. Hang on to the old editions, though. They look nice lined up in a row on the bookshelf.

—Steve Fagin
Book Review Editor

Mount Washington: Narratives and Perspectives

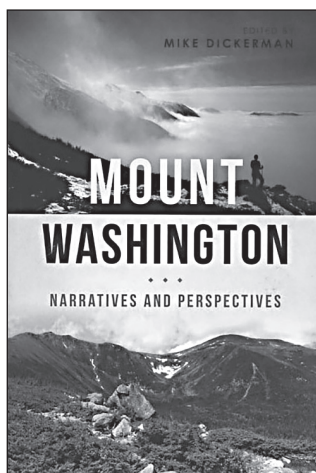
Edited by Mike Dickerman

The History Press, 2017. 224 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-62585-901-3. Price: \$21.99

(paperback).

SEARCH FOR “MOUNT WASHINGTON” on the Amazon books or Appalachian Mountain Club websites and you’ll discover a veritable library of volumes about New Hampshire’s celebrated peak—not to mention scads of Mount Washington products



including paperweights, zipper pulls, T-shirts, trail signs, posters, lapel pins, and water bottles—which raises the question: Have we sort of had our fill about the Northeast’s tallest summit?

The answer is decidedly “no” once you consider the collection of essays contained in *Mount Washington: Narratives and Perspectives*, edited by Mike Dickerman.

This 2017 edition, a condensed version of Dickerman’s 1999 book of the same name, includes vintage writings about Mount Washington that are in retrospect sometimes amusing.

Jeremy Belknap’s 1784 essay, for instance, describes an ascent that year by “a company of gentlemen” who lugged along a telescope, sextant, thermometer, barometer, and other instruments to compile various measurements, “but they were unhappily broken in the course of the journey, through the rugged roads and thick woods.”

The men’s fingers were too frozen, anyway, and the fog too thick to get accurate readings, so they relied on estimates. Their calculation for the summit elevation: nearly 10,000 feet above sea level.

Other writings chronicle various mountainside tragedies, including a plane crash, and the “melancholy occurrence” of September 13, 1855, when 23-year-old Elizabeth Greene Bourne of Kennebunk, Maine, had the dubious distinction of becoming the first person to perish on the summit.

“Lizzie,” as she was called, along with her cousin Lucy and uncle George, underestimated the difficulty of the climb and were beaten down by high winds and plunging temperatures.

Floyd W. Ramsey’s account describes Uncle George’s futile efforts to save Lizzie. He built a stone wall as a shield against the elements, and when he crawled outside it to comfort his niece, “the roaring wind and bitter cold quickly engulfed him. . . . As the hours passed, he began to suffer miserably. Then, around ten o’clock, as he lay down next to Lizzie, he reached for one of her hands. It was icy cold! Trembling, he touched her forehead. That was cold too!”

We know, of course, how the story ends—as have, unfortunately, so many mountain tales.

Dickerman’s book, illustrated by vintage black-and-white photographs, is an interesting read, in a morbid kind of way. It is a perfect companion volume to the next book up for review.

—Steve Fagin

**Death in the White Mountains:
Hiker Fatalities and How to Avoid
Being One**

By Julie Boardman

Bondcliff Books, 2017. 192 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-931271-34-9. Price: \$17.95
(paperback).

THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF WAYS TO KICK THE bucket in the mountains. You can freeze to death, collapse from the heat, drown, wind up buried by an avalanche, suffer a heart attack, stroke or other medical emergency, be struck by lightning, get murdered, or, of course, fall off a cliff.

During the last two centuries more than 200 hikers, climbers, and back-country skiers have faced the Grim Reaper in New Hampshire's White Mountains, and Julia Boardman's grim volume separates the chapters by methods of demise.

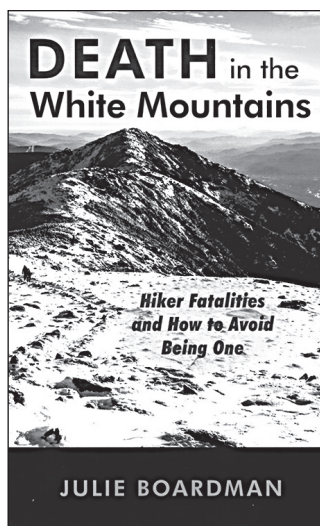
Some of these reports contained detailed chronologies and descriptions; others are stark, one- or two-sentence accounts: Geoffrey Bowdoin, 18, was hiking near the Dry River with classmates on October 10, 1971. "While crossing the river, which was running high, he fell in and drowned."

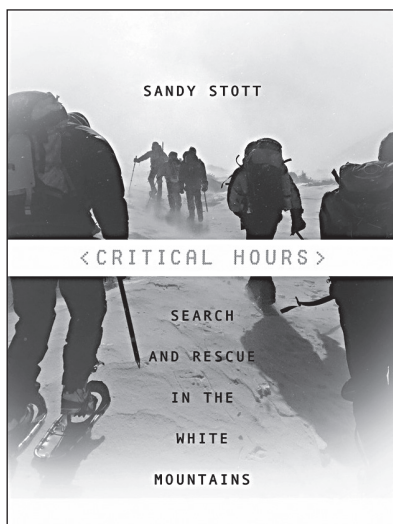
The book delivers, as promised, an abundance of death but falls somewhat shorter regarding advice on avoiding fatality. In fairness, though, what can you say beyond, "Don't get too close to the edge," or "Make sure you have plenty of warm clothing."

Those who crave more gripping chronicles of human tragedy might want to curl up with Nicholas Howe's 2009 tearjerker, *Not Without Peril: 150 Years of Misadventure on the Presidential Range of New Hampshire* or Peter W. Kick's 2015 somber collection, *Desperate Steps: Life, Death, and Choices Made in the Mountains of the Northeast* (both published by the Appalachian Mountain Club).

Boardman's book, though, and the others serve as reminders that although the mountains give us much joy and adventure, death's cold hand is never too far afield.

—Steve Fagin





Critical Hours: Search and Rescue in the White Mountains

By Sandy Stott

University Press of New England, 2018.

284 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-5126-0040-7 (paperback);

978-1-5126-0176-3 (ebook).

Price: \$22.95 (paperback);

\$17.99 (ebook).

READERS OF THIS JOURNAL'S "Accidents" report know Sandy Stott, who has been its editor since 2014 and who edited the journal itself for the decade of the 1990s. He has been hik-

ing in the White Mountains of New Hampshire his entire life. A disclaimer: The author is my colleague, and I encouraged him to write this book.

Search and rescue might seem the closing chapter of a dramatic story of mishap or tragedy, but in *Critical Hours*, SAR rises to its deserved place as a crucial part of mountain life. All climbers can get into trouble in the unpredictable Whites and in the 21st century find themselves in a web of government agencies, volunteer aid, "spot-on (or not) technology and flying machines," Stott writes. Add in the state law that allows New Hampshire Fish and Game the right to charge victims deemed negligent in their behavior for rescue costs and the growing popularity of peakbagging, and it's very easy to see why SAR operations have intensified and expanded in the last century.

Stott writes in a lyrical style that combines a sense of the poetic with his yearning to understand what happened. White Mountain veterans will recognize some of the more famous slips, falls, and disasters and encounter many new stories. Stott tells them all through the fascinating "back story" of the SAR machine. Much of chapter 2, "Finding Kate: Searchers' Stories," appeared first in this journal. Other stories represent expansions of items from former "Accidents" reports, such as the mysterious drowning death of experienced hiker Clairemarie C. in the Gale River in 2015, which introduce "a few thoughts on crossing rivers alone."

Stott tells how the history of the Whites—logging, the Weeks Act that created the White Mountain National Forest, Appalachian Mountain Club hut builder Joseph Brooks Dodge, the twentieth-century adventure boom,

and more—all affected how government and volunteer mountain workers make decisions. He dissects court cases that have shaped SAR, such as the lawsuit after Cheryl Weingarten’s tragic 1994 fall and the state’s attempt to charge for the cost of the 2009 search for teenager Scott Mason. Stott argues against all-professional SAR operations in the Whites, asking instead for restraint that requires that climbers and walkers prepare better to help themselves. There’s so much more here. Everyone fascinated by the Whites will want this book for their shelves right next to a collection of *Appalachia* journals.

—Christine Woodside

In Wild Trust: Larry Aumiller’s 30 Years Among the McNeil River Brown Bears

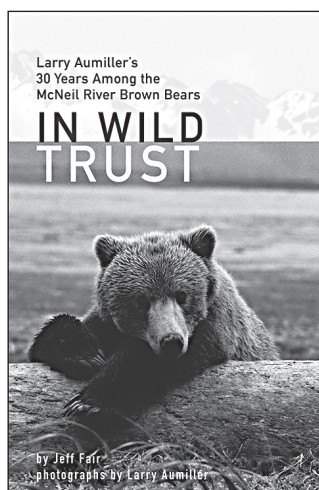
*By Jeff Fair, with photographs by
Larry Aumiller*

University of Alaska Press, 2017. 165 pages.

*ISBN: 978-1-60223-323-2. Price: \$32.95
(hardcover).*

THESE PAGES EXPLORE AND CELEBRATE the remarkable confluence of a place, wild creatures, and an extraordinary human being. The place is southwest Alaska’s McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (established in 1967) with its legendary salmon runs. The creatures are brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), which, attracted by the fish, congregate on the river in numbers seen nowhere else in the world. The individual is Larry Aumiller, who spent 30 years managing the sanctuary, learned to understand and respect bear behavior, and turned McNeil into an unparalleled place for safely observing bears near at hand.

Jeff Fair, a writer and biologist, lives in Palmer, Alaska. He serves on the *Appalachia* Committee. His evocative prose and insightful observations bring vividly to life Aumiller’s passion for wild places and animals, the Alaska backcountry, and the routines of camp life and visitor management. The book is lavishly illustrated by Aumiller’s photographs, which depict beautiful scenery, visitors to the sanctuary, the facilities, but most of all the bears. Aumiller



captured bears eating, fighting, teaching cubs, playing, and just wandering around, sometimes within just a few feet of people.

Aumiller grew up in suburban Denver where, with his grandfather, he found places to hunt and fish and developed an appreciation of nature. A natural artist, he earned a college degree in fine arts. After graduating he entered the army and was slated for Vietnam until the Pentagon decided it needed an illustrator in Washington. Soon after his hitch was up, he drove to Alaska and secured a summer job counting salmon for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, a position that ultimately led to his assignment at McNeil.

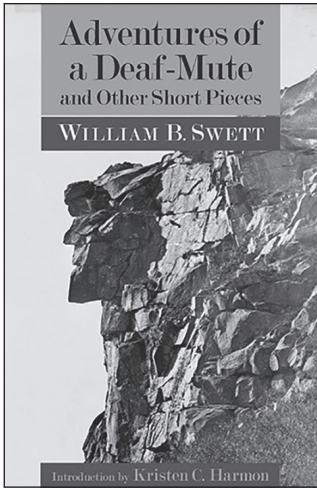
Despite the lack of formal training in wildlife biology, Aumiller became a renowned bear expert, developing a kind of interspecies “trust” with the animals through psychological savvy, respect for the wild, and both methodical and serendipitous learning. Fair succinctly captures the secret sauce of Aumiller’s success. “Biologists count things,” he writes, “and naturalists observe. Aumiller did both. But artists interpret, and therein lay his strength.”

Aumiller developed a system of regularly timed visits with consistent numbers of visitors and rules for “thoughtful unintrusive, non-threatening human behaviors” that enabled people to get close to the bears as the creatures went about natural activities. He also dealt with bears wandering into camp, commercial fishermen who disrupted the salmon runs, low airplane flyovers, and hunters who got too close. Gatherings of friends and colleagues, his wedding to Colleen Matt, and his daughter Kianna are all part of the cycle of summers at McNeil.

Aumiller left the job in 2005 after the state opened adjacent lands to bear trophy hunting and put McNeil bruins in harm’s way. He believed this action violated the refuge concept established by state law and saw it as a personal betrayal. Ultimately, the hunting decision was reversed, and Aumiller has returned to the sanctuary as a visitor and volunteer with enthusiasm and joy.

Aumiller has become an iconic figure in the world of bear conservation, garnering well-deserved accolades and awards. He has dedicated himself to ensuring that McNeil remains solely a place for bears and unobtrusive human observation. Anyone who believes in the beauty, value, and power of wild places will find Aumiller’s story inspiring.

—*David K. Leff*



Adventures of a Deaf-Mute and Other Short Pieces

By William B. Swett

Gallaudet University Press, 2017. 128 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-56368-683-2. Price: \$24.95

(paperback; also available in Kindle and e-book editions).

LIKE ME, LIKE YOU, WILLIAM SWETT CLIMBED in the White Mountains—only, he did it right after the Civil War.

For three summers between 1865 and 1868, Swett (1824–1884) worked as a mountain guide and handyman in the Profile House, a tourist destination in Franconia Notch (it burned down in 1923). The job was a form of grief therapy; two of his five children had died the year before.

Swett was a man of nonchalant courage, “ready-witted and withal not afraid of a little hard work.” He was also deaf, mute, and undeterred by fellow workmen baffled by his “signs and gestures and little slate.”

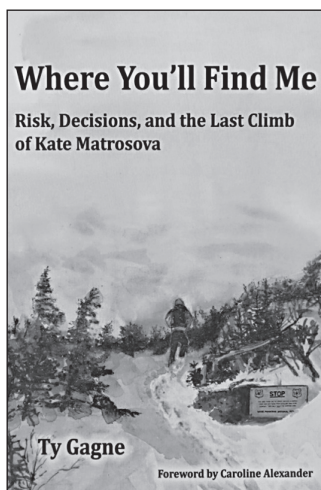
Guests were often judgmental, confusing hearing for acumen. One morning “a gentleman from New Jersey” flatly refused to use him for a guide. By night, the gentleman was lost near Walker’s Falls, and the rescuing Swett discovered him “perched on a rock, wiping his brow vigorously.” Sunset has swift effects on judgment. “His conduct,” Swett writes, “somewhat belied his previously expressed opinion.”

Carrying a hatchet in his belt, and in what seemed a continually cheerful state of drying out from this storm on Mount Lafayette or those 20-foot spring snowdrifts in the Ammonoosuc, Swett sought manual adventure when he wasn’t busy with manual work. Once, he planted a 10-by-5-foot flag on what he thought was the head of the Old Man of the Mountain. After an arduous ascent up and down, he saw that he had planted it not on the head, but on the Adam’s apple—which was anatomically unacceptable. “I struck off and up again through the pathless woods.”

The writing here is charmingly formal. In the grip of great winds, the Profile House “shook like a person with the ague”; guiding a photographer in backcountry (and carrying over 100 pounds of his equipment), “all was utter

silence to me; my companion doing the hearing for both of us, while, I suppose, I did my share of the thinking.” Swett could not hear himself talk, but clearly, this good writer heard himself think.

—*Elissa Ely*



Where You'll Find Me: Risk, Decisions, and the Last Climb of Kate Matrosova

By Ty Gagne

TMC Books, 2017. 192 pages.

ISBN: 978-0-9962181-5-3. Price: \$19.95 (paperback).

AFTER KATE MATROSOVA'S DEATH in 2015 in New Hampshire's White Mountains, Ty Gagne (the CEO of the New Hampshire Public Risk Management Exchange) began using her story in presentations on how decisions affect safety and risk. Gagne's thorough research, wide-ranging interviews, and attention to detail in this book takes mountaineering accident analysis to a new level.

Much has been written about the tragedy and search, including Sandy Stott's excellent accounts in *Appalachia* ("Too Cold" in Winter/Spring 2016, and "Looking for Kate" in Summer/Fall 2016). Gagne's essay based upon the book's prologue, "Weakness in Numbers," appeared in this journal's Winter/Spring 2018 issue (page 56).

A caller to New Hampshire Public Radio, on which Gagne was a guest not long ago, asked why we need this book. We sometimes hear questions like that from readers of *Appalachia's* "Accidents" section. People read such reports out of curiosity (and perhaps sometimes with a sense of the macabre), but they also learn about making decisions that will save lives.

Gagne goes deep into the background and motivations of Matrosova, speaking with people who knew her well, including her husband, Charlie Farhoodi, who gave very few interviews. A clear picture emerges of this dynamic, vibrant Russian immigrant who stood out in academics and in her work in the financial sector. She brought this same passion and energy to mountaineering and had set her sights on the Seven Summits (the highest peak

on each continent); she had already climbed Kilimanjaro, El'brus, Denali, and Aconcagua. We learn, however, that she had climbed them with guides and thus may have lacked what Gagne describes as critical decision-making "soft skills."

The heart of this book are Matrosova's key decision points, starting with her plan for a 15-mile traverse of the northern Presidentials in 13.5 hours. This was ambitious for her second White Mountains trip but plausible in ideal conditions for someone of her high level of fitness.

The author does a brilliant job of integrating research, including how hypothermia can affect a person's ability to understand risk. With the benefit of her GPS technology, we learn precisely where she was and when, which makes the analysis that much more compelling. Gagne observes that Matrosova, while traveling "fast and light," packed two Apple iPhones, a Garmin GPS, a satellite phone, and a personal locator beacon. Could all this technology in her pack have given her a false sense of security?

Gagne tells the story step by step, describing how at 10:27 A.M., already behind schedule after descending Mount Madison, she struggled up Mount Adams and, descending to the Star Lake area, set off her emergency locator beacon. Her body was found 21 hours later. Gagne describes in detail the heroic efforts of New Hampshire Fish and Game, Mountain Rescue Service, Androscoggin Valley Search and Rescue Service, and others who put their lives on the line in temperatures as low as -16 degrees Fahrenheit and winds as strong as 125 MPH on nearby Mount Washington at the time she was found.

Where You'll Find Me includes a superb analysis of the complicated nature of mountain rescues with so many phone calls to organize the agencies and people involved, as well as the limitations of the technology, which sent multiple conflicting locations for her whereabouts throughout the evening and next day.

The author, to his credit, avoids being judgmental, laying out the facts so that readers draw their own conclusions. Once I started reading, I could hardly put it down. While we can never know what Matrosova was thinking, Gagne does an excellent job incorporating research on decision making, situational awareness, and hypothermia to lay out some possibilities. I was left wondering if Matrosova thought defeat was even possible, and what might have gone through her mind as she pushed up Adams for more than two hours before finally turning around, just short of the summit. At what point did she realize that she was in trouble? I was also reminded of the

Norman Maclean quote: “If you don’t know the ground, you are probably wrong about nearly everything else.”

Where You’ll Find Me has many beautiful drawings that illustrate key moments of Matrosova’s last climb. There are also helpful photos (including some dramatic ones of rescuers fighting the extreme winds). Future editions could benefit from the additions of an index and summary timeline of events.

Like many others, I had strong reactions when I first learned of this tragedy. I wondered why anybody would push so hard in such extreme weather, but also felt a kind of kinship, a sense that, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.” After reading this book, I realize the need to go deeper within myself to better ensure safety in future adventures.

—*Douglass P. Teschner*

Going Far Away to Find Something

PACKING FOR A TRIP TO SOME LANDSCAPE CALLING OUT TO ME, I OFTEN think, “I wonder what will go wrong this time?” Does that mixture of realism and excitement ring familiar? Our writers next time go far away to places that beckon. They carry big expectations. What they meet out there, naturally, diverge from the dreams.

Elissa Ely knows that the tourists leaping out of the bus onto a trail at the Grand Canyon rim are overdoing it. Within an hour, walking downward past thunder, she compares her own expectations to those of a mule. Sally Manikian finds herself, after many years, wrestling with her desire for a wild place and her inborn yearning for the landscape of her childhood vacations: Florida, in winter. What’s going on with this? David K. Leff journeys to Labrador in pursuit of true wilderness; his idea of remoteness will transform. Climbers and rangers Todd and Donette Swain decide they should work a season in Antarctica. Historian Nick Reynolds has wanted to climb a Canadian glaciated peak for 30 years. Finally, he’s going to do it. Get ahold of our next issue, available in December, and find out what happens to Nick and all these pilgrims whose chosen landscapes remold and remove their expectations hour by hour. And we’ll publish the winning Waterman Fund contest essay.

Each issue always includes our Accidents report, where Sandy Stott analyzes misadventures, injuries, and rescues in the White Mountains of New Hampshire; Alpina with its armchair updates of big-peak exploration around the world; News and Notes of the Appalachian Mountain Club’s home base of the Northeast and its members’ adventures farther afield; and our reviews of books and media. Join us there and on our Twitter feed @AppalachiaJourn.

Christine Woodside

Editor

Chris@chriswoodside.com

Writing from the Mountains

A weekend workshop with *Appalachia* journal

Friday, November 30–Sunday, December 2, 2018

Writers of all levels and interests, join the mountains with the landscape of your ideas at AMC's rustic Cardigan Lodge, with *Appalachia* journal Editor Christine Woodside and two of our best writers (and former *Appalachia* editors), Sandy Stott and Lucille Stott.

Many writers already realize that their work is not merely an indoor, sedentary pursuit but that the best ideas come in a flash while we are doing other things that have nothing to do with writing. The mountains can deliver this flash. We will help you find it and write it.

This workshop is for writers of all levels—anyone who wants to use the backcountry as a way to tell human stories.

The weekend's package includes:

- Lodging at Cardigan Lodge
- All meals from dinner Friday, November 30 through lunch on Sunday, December 2
- Guidance and leadership from AMC Instructors

For more information or to register, visit outdoors.org/writing

Christine Woodside has been the editor of *Appalachia* since 2006. She started her journalism career in 1981 and has hiked thousands of miles with others and solo in the Northeast, including her thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail in 1987. Her essays in *Appalachia* include “Alone With Wolves,” “Four Quartets and Eight Legs,” and her editor’s column, “The Long Way Home.” She edited the *Appalachia* anthology *No Limits But the Sky* (Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2014). She lives in Deep River, Connecticut.

Sandy Stott is the Accidents editor of *Appalachia* and was editor of the journal from 1990 to 2000. He taught English for many years at Concord Academy and has spent most of his life exploring the trails of Mount Cardigan. His book, *Critical Hours: Search and Rescue in the White Mountains*, was published by the University Press of New England this year. His essays for *Appalachia* include his editor’s column from 1990 to 1999, “View from the Oregon Ridge,” “Looking Up,” and “Night News.” He lives in Brunswick, Maine.

Lucille Stott, an English teacher, editor, and writer, edited *Appalachia* from 2000 to 2006 and remains a contributing editor. “Wild Katahdin,” her most recent article for *Appalachia*, appeared in the Summer/Fall 2016 issue. During the 1990s, she wrote the column “AMC People” for *AMC Outdoors* while serving as editor and managing editor at Community Newspaper Company, based in Needham, Massachusetts. Her essays have been published in *American Spirit*, *Orion Afeld*, *Sojourner*, *GC New England*, *Crazy Quilt* journal, and *Italian Cooking and Living*. A resident of Brunswick, Maine, she teaches writing and critical reading at Southern Maine Community College and writes profiles and essays for Concord Academy’s website and magazine.



Appalachia
Appalachian Mountain Club
10 City Square, Boston MA 02129

Add to your collection!

ORDER BACK ISSUES OF *APPALACHIA* AT
OUTDOORS.ORG/AMCSTORE

Since 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club's journal, *Appalachia*, has delivered inspired writing on mountain exploration, ecology, and conservation; news about international mountaineering expeditions; analysis of Northeastern mountaineering accidents; and much more.

In this issue of *Appalachia*:

Care for the Caregiver

His mother had never backpacked;
he took her to the Presidentials

Climbers as Humanitarians

Helping injured migrants in Mexico

Continuing Adventures of Buffalo and Tough Cookie

Sometimes a family goes deeper than blood

Emotional Rescue

A hiker becomes a benefactor as
she follows a set of sneaker prints

The Resourceful Teen

A broken stove awakens ingenuity

Sequoias and Redwoods in a Hotter World

When trees as high as 30-story buildings
die "on their feet," something's wrong

Also: Germany's first bear in 170 years.
Encounter with a baby stroller.



\$10.95 US

Sales of AMC Books and *Appalachia*
fund our mission of protecting the
Northeast outdoors.