

BOOTPRINTS

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Thank You Jack

By Marie Babbitt

Jack Leary has served as the clubs Quartermaster for the past 8 years. My dealings with him have always been pleasant and professional. The Quartermaster job is one of those quiet but very important positions that can easily go unnoticed. Accounting for the clubs rental equipment inventory, and coordinating drop-off and pickup times and locations for a busy club like ours is time consuming. Jack has given us the gift of his time and a hearty **Thank you** goes to you Jack for all you have done. Jack has passed the mantel of the clubs Quartermaster duties on to Mike Carrier. Thank you Mike in advance for taking on this important club position.



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There was one conversation I came upon where one member of the club was fondly recalling

his first hike with the club. Seems one of the longtime female members was helping him off with his pants on his first hike. He was waxing about the memory and the apparently helpful female could not recall the incident, or at least this is what she said. About that time Eva came along and she said she wasn't going to hang around for all the details, and so I left with her. I will say that Eva and the longtime female member are really good friends.

The hike itself was about 4 miles long, and we walked around an open field and along the brook to extend the day. Afterwards we all piled into our cars and headed for Dick and Sue's, where we were served hot chocolate, tea, freshly baked cookies from Sue's kitchen, and assorted crackers, cheeses, chips, etc

Dick and Sue are a bit sly though, as some of us who chose to work on a puzzle they set out, were subsequently informed that we could not leave until we had completed it! Most of the rest played Mexican Dominos in a separate room. I stuck with the puzzle crowd. After my eyes got tired, I went into the other room to check out the dominos.

People seemed a bit serious about the game. I am not sure how it worked or how it was different from regular dominos.



I confess I ended up leaving before the puzzle was complete but they were pretty close to wrapping it up.

Thanks, Dick and Sue, for the leading the hike and for the great hospitality.



Wilderness Volunteers

By Shari Cox

It's only the beginning of January, and I have already had days off from work due to snow and ice. Not that I am complaining. I love having extra days off from work. However, as much as I love the snow and hiking out in it, I do look forward to the summer: to days when I don't have to worry about having a headlamp, where I don't have to hike about 20 minutes before I feel warm, and where I don't have to lug crampons, stabilicers, snowshoes, hats, mittens, and extra mittens. So then, when I think of summer, I think of vacation. Where do I go this year? I'm sure I am not the See *Wilderness* page 2

McCann Family Farm Hike

By Marie Babbitt

The club's first official hike of the New Year was hosted by Dick and Sue Forrest. If my memory serves me correctly, there were 24 of us for this cold January hike. We met at the commuter lot in Enfield. The plan was to leave cars at the town hall in Somers but I dare say that very few of us ended up doing that. We took just about every parking space at the trailhead . so much for carpooling and the environment.

The day was cold but sunny, and with the new snow that fell on New Year's Eve, the hike was pretty. It felt like we were going around in circles, and I found out later we were! There were times were I got a bit confused as I thought some people were behind me but when I looked ahead they seemed to be ahead of me; only to find out after we stopped that the trail zigzagged a lot and so we ended up passing each other.

Seems one of the longtime female members was helping him off with his pants on his first hike

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only one thinking of summer and vacation.

So, if you are thinking of vacation and are looking for something different, something that involves the outdoors and enables you to give something back, I have just the opportunity for you. It is a week long, working vacation with Wilderness Volunteers. That is the group that I took my vacation with last Fall.

Last year, I was looking to go someplace different and do something a little different than I had the last few years. So, as I was thinking about this, I remembered a slip of paper on which I had written a website down a few years back: www.wildernessvolunteers.com. A person that I met up at NobleView told me that he had done several trips with them and that he was going to Yosemite with them that year. It sounded like a great time, so I looked checked out the website. It was already July when I started looking. A little late in planning, though I found a trip that was open in October. It was to Saguaro National Park in Tucson, Arizona. I had never heard of it. I thought the only park in Arizona was the Grand Canyon!!

The website lists all of the upcoming trips, and their difficulty and availability. When you click the link, you will read a description of what type of work is involved. Each person has to fill out a questionnaire to see if they are qualified for the type of trip it is. The hike that I planned was a 9.3-mile backpack in to a camp. Most trips do not involve backpacking, so don't let that scare you off.

The trail maintenance that I was involved in was working on waterbars and clearing trails. We had a National Park Service person with us, leading, teaching and helping us on the trail.

We all met at night and camped at the trailhead the first day. The next morning we had something to eat, broke down our tents and packed our pack. We wanted an early start because we were in the desert and would be exposed to full sun until we got up in elevation. It was a full day hike in and was more difficult than I thought it would be. I don't know if it was the sun exposure, the elevation gain or just that everyone was a faster hiker.

The group consisted of two leaders, six volunteers, and an NPS person. The

ages ranged from 37 to 74. This really surprised me because I thought it would be all young people. The man that was 74 hiked and worked like he was in his 50s. Maybe hiking keeps one young? I also found out that Eb was from New Mexico and had a nephew in Massachusetts. The nephew owns and runs a cross-country skiing lodge called Stump Sprouts, a place that I have been to. What a small world this is!

We worked on the trail for two days, had a day off, then worked for two more days before hiking back down the last day. The work days were fairly easy. After breakfast, we hiked to the section of trail that we were working on. We would take a break sometimes on the way there or once we got there. It was only about three miles. We would then work for a few hours, take a break, work some more, eat lunch, and work again before heading back to camp. All food was provided. For us PVHCers who like to eat, the food was good and there was plenty of it.

On our day off, most of us hiked around the area. One person stayed at camp, as she was nursing blisters. We were back at camp early enough to relax.

It was a great experience for me. The group was great. We all worked well together and had a lot of laughs. It was a great way for me to see a different part of the U.S., a National Park, and a way to give back to all the people who have come before me and made the trails for everyone to enjoy.

If you are interested in the group, go to their website. You can also contact me if you have any questions.

Quabbin Hike

Marie Babbitt

This was my first hike at Quabbin and I have to say, it was very pretty. Some people wore snowshoes and others wore icers. We were greeted by a pack of deer at the beginning of the hike; I believe there were about a dozen. I was surprised to see them as it was mid-morning, but Chip said that they were always on the move because predators were often stalking them.

The contrast of low-hanging evergreen branches laden with freshly fallen snow is always a pretty sight, and on this day it was no different. We hiked up to a spot overlooking the Windsor Dam, and then returned to the main trail we were hiking.



We hiked up to the Quabbin Tower and got a great view of the surroundings and distant mountains. I am not one for names, but with a little help from my binoculars I was able to see the summit house on one of the far-off peaks. At the higher elevation of the hike, there were places where the ice coated the trees and the sun sparkled through it. There were also places where low brush was covered with ice and freshly fallen snow, which looked to one of my fellow hikers as if we were in a winter wonderland. Even in the open fields, I enjoy the picture the snow makes with the land and the way it softens the land.

We went down to the water's edge and saw old railroad rails that were cut at the edge and buried by the land. The walk along the water's edge was pretty.

We stopped for lunch at some picnic tables. It was a bit windy, with normal winter weather conditions. We wrapped up the hike by passing through some low pines again. One of the members heard a hawk screeching but we were too busy talking and did not hear it.

It was a great first hike for me at Quabbin. Thanks, Chip and Harry.

Snowshoeing the Unkamit Path

By Rob Schechtman

We snowshoed the Unkamit Path to the summit of Mt. Shattarack on Jan. 31, after an ice storm. The group of 11 faced the uphill climb, having to first cross over a guardrail, we left a variety of snowshoe designs, quite gracefully (no one fell). We broke trail loudly through the icy crust, although still able to hear a train passing nearby. Switching who was first in line seemed to be the best way to go. The sun was warming bright, the sky cathedral glass blue, and the wind chill at the summit 4 degrees (we made it). The first comment, "Why do I drive 4 hrs. to hike in the White Mountains?" How about for the distant clear views and challenging climb, as well as the cold temps? All with smiling faces, the downward slide went rather quickly. There was talk of wanting to return in the Spring. Great group!

White Mountains Feb 5-8

By Marie Babbitt

On Friday Tom, Shari and I headed up to the White Mountains for some high peak hiking. Two of us knew what we were getting into, and the third was just a willing bystander so to speak; that would be me. Enjoying the White Mountains as I do, most any opportunity that arises to make the trip up there is worth it in my book. Don't get me wrong, I had all the usual concerns: cold temperatures, wind chill, physical ability, but none that would compare to the adventure before me.

After stuffing the car with all our gear, there was just enough room for the three of us. Tom did the driving, Shari was co-pilot, and I was in the back seat. We made the trip up in good time. Tom had an article about energy bars, so we spent time comparing our energy bars with the articles recommendations. Basically, we concluded that it came down to eating real food on the trail, if you can.

After arriving at the Highland Center and selecting our bunks in the Shapleigh bunk house, we changed and hiked Mt. Wilard. It was a short hike, about 3 miles total, but the view was

Basically it came down to eat real food on the trail if you can

quiet nice. We could see what we believed to be Mt. Washington, socked in by clouds. We of course talked about possible hikes for Saturday but were waiting for Bob and Carol to arrive so we could have a group discussion about it. Not having done any of the 4000-footers, I was totally neutral on the subject; well, except in regards to the length of the hike. I definitely did not want to do a double-digit one.

We went into Conway for dinner at the Muddy Moose. Upon our return, Bob and Carol found us in the main lodge of Highland Center. We sat down and discussed the possible hikes for the following day. The weather was looking good for Saturday, with mild temperatures and good visibility. Some winds were forecasted for later in the day. Bob and Carol decided to do Mt. Moriah, and Tom, Shari and I were going to do Jackson and Pierce, about an 8-mile hike. Shari went to call John and Rick, who were going to join us in the morning, to let them know what the plans were for the following day. By the time she returned, Tom and I decided that Eisenhower and Pierce looked like a better option. For me, it would work since it was an out-and-back trail which gave me the option to turn around when I needed to, since it was going to be a 10-mile hike.

Saturday we hit the Crawford Trail about 8:30am. John and Rick arrived just as we were setting out, and we told them of our change of plans. They said they would catch up to us after they got themselves together.

The trail was quite picturesque, with snow on the evergreens, and low tree stumps of varying diameters wearing caps of snow, some of which reminded me of jester hats. The grade was gradual but constant, and it seemed we were just plodding along at a pretty slow pace. The trail was packed down pretty good, and I was glad that we decided on crampons instead of snow shoes. A couple passed us and I learned my first lesson, do not step off the trail in winter, because it usually means you'll be post-holing.

We were about 30 to 40 minutes into the hike, and began to wonder where John and Rick were. We all figured they would have caught up to us by then, and thus questioned whether we were not clear

on the change of plans, and thought perhaps they did Jackson and Pierce instead. Being the close-knit group that we are, we just kept hiking, knowing that they were together and trail wise.

We caught up to a group that we had not seen previously, who were from the Boston and local chapters of the AMC, who were attempting the same hike as us, which we found out later. To my delight, and others I am sure, someone had drawn a smiley face in a vertical portion of snow supported by the branch of an evergreen tree. It was what I needed, for sure, as the trail just kept going up, as most mountain trails do. At the same time, we met up with a father and his two sons who were already on their way down. The youngest of the boys frolicked down the side of the trail, with his clothes covered by snow. He was having quite a good time. Ah, the gift of youth.

Well, by the time we reached our halfway point, we concluded that John and Rick must have taken another trail. Shari, our group's liaison, promptly began chatting with the members of the AMC group we were playing bumper cars with. She found out that one of the men had hiked with our own Laurie M. in Alaska. Good job, Shari. Tom caught up with us here, he had gotten stuck behind the group earlier. The trail was still like a winter paradise, with the snow covered trees. There was a distinct lack of conversation on the trail though, probably because everyone was just as focused as I in putting one foot in front of the other, with no spare energy to expend.

We finally reached tree line but had not yet determined which of the peaks we would summit first. We decided to do Eisenhower, which was closer, since stronger winds were forecast for later in the day. The AMC group was going to do Pierce, which would give us a little space between them and us. Tom, our fearless leader, pointed out our destination and both Shar See Whites on page 4 for continuation

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and I quietly wondered to ourselves if we had it in us, as it still looked like quiet a distance away. Tom had figured out that his pack was sitting too low on hips, and that was why his legs felt so heavy and tired. On the other hand, mine were just plain tired and heavy. Another mile and a half is what I told myself I was good for, although I didn't think that even this was likely.

Well, it was a good thing I had someone to follow because the rock cairns were nowhere in sight. Shari and Tom were comparing notes about what they remembered of the trail. Tom said he was sure the peak he pointed to was Eisenhower, or at least it was going to be Eisenhower today as far as he was concerned. Hey, if it was good enough for Tom, it was good enough for me.

We made it to the junction of the loop, with just another half mile to go. Tom reassured us it was that the worst part was over. Gee, I have heard that before, anyone else? We stopped for some water and a quick snack, and began the final ascent. I know it was nowhere near Everest-like conditions, but hiking in the Whites, and above tree line, I felt like the explorers I've read about in books about hiking in the winter. As we forged ahead, the wind picked up a bit as we made it to the top. We were greeted there with a clear view of Mt. Washington and the surrounding vista. The usual pictures were taken, with Mt. Washington as the backdrop. I was tired and cold, and ready to get going, so I left ahead of Tom and Shari. Not too far down the trail, I ran into John and Rick. They had parked in the lot across the street from the Shapleigh bunk house, which they mistakenly thought we had to hike by. So they inadvertently added about a half mile to their hike. Shari and Tom caught up with us and joined in the conversation. I was



still cold, so I began to hike again. When we got down to the loop junction, we dropped our packs and had some lunch. I don't think I was two bites into my sandwich, when John arrived and reconnoitered the situation in search of, yes, our lunches! It was still windy where we were, so we did not spend too much time eating.

John and Rick led our merry little band of hikers down the trail. I was tired and decided I was not going to summit of Pierce. I would either wait for the group at the junction or head down ahead of them. When we arrived at the junction, John assured me it was only 100 yards to the top. When I told him I was going to count, he upped it to 120. We dropped our packs and headed up. It was much easier without the packs, so I didn't count but it was indeed a pretty short hike, and I must say the view from the top of Pierce was much nicer than Eisenhower and so, definitely worth the effort.

I have to say that, with technology the way it is today, it was quite a site to have three people setting up their cameras and their timers, and then running over to join Rick and I for the shot. I believe Rick got a picture of the camera set-up flurry. From there it was all downhill, and boy was I glad. We had plenty of time to head back down, and were blessed with a mostly blue sky and sunshine.

After arriving back at the bunk house and cleaning up, we headed over to the main lodge for cheese and wine. To our surprise, Richard Harris entered and joined us. He had come up for the day and hiked Jackson and Pierce. There was a trivia contest being held there, of which we all partook, and tied for 2nd place. We had to answer the following three additional questions to break the tie: One inch of rain is equivalent to how many inches of snow? How many sides does a snowflake crystal have? And, how much faster does fog melt snow than rain? Initially, we were told that we had only answered one correctly, and the questioner handed us back our answer slip. Lucky for us Shari was on the ball and saw that he had given us the other teams slip back, so we pulled out a victory for the PVHC. Our correct answers were: 10 Inches of snow equals 1 inch of rain, and there are six sides to a snowflake crystal. I'm still not sure what the answer is to the last one.

Welcome New Members

Glenn Ewing	Nov-08
Kathy Gray	Nov-08
Enola Nelson	Nov-08
Maribel Ortiz Douglas	Nov-08
Bill Packard	Nov-08
Diane Sullivan	Nov-08
Peter Thieme	Nov-08
Lori Tisdell	Nov-08
Kenneth Hrycay	Dec-08

Bob and Carol finally arrived back at the lodge. Bob had made it to the summit of Moriah, but the trail was not packed down as reported on-line. Carol was pleased with the hike she had accomplished. They cleaned up a bit and then we all headed out for more food. John had run into his brother- and sister-in-law in the morning before the hike, and they were staying in the bunk house also, so they joined us later.

No one hiked on Sunday, so some of us headed back directly, while others took a trip into Conway to do a bit of shopping. It was a great weekend in the White Mountains, again. Would I do it again? You bet! Thanks Shari for organizing the trip.

Hungry Hikers Corner

By Monica Gross

BUTTERNUT SQUASH - TWO WAYS

#1 - SKILLET LASAGNA

1 Tbs. olive oil
 1 yellow onion, diced
 4 garlic cloves, minced
 Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
 1 lb. mild Italian sausage, casings removed
 4 Tbs. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 3 cups milk
 1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

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1/4 cup plus 1 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley
 1 Tbs. minced fresh sage
 9 dried lasagna noodles, cooked el dente
 3 lbs. butternut squash, peeled, neck portion sliced into wide, thin slices

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Warm the oil in a large nonstick frying pan, over medium high heat. Cook the onions for 8 minutes. Add garlic, salt and pepper, then cook for 30 seconds. Transfer to bowl. Cook sausage, breaking it into pieces, 8 minutes. Add to onion mixture.

Melt the butter in frying pan over medium heat. Add flour and cook while stirring for 1 minute. Slowly stir in milk, increasing heat to medium-high; cook 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a separate bowl. Stir in 3/4 cup cheese, 1/4 cup parsley, sage, salt and pepper.

Spread 1/3 cup sauce on bottom of the frying pan, top with single layer of 3 noodles, then with 1/3 cup sauce, 1/3 cup sausage mixture, and a layer of squash slices. Repeat layering of sauce, sausage and squash five more times, replacing squash layer with noodles after every two layers of squash. Top with remaining sauce and cheese. Bake 45 minutes. Sprinkle with 1 Tbs. parsley. Let stand 15 minutes. Serves 8 to 10. Make sure the frying pan has a melt-proof handle. To reiterate, the layering is:

1. sauce, noodles, sauce,
2. sausage, squash,
3. sauce, sausage, squash,
4. sauce, sausage, noodles,
5. sauce, sausage, squash,
6. sauce, sausage, squash,
7. sauce, sausage, noodles,
8. sauce, cheese.

It is really tasty. I found the recipe in the William Sonoma cookbook.

I had leftover squash from the bottom of the squash, since I only used the neck portion in the recipe, so the next night I prepared the following recipe of my own invention:

#2 - TORTELLINI AND VEGETABLES

1 lb. package of Barilla cheese tortellini (cooked according to package directions), rinsed and drained.
 1 Tbs. olive oil
 1 yellow onion, diced
 2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 green pepper, chopped
 1 roasted red pepper, sliced
 1 to 2 carrots, peeled, thinly sliced.
 Lower portion of the butternut squash, seeds removed, peeled, thinly sliced, and cut into small pieces
 5 oz. package of fresh baby spinach
 4 to 5 sun-dried tomatoes, diced
 2 tsp. poultry seasoning (Bell's or similar)
 1 tsp. McCormick Montrey Chicken seasoning

Heat olive oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, sauté about 2 minutes until tender. Add garlic, cook about 1 minute. Add green pepper, cook until el dente, about 3 minutes. Add red pepper, cook about 30 seconds. Add tomatoes, carrots and squash, reducing heat to medium. Add the poultry Montrey Chicken seasonings. Cover and cook until the carrots are tender (about 8 minutes). Add spinach and cover it until the spinach wilts (about 1 to 2 minutes). Add the spinach to the mix. Place drained pasta in a large pasta dish, add vegetable, mix and enjoy. This is a colorful and great tasting dish. For the non-meat eaters, although this calls for Poultry seasoning and Montrey Chicken seasoning, these actually contain no meat or meat products.

See you on the trails.
 Monica

M-M Trail

Dear PVHC members

On March 16th, a warrant article to protect the 43 acres at the trailhead of the M-M trail will be voted on at a special Southwick Town Meeting. The Rising Corner parcel of land represents the anchor to the southern end of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail and includes a diverse wetland habitat. The warrant article may not pass. People are afraid of the economy - although these funds are already set aside and cannot be spent on anything other than CPC projects. Residents are also under the mistaken impression that the Federal government will buy the land as part of the National Scenic Trail designation. We need your help to drum up support to protect this vital section of the trail that our club maintains in Southwick. The special town meeting will be held at

6:20pm on March 16th; and will likely be held at the Southwick High School. Please support, and ask your friends and neighbors that are Southwick residents to support, this warrant article.

Sincerely,
 The PVHC Executive Board..

The Hike to Carter Notch Hut

by Steve Fratoni

Typical me; I had something to do that I was a little anxious about and responded by trying to do it as soon as possible. I kept moving my plans for the Carter Notch Hut overnight earlier and earlier in the weekend, until I found myself at AMC's Pinkham Notch Visitor's Center by 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon. The unusually warm (20°F) temperature and remaining daylight were reasonable enticements to eschew the comforts of Joe Dodge Lodge and head straight to the Carter Notch Hut. Before undertaking such a rash act, I thought it best to talk it over with the folks at the Center's information desk. It turned out I was getting my trail information from Mike, AMC's Director of volunteers at the Center. He knew everyone and had been on every trail. We talked for quite awhile. He also didn't give me a lecture about hiking alone, and even drove me to the trailhead. Before I left, I wrote my hike plan in the Center's log book, just to make it look like I knew what I was doing.

The conversation, however, had used up some precious time and daylight; it was 3:17 pm when I took my first photo at the trailhead sign. The 19 Mile Trail was as described, a well packed trail with deceptively picturesque snow along the sides. The snow was 40 inches deep. The trail signs visible at knee level were good evidence of that, as were the occasional poles at the edge of the trail. Especially on the side that dropped off to the river. The 19 Mile River was still flowing, although beneath a heavy blanket
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of snow. It emerged at random intervals through jagged, frost rimmed holes, and over crystal lipped ledges, accompanied by a deep guttural sound like voices echoing from the underworld. I knew enough not to stop for photographs. The light was already dim, plus the packed trail was still soft underfoot which made for slow progress. Still, the beauty was endless. After an hour, a huffing noise came up behind me. It was Chris, a young man from Vermont, who was also the only other registrant for the hut that evening. We shared thoughts about the trail and I got my first inkling that my navigation may have had a slight flaw.

In a previous lifetime, I spent several years engaged in competitive orienteering. It is essentially a running sport that has each contestant finding a series of selected terrain features in the least amount of time. The competitions took place in forest much like the one along the 19 Mile Trail, 6 to 12 kilometers, alone, off-trail. The whole experience was rewarding for offering discoveries of nature that most trail hikers pass by, and was even more rewarding as an act of self-discovery. It is one of the more perilous beliefs of youthful naiveté that every skill that can be identified can be learned. Orienteering, as do many of life's activities, taught me about what I did not have to learn and what was beyond me. My improved performance in the sport was greatly achieved by an increased understanding of myself; determining my hard wiring, as others have put it.

In fact, I have very little sense of direction. Knowledge of the sun and practice with a compass did little to change that. However, I am very good with distances. Many in orienteering find out the scale of the map and tape over the ruler on the edge of their protractor compass. You are not going to get lost by millimeters so who needs the scale? Instead they utilize a personal formula to convert the standard units into personal pace counts. With my typical stride, on a 1:10,000 map a centimeter will take me 62 steps. From then on, using a map is just counting, i.e., pace counting. Never did it myself, but I have seen it done. For me, I would take a consistent pace from the start of the race to the first obvious feature on the map, and then it was

there. Somewhere in the hard wiring, inaccessible to my conscious mind, were all of the dimensions of the map. Over time I found that they are actually scalable for uphill or down, fast or slow. I just proceed conscious of my direction of movement until from somewhere a bell goes off indicating you are there. The critical element in relying on this skill is the quality of the map on which the subconscious calculations are based. The New England Orienteering Club makes its own maps in part for this reason. They are large scale and closer to the real dimensions than most topographic maps, and have closer contour intervals.

Extensive field checking results in many more landscape features that are carefully marked. They include seasonal information such as an intermittent streams or marshes. They also map vegetation that might inhibit progress. A decade ago, the orienting maps in the US adopted the international standards for map notations. The terms used for difficult vegetation are English translations of the original Finnish words: light green for low and dark green for light. As a result of the quality of the maps on which I learned, and probably a bit because of the hard wiring too, I read a map very literally. Not that the maps included in the AMC Guide to the White Mountains are bad. They are quite good and getting better with each edition. It's just that in my current unemployed state I presumed the Guide's 25th edition from my local library would be good enough. It wasn't until a day later, standing at a puzzling switchback halfway up Wildcat Mountain, that I compared my map to Rob Schechtman's 28th edition and became aware of the remarkable accuracy and detail GPS has brought to mapping. But that was Saturday. On this late Friday afternoon, neither Chris nor I wanted to delay our ascent for that kind of analysis. We properly exchanged information about our itinerary and chatted pleasantly for the few minutes I could keep up with him and then said our farewells. I never saw Chris again. However, what I did see that was more important were his fresh footprints in the churned snow of the trail.

As the elevation increased, so did the wind speed. It was a pleasant breeze at the start with a relatively mild air temperature. But now the moving air

meant the snow was also moving. A popular trail, the 19 Mile formed a distinct depression from the surrounding snow at its start. The day's work of sun and breeze had muted the impressions of earlier boots. Chris's fresh prints, along with occasional tracks left by the Hut's caretaker who skied his way between Hut and highway, were a hypnotic beacon to draw me up the trail, as the physical exertion began to take its toll.

I hike with a Lumbar Pack. For those of you who aren't familiar with it, in order of increasing size, it's fanny pack, Lumbar Pack, daypack, backpack, and a few other distinctions. A fanny pack is a belt with one or more pockets of some kind. The lumbar pack is bigger with a bigger belt. It also has a suspension system. The bag part has two additional straps on each side that when adjusted properly hold the weight of the pack in the lumbar curve of the back. They pull the pack forward and tip the upper part inward, so the weight sits on your pelvis rather than just your hips. I went to this type of pack to keep the stress off of my back and shoulders that have never been shy about complaining of mistreatment. With a well planned selection of gear it held all that I needed for this trip except for the sleeping accommodations; my winter bag, my summer bag as a liner, and, sealed as tightly as possible, my must remain dry layer of sleeping clothes all compressed into one bulging stuff sack. Since my lumbar pack also had optional shoulder straps, I rigged an attachment to them for the sleeping bags. These shoulder straps are not meant to be weight bearing. They are just handy for hanging convenience items like a camera, scarf, water bottle, etc. and therefore reduce the need for opening up the pack.

Eventually, I got all of the straps and bags properly tensioned and as comfortable as I could expect. That occurred sometime Sunday afternoon See *Carter Notch page 7 for continuation*

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maybe a half mile from getting back into my car. Friday evening the subtleties of a prolonged uphill trek were teaching me the finer points of overnight excursions. It was not just the weight. At first whole load bounced a bit. Then the straps for the stuff sack cut into my upper arms rather than over my shoulders. I had wisely, but incorrectly, tested the load on a local hike the week before but half way up this mountain I realized that I had much more weight in the pack than during my test. By going up for an additional overnight, I had added an additional day's food as well. I also had a concern about the primary nutrient: water. Despite several reassurances that the Hut would have plenty of drinkable water I could not yield from having the "what if" contingency available. It's like the clothing rule; you always start a hike wearing enough layers to feel warm when your standing still before the hike, then you add to your pack one additional layer. If I hiked all the way to the cabin and there was no water, or maybe was no cabin, which all of those hut sized boulders and other landslide debris surrounding it clearly foretell will happen someday, I would need an equal amount of water to hike back out. I had done the calculations as part of a training program once: at 32 degrees Celsius (90° F), 50 % relative humidity, which would feel comfortably dry, air has about 10 grams of water per cubic meter of air. At minus 7 Celsius (20°F) a cubic meter of air at 50% RH holds about 2 grams of water. So, in the summer when you breathe out carbon dioxide and water vapor, the waste products of energy production in your muscles, you inhale back in almost as much atmospheric water vapor. In the winter you lose water, lots of it, with every breath.

Well, back to my progress report. Eventually the hardwired bell went off. I should have reached the halfway point; the trail junction with the Carter Dome Trail; 1.9 miles from the trailhead and 1.9 miles from the Hut. The terrain was right and the trail conditions were about the same, but it took considerably longer than expected for me to reach the junction. My map had a distinct bend in the trail one-half of the way to this trail junction and I had noticed it and simply multiplied the time by two. However, I should have multiplied by three.

At the junction marker I knew it was time to stop fiddling with the pack and pick up the pace, but the trail had opposite plans. Some of the trail traffic had come down along Cater Dome Trail, so the remainder of the 19 Mile Trail from thereon had less definition and was less compacted. As the elevation increased, the wind increased, as if the air in the mountains had to be back to the Visitor's Center before the sun set. I knew at that point that I would not reach my destination before that same deadline. Despite being just a wee bit annoyed by headlamps on moonlight hikes (moonlight, get it! moon-light), in this circumstance, mine came on and stayed on. The snowshoes went on as well, as the trail began to pass over more and more streams. At some point during this arduous portion of the hike, as the fatigue and uncertainty replaced the last of the sunlight, a familiar voice was heard. The message was clear: "Steve, you're too old for this!" A statement that was answered by another familiar voice saying, "Steve, you ain't getting any younger!" Which speaker was the devil, and which was the angel, has still not been determined. At the time, the man in the middle (that would be me) started looking at every passing snow bank and tree bow and mentally reviewing what make a good emergency winter shelter (the advice of Wayne Rodrigues in my memory).

To keep my thoughts away from these distractions I began to observe the beauty as well as the isolation of the snow filled forest. Within the small circumference illuminated by my headlamp was a marginally discernable trail surrounded by mounds and huge pillows of white mystery. Here, I am literally walking in mid air, in sight of the one thing most critical to my existence at that time, the trail, and almost every other detail of the lush, diverse, and miraculous environment that I was surrounded by was shielded by a fluffy white or beyond the red glow of the LEDs. Such an incredibly huge expanse of nature comprising the White Mountain National Forest had been reduced to a bubble only two strides across. Perseverance was called for, as was persistence, and on select critical instances a little profanity. After I had passed the last of the hemlocks and struggled into the fir and spruce of the boreal forest, the bubble burst. The red

glow was still there, I was still there, the cold was still there, the wind was really still there, however the trail was not. In the distorted world of a surface topography that altered on a timetable just one level slower than the waves on the sea, a virgin snowdrift crossed the trail in front of me with the seeming quickness of a frightened red squirrel. Good place to stop. Maybe some fluids. A reach for the handkerchief. A glance or two back toward the trailhead. Remember my orienteering? The drift cut across the trail on a diagonal. It was easiest to cross on a perpendicular. I could do easy if I didn't do dumb. When I get to the other side don't go straight ahead looking for the trail. There's a technique called "aiming off" that means you can reduce your uncertainty by deliberately missing the target in a known way. If I turn a little right to cross the drift, the trail will very likely be to my left. Just follow the back edge of the drift to the left until the trail emerges from underneath it. I could just walk back and forth on the other side and I might eventually find the trail but I might also find the River or at the very least lose more time.

This one was pretty wimpy; enlarged by the limited dimensions of my view. It was just that when I first started orienteering I befriended Steve Tarry, the best competitor in all of New Hampshire. He was experienced and generous enough to give me the key to his success. "Navigation." That was it; one word, "navigation." You will lose more time being lost than you ever will being slow. So, if I didn't have Chris's footprints in front of me, I had to have a plan for finding them or at least a way to return to my last verifiable position. Two more disappearances were similarly surmounted when my circle of light seemed to disappear. It was coincident with a noticeable increase in wind velocity. Perhaps I had ventured too close to a celestial black hole and all of the See *Carter Notch page 8 for continuation*

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light was being sucked into it. No, the map wasn't that bad. But it was space related. There was suddenly nothing for the light to hit. I was in a clearing of packed snow. More excitingly, it was the junction with the Wildcat Trail. I had made it to the elevation of the Notch, or more precisely, 3 feet above the elevation of the Notch judging by the ankle-high trail sign. Here I spent some time, on my knees, in the snow, reading each word and number carved into the wood. Remember, I'm not really close to the Hut until it's within my little light bubble. My headlamp had a focused krypton beam, but when the snow was blowing it was as detrimental as high beams on a foggy highway. I made absolutely certain that I left the junction on the right trail. Who was to say Chris hadn't made a wrong turn?



Fortunately, his prints were pleasantly still leading my chosen way for the last 0.3 miles to the Hut. Down they led to the first of the two lakes at the Notch. The trail followed an S-shaped path as it went around the first, between the two, and curved along the second. Unfortunately, the footprints did not.

When I reached the edge of the first lake the prints turned and headed straight across the lake. On a clear day I could probably see the Hut from there but this was no longer daytime, nor was it particularly clear. I made the turn proceeded only far enough to see all evidence of footprints disappear at the edge of a looming gray surface ahead. Oh, no! Chris had fallen through the ice!!! Not likely. If Chris had a pickup truck it would probably not fall through that ice. But his tracks had. Resisted

by the hard ice or disguised by blowing snow, all of the tracks disappeared not far from the shore. Navigation!+ Despite the cold and fatigue, I turned around and went back to where the tracks had deviated from the trail. I knew the trail merely skirted the far shore of the lake so how hard could that be to follow? Well, impossible was my eventual conclusion. No one had used it for months since the lake had frozen, and snow drifts meant it would not be easy to hike even if I did find it, which I never actually did. So, it was time to test my faith and start walking on water. Line up the direction of the last visible prints and keep going. Did I mention I am not real good at direction? Or that a notch between two, three thousand foot higher mountains is a real wind tunnel that exerts a serious influence on which direction you are able to go in? Or that light from my headlamp might bounce off the blowing snow in the air while also getting absorbed into the gray ice under my feet, so it kinda looks like you're maybe upside down with your face in the snow and feet in the air? Or that maybe I should have just followed the dog ("in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food and fire-providers").

It was a memorable few moments adrift in the universe, accompanied only by a stinging cold, a gale force hug, and the thawing recognition of many a line of long frozen prose.

My footfall on the opposite shore was also to step into line with Chris and his predecessor. The smaller lake was skirted and I found myself on a steep incline in a tunnel of Balsam Fir. After four hours of the mounds and curves of the natural world, the instant a mathematically horizontal line of shadow appeared in front of me I realized I that I had reached my destination. The familiar voices congratulated with, "Now that was a piece of cake,+ followed by, "You came all the way up here for this?+ I dismissed them both, along with epaulets of snow on my shoulders, before entering the Hut.

Both Chris and the Hut's caretaker, a young Middlebury grad named George, had turned in for the night. The Hut had gas lights, as well as more modern solar powered fluorescents, but I left them both untouched. The gas stove was my companion for the next hour. I warned from the inside, put on my dry set of clothes, made my introduction to

the spirits inscribed in the Hut's long shelf of registration books, paid my respects to Jack London, and found a bunk space for the restful slumber of a below zero night.



Post holing full body style



Shari getting the scoop again?



Our resident photographer



I read that this color would scare away the bears!

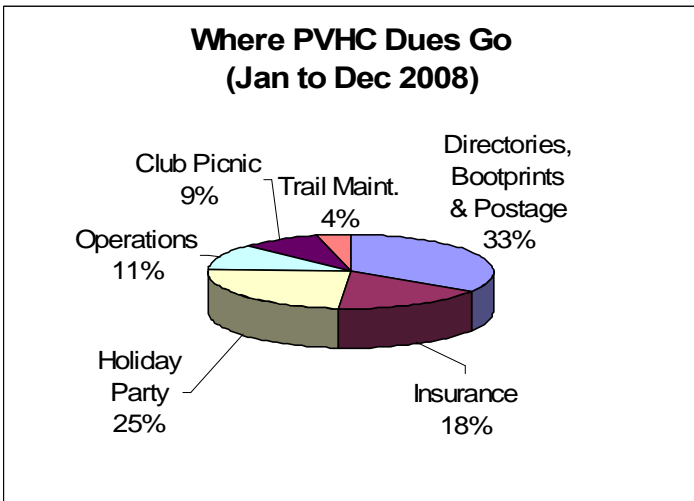
Where your PVHC Dues went in 2008

By Deb Gebo

The attached pie chart represents a summary of how your dues contributed to the many activities that the club supported in 2008. The club provides our members with a subsidized summer picnic, holiday party, and liability insurance for hike leaders each year. In addition, we have an active trail maintenance program that promotes conservation and land stewardship. Your dues also make it possible for you to receive new activity schedules by mail, if you cannot attend a meeting, and provides for publishing "Bootprints," our club's newsletter. Volunteers run all the executive board positions and the club activities.

Directories, Bootprints & postage	1,817.42
Insurance	936.00
Holiday party	1,317.89
Operations	600.87
Club picnic	474.05
Trail maintenance	202.21

Operations:	Liability insurance, meeting expenses, office equipment & supplies, guest speaker gratuity T-shirts, web site maintenance, etc.
Photocopy & Mailings:	Meeting agendas, schedules, newsletters, club brochures, membership kits, labels, postage, etc.
Trail Maintenance:	Support for trail maintenance
Holiday Party:	Includes food, hall rental, door prizes and entertainment
Club Picnic:	Includes food & miscellaneous expenses
Membership Goodwill:	Special awards, leadership training, scholarships, and membership goodwill.



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 Marcia Kelly, Vice President
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Bootprints Co-Editors:	Marie Babbitt; Mike Reed

Bootprints is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Send your story contributions to the editor at: marie_babbitt@hotmail.com

Important Notice

The following memberships are up for renewal:

March Renewals:

Bill & Donna Allard
 Lundy Bancroft
 Kay Byington
 Suzanne Carey
 Mike & Gail Carrier
 Susan DeMaria
 Sean Dugre
 Diane Gahres
 Alan Goodhind
 John Gorey
 Frank Grabinski
 John Klebes & Family
 Michele Lloyd
 Tom Lynch
 Donna Rowe

April Renewals:

Christine Babineau
 Jacki Barden
 Jeannette Bastien
 Virginia Brown
 Dianne Chiba
 Arline Ely
 Lisa Galpert
 Lawrence Garvey
 Jane Glushik
 Bryan Goodwin &
 Joan DelPlato
 Mike & Monica Gross
 Penny Kratimenos
 Ann Krawet
 Theresa & Barney Marsh
 Susan McGurk
 Robert Morgan
 Mike Rattelle
 Lynne Shapiro
 Ann Shea
 Jacqueline Sheehan
 Jonathan & Kimberly
 Stevens
 Carolyn Stewart
 Deborah Thompson
 Judy Treu
 Pam Wells
 Tamsen West
 Charles Williams

Please send your Renewals to Deb Gebo

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES & THE USUALS

Mar. 21-22 - Adirondack Backpack (NY)
 Mar. 28-29 - Doublehead Mtn. Cabin / Backpack (\$, Res.)
 Apr. 11 . Bartholomew's Cobble Work Day (MA)
 Apr 18 - (NY) NYC Carpool Daytrip
 Apr. 26 . Little Mt. Tom Trail Maintenance (MA)
 May 16 - (CT) West Hartland private lake preserve
 Every Monday - Morning hikes, various locations
 Every Wednesday - Evening walks
 Every Thursday - Afternoon hikes

IMPORTANT NOTICES

- ❑ Next Club Meetings:
 April 7, 2009, 7pm at **FBC**
 May. 5, 2009, 7pm at **FBC**
- ❑ Deadline for Submissions for next BootPrints is: April 20, 2009

FBC . First Baptist Church, West Springfield

***** Check out our web page at:**
<http://www.geocities.com/pvhcweb>

Members may join the PVHC Email List by sending a message to:
pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com

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 P.O. Box 265
 Southwick, MA 01077

