



A Special April Supplement of Feetprints

The Little People of the Deep New England Woods

by Al Roman

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(April Fool's
Edition)

I've been an avid backpacker for over 25 years and have seen much of the deep woods in New England and two areas in Europe during those years. When I say deep woods I'm talking about those areas of the forest where there are no roads, houses, or any signs of civilization, only a poorly or unmaintained hiking trail through the forest. Many hikers never see such beautiful, natural, often old-growth forests unless they are willing to hike the rugged terrain and unmaintained trails to reach these deep woods.

While on one of my first backpacking trips with new friends John, Ricky, and Ed more than 20 years ago I got my first of several glimpses of the "little people." I wasn't sure I was in good enough shape as we hiked a whole day over rugged terrain, climbing and descending mountain after mountain until finally late afternoon we reached a small clearing near a pond in a remote valley between two mountains.

As we set up camp we all commented on the magical beauty of the spot we had chosen for the night. It looked as if no one had hiked this trail for many years. What a story the trees and animals could tell if they could talk.... We collected some rocks at the edge of the pond to make a small fire ring. After dinner, twigs and some larger wood were collected to make a fire only big enough to take the chill out of the early summer air. As the sun set behind the mountain to our west everyone decided to head for their tents for the night. I decided to sit by the crackling fire enjoying its glow until the woods grew very dark. As I relaxed in my backpacking chair with my feet on a nearby log I must have dozed off. I was jolted awake as I felt my feet lifted off the log then hit the ground. As I sat up I heard a loud, high-pitched giggle coming from a bush just at the edge of the light cast by the fire. When I turned on my headlamp to see who was giggling behind the bush all I saw was a very short man dressed in ragged clothes running into the dark forest!

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"While on one of my first backpacking trips with new friends John, Ricky, and Ed more than 20 years ago I got my first of several glimpses of the "little people."

~ Al Roman



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I went back to the tent area and quickly woke up Ricky and John to tell them what I had seen. John was most interested while Ricky quietly listened until I stopped talking. He then said:

I'm glad you got to see one of the "little people" rumored to live in these deep woods. If he was wearing a red hat it was most likely Ernie, one of the leaders of this community. This community of "little people" has been in these deep woods of northern Vermont for more than 100 years according to local folklore. The story I was told by one of oldest residents of a village not far from here, was that in the late 1800's there were several dwarfs living peacefully in a small town close by. A new group of people from somewhere in Europe settled in that same town and started tormenting the dwarfs constantly. They would tease them about their smallness day after day until one day the dwarfs suddenly left the town to never be seen again. Most dwarfs are somewhere between 3 and 4 feet tall when adults. The story that's been passed down from generation to generation is that due to the small number of dwarfs in that community when they reproduced to survive the average height decreased due to recessive genes in the gene pool.

"I told my friends that Ernie was about 3 feet tall and certainly was fast as he ran into the darkness giggling constantly."

~ Al Roman

I told my friends that Ernie was about 3 feet tall and certainly was fast as he ran into the darkness giggling constantly. The second time I saw a "little person" I was deep in the woods of northern New Hampshire about 5 years later. As we reached a remote clearing by a stream after a challenging, daylong hike everyone was ready to get their backpacks off and relax after setting up camp. We had to build our own fire ring out of stones retrieved from the brook. As the sun set, the fire produced a warm glow which faded off into pitch darkness.

All the others went off to their tents leaving me by the fire alone enjoying the peaceful crackling mixed with the tree frog calls. As I started nodding off I was hit on the head by a small branch. When I turned around I saw a "little person," about 2 1/2 feet tall, smile and wave at me then quickly turn and run into the darkness. I raced back

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The Little People *continued from page 2*

to our tent to wake up the others only to learn that the "little people" had visited our campsite while the others slept. Several well-worn, wet tee shirts and 1 pair of shorts were taken off the clothesline to be used by the "little people." I have seen the "little people" 2 more times during my many backpacking adventures. I've never heard them speak but I've heard they have a very unique language.

If you should find yourself in the deep woods of Northern New England you may be lucky enough to get a glimpse of one of these happy, solitary "little people" that want to live alone completely separated from civilization.

--Al Roman



McDonald's to Introduce McRamen

by PaPa Smurf

"Catering to the thru-hiker crowd McDonald's has designed the McRamen to appeal to the peculiar taste palette of a thru-hiker."

~ PaPa Smurf

McDonald's restaurants has introduced a new menu item called the "McRamen" starting this spring. It will be available exclusively at participating McDonald's restaurants located near the Appalachian Trail during April through October months only. Catering to the thru-hiker crowd McDonald's has designed the McRamen to appeal to the peculiar taste palette of a thru-hiker.

The basic McRamen consists of two beef patties made from reconstituted, freeze-dried beef and topped with a huge pile of ramen noodles served on buns made from leftover, stale, Big Mac buns that have been dried and rehydrated. Then topped with a cheese stick, fried onion rings, and plenty of salt and msg. Two premium versions will also be available. The Northbound hiker (NoBo) version will include a topping of trail mix and sliced slim-jim beef sticks and beef jerky. The Southbound (SoBo) hiker version is topped with a dollop of chunky peanut butter and a snickers bar. An assortment of catsup, mustard, and salt packets are included.

Not available at the time of this article, but expected to be announced soon, is the "Beyond McRamen" Burger coming in 2025. The author's favorite? The #5 McRamen Combo that comes with a Coke-flavored hydration drink mix powder, a dried pickle, a supersized portion of dehydrated fries, plus a mini Snickers bar for dessert.

--PaPa Smurf

The New Hampshire 84

by Dick Lost & in the Forest

You've heard of the New Hampshire 48 (NH48), all of the 4,000 footers in NH. And you've probably heard about New Hampshire 52 With a View (NH 52WAV), 52 more peaks below 4,000 feet with views in NH. You might have heard of the New Hampshire Grid (NH GRID)(576-NH 4,000 footer peaks, or 48x12 (all 48 - NH 4,000 footer peaks every month of the year)). You might not of heard of the New Hampshire 84 (NH84).

What is the NH84? The NH84 is the NH48 but walking backwards up the NH 48-4,000 footers. "What do you mean by backwards?", I hear you saying. That's right, the NH84 are the NH48 climbed up the mountains backwards. The idea is to use muscles that you don't normally use to climb the NH48, and to also create a brand-new, achievable hiking award.

"And how do you propose to do that?", I hear you saying. It's highly recommended that you use hiking poles to help you propel yourself up the mountain backwards. These give you more stability on the rough terrain, and prevent you from falling as often.

It's also recommended that you wear a bike helmet with rearview mirrors to see behind you. The helmet is for just in case you lose your balance, and the mirrors on the helmet are for not having to turn your head to see behind you every time you take a step backward. And, of course, bike helmet rearview mirrors are also beneficial for not walking off cliffs.

It is required that you hike backwards up the mountains, but it's not required to hike backwards down the mountains. The NH84 Club is going to cut you, as a backwards hiker, some slack. In other words, you can hike forwards, as normal, going down the mountains.

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"The NH84 is the NH48 but walking backwards up the NH 48-4,000 footers."

~ Dick Lost & in the Forest



"...Every step backward up the mountain will, in actuality, be a step forward."

~ Dick Lost & in the Forest

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Here are some of the benefits of walking up the NH mountains backwards: (1) As mentioned, you use different muscles than walking up the mountain forwards; (2) As mentioned, we need another hiking award because we, as hikers, like new challenges; (3) You don't have to see how steep it is in front of you while climbing the mountain; (4) If you are introverted and you don't want to acknowledge other hikers on the trails, you never have to look at them, unless, of course, they pass you coming up the trail; (5) And if hikers are coming up the trail they can't sneak up on you – you'll see them coming your way up the trail well in advance; (6) You won't have to worry about false summits since you'll never see them; (7) You can actually see, without turning your head, how much elevation you are gaining; (8) You'll have an advantage going down the trail since you are spending more time looking at the downhill part of the trail; (9) The pattern of wear on your hiking boot soles will be more evenly distributed; and, finally, (10) Every step backward up the mountain will, in actuality, be a step forward.

Happy hiking, peakbaggers, in reverse!

--Dick Lost & in the Forest

SpaceBook

by PaPa Smurf

The Pioneer Valley Hiking Club is now on SpaceBook! It's like the well-known FaceBook but it's not just for Earth! Join SpaceBook and make new hiking friends from other worlds. Lots of new hikes, exotic places, and strange and wonderful adventures are to be found when you hookup with your new otherworldly hiking friends, and other humanoid-like creatures, that you can meet through SpaceBook.

This is what one SpaceBook member had to say about hiking in our neighborhood, "Far Out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of the galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun. Some great hiking with the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club can be found on the third planet out."

Keep in mind that due to the multi-world nature of SpaceBook you may need to account for time delays in communicating with outer worlds that may be outside your time zone or spacial time plane. Not all members of SpaceBook speak Earth-like languages or utilize familiar male/female sexual characteristics. Remember SpaceBook is an all-inclusive, adult social environment. All are welcome to participate but be prepared to be exposed to various forms of non-monogamous, multi-species relationships, or non-exclusive sexual or romantic relationships with alien races and species.

The Pioneer Valley Hiking Club is not responsible for any cultural or multi-galactic disputes and conflicts that may arise due to differences between galaxies, time dimensions, and the rules of law in other galactic empires.

Special note for PVHC hiking members on SpaceBook:

Please adhere to SpaceBook's first rule of The Hiker's Guide to

See *SpaceBook* continued on page 8



PaPa Smurf

*"Join SpaceBook and
make new hiking friends
from other worlds."*

~ PaPa Smurf



"The SpaceBook Guide says a towel "is the most massively useful thing an interstellar hiker can have."

~ PaPa Smurf

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SpaceBook; "Don't Panic!" It is also highly crucial to bring along a towel. Please add a towel to the required Ten Essentials for Hiking that we recommend for all hikes.

The SpaceBook Guide says a towel "is the most massively useful thing an interstellar hiker can have. You can wrap it around you for warmth as you bound across the cold moons of Jupiter; it can be used as protection from cosmic radiation produced by solar flares; you can lie on it on the brilliant marble-sanded beaches of Santraginus V, inhaling the heady sea vapors; you can sleep under it beneath the stars which shine so redly on the desert world of Kakrafoon; wet it for use in hand-to-hand-combat; wrap it round your head to ward off noxious fumes or avoid the gaze of the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal; you can wave your towel in emergencies as a distress signal, and, of course, use it to cover up after skinny dipping." Please bring a towel on all PVHC/SpaceBook organized hikes.

Any galactic trekker who can hike the maze of trails within the galaxy, rough it, slum it, struggle against terrible odds but win though, and still knows where his towel is, is clearly a hiker to be reckoned with.

Do not panic and always bring a towel on PVHC hikes.

--PaPa Smurf

Staying Healthy on the Trail

by PaPa Smurf

How to stay healthy as a yogi begging spoon hiker is among the latest crop of health nuts. We have all been there - hiking along on day six out of town, craving some meaty greasy burgers and stumbling on some campers cooking up a storm. As a yogi thru-hiker you whip out your trusty begging spoon, turn on your charm, and yogi a burger from the unsuspecting campers. Success you think! But then you realize it's a gluten-free, non-GMO, and an Impossible™ meat-free, beyond-food product. Ugh!

What to do? Not to fear. PaPa Smurf has just the solution with his woke-food emergency kit. This 1/2 ounce hiker-friendly, emergency food repair kit has everything you need to save the day. With individual super lightweight packets of high-gluten, additive powders, enhanced, high strength GMO enzymes, and freeze-dried, pork belly fat you can spice up any just ho-hum, plant-based meal with real meat flavorings and strength building GMO and Gluten. And as a bonus, the emergency kit includes a few packets of flavor-enhancing MSG meat-flavored seasoning. Makes any begging food more palatable. Guaranteed to put the meatball back in any smurf's great physique.

--PaPa Smurf

“As a yogi thru-hiker you whip out your trusty begging spoon, turn on your charm, and yogi a burger from the unsuspecting campers.”

~ PaPa Smurf

“PaPa Smurf has just the solution with his woke-food emergency kit.”

~ PaPa Smurf



Hiking Club Dues Increase

by PaPa Smurf

Companies and organizations across all aspects of our lives have been increasing prices. Consumers continue to see increasing price inflation as expenses for goods and services have grown after Covid, with it's difficult supply chain issues, inflation fears, the past year's interest rate increases, and high demand for services.

Hiking clubs are no exception. Hikers arriving at the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club meeting in Springfield, MA, on April 1st were shocked to find four-digit prices greeting them for their 2024 dues. Yearly dues are now \$2249.00, an almost 9000% increase over the previous year. For those not able to afford the new prices a daily walk-up hike rate is now available. Adult one-day hike dues are \$35 per day. A child's hiking day-pass is \$20. Elderly seniors are eligible for a 25% reduced dues.

"This is an outrage," said Grandma Gatewood's grandson, while walking back to his car after the hiking club announcement. "Why I remember when you could just hike without paying on any forest trail. With these high-priced dues kids will shun hiking and just waste the whole day Facebook-posting and playing video games."

The enormous price increases didn't seem to bother everyone. "What, is that a lot?" said several congressman that just voted to defund the national park system. Elon Musk, having just paid his dues in bitcoin said, "I hike in New England all the time and feel it's a fair deal. When you plan to build a house on every mountain top in the Whites you tend to hike more and I don't mind paying the high price of dues to hike."

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*"Yearly dues are now \$2249.00, an almost 9000% increase over the previous year."
~ PaPa Smurf*

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The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), who also announced new hiking club rates for 2024 that are twice the PVHC rate increases, has announced the formation of a competitive AMC-Epic Hiking Pass. The new AMC-Epic Hiking Pass will allow up to five hikes per year with each of the major hiking clubs in the New England area for a lower rate than PVHC charges in yearly dues. Note that the AMC-Epic Hiking Pass has blackout dates on most weekends and holidays for AMC-sponsored hikes.

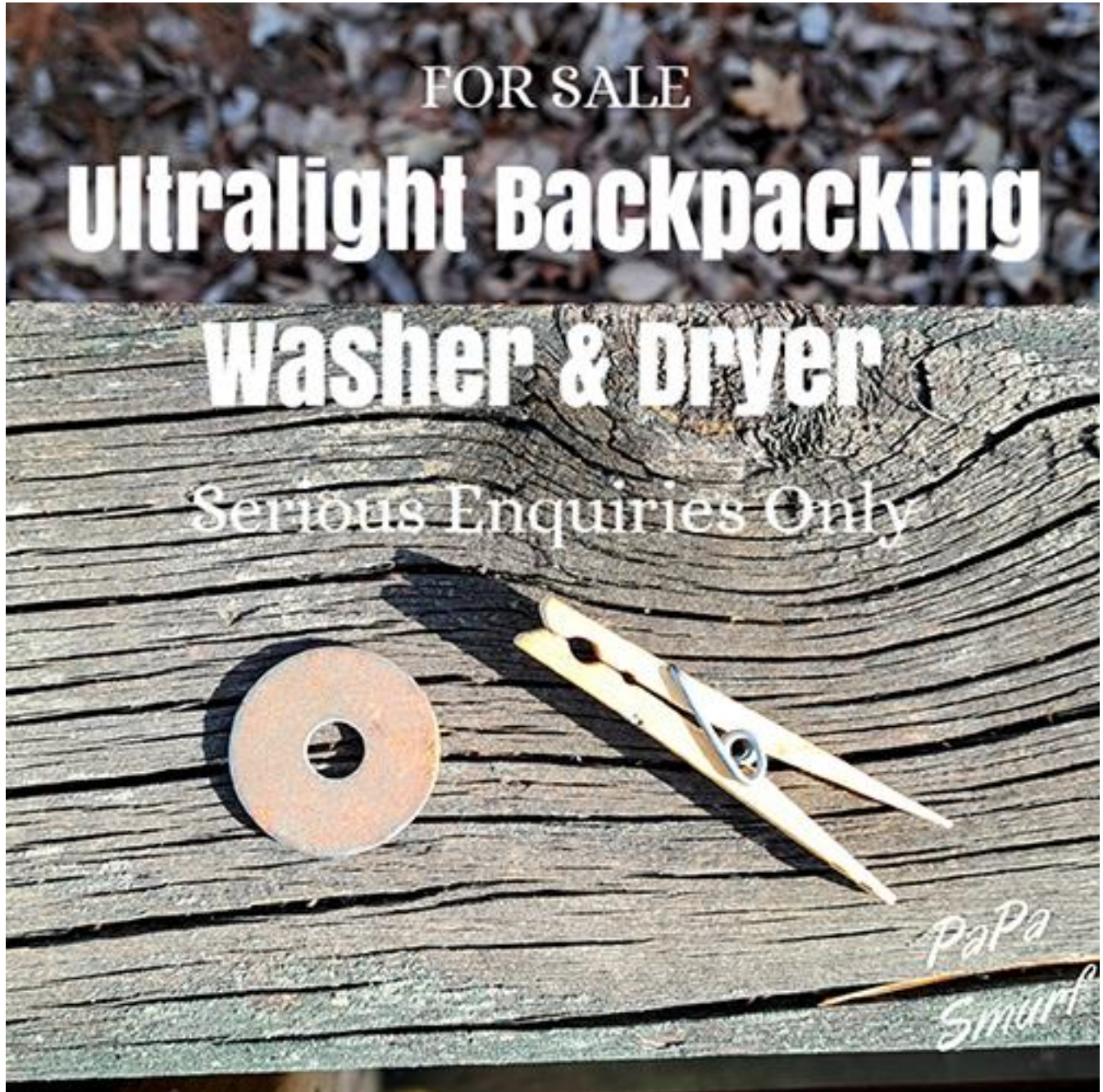
Asked if she was familiar with the Epic Hiking Pass, Appalachian Mountain Club's new President and CEO acknowledged that she was, but said that she doesn't, "use coupons," before stepping into her gas-guzzling limousine and driving up the dirt trail to Vermont's Mt. Mansfield summit.

Reached for comment, a Green Mountain Club spokesman said, "we are hoping the high price of hiking will protect the environment from the wear and tear of hikers and save it for the next generation of wealth holders."

"It's fine," said a 39-year-old lawyer from Amherst, who was eating lunch with her husband and three children at the Highland Center. "When you're having the Experience of a Lifetime, you don't really pay attention to things like money."

--PaPa Smurf

"The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), who also announced new hiking club rates for 2024 that are twice the PVHC rate increases,...."
~ PaPa Smurf



UPCOMING EVENTS AND THE USUALS

- Every Mon. (MA) Monday Morning
Hikes w/ Chip
- Every Tues. (MA) Tuesday Morning
Hikes w/ Various Leaders
(MA) Tuesday Evening
Hikes w/ Lori
- Every Wed. (MA) Wednesday Morning
Hikes w/ Deb & Cheryl
- Every Thurs. (MA) Thursday Morning
Hikes w/ Peggy
- Every Sat. (MA) Saturday Morning
Hikes w/ Various Leaders
- Every Sun. (MA) Sunday Morning Hikes
w/ Various Leaders
- April 2 Club Meeting
- May 7 Club Meeting

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Next Club Meetings:
 Apr 2 , 2024, 7 p.m. at **ROC**
 May 7, 2024, 7 p.m. at **ROC**

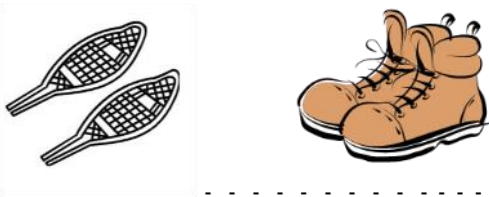
FBC - Red Oak Church, 337 Piper Road, West Springfield

This issue of *Footprints* is dedicated to my Mentor-in-Jest, John "PaPa Smurf" Klebes, former *Footprints* Editor ~ Dick Lost & In the Forest

Deadline for submissions to the next *Bootprints* is April 20, 2024

**** Check out our web page at:**
www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org

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



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