

# RIDGE LINES

www.naturecompass.org/gmcburlington

Winter 2007 - 2008

We asked Ridge Line readers to share lessons learned about hiking and backpacking during Vermont's winter months. We got more ideas, recommendations, warnings and thoughtful suggestions than we have room to print – so here's a summary of the most frequently mentioned tips.

## *Advice from experienced winter hikers*

Leave cotton clothing and blue jeans at home. Cotton provides almost no protection from wind, and when it gets wet you might as well be wandering around out there naked.

Don't count on your good old summer hiking boots. Get insulated boots designed for winter hiking.

Remember the **Three W's**. Wear a layer like polypro that will **Wick** moisture away from your skin. Wear a **Warming** layer like wool or fleece. Wear or carry a layer that will protect you against **Wet**. It's nearly impossible to stay warm if you're wet. A waterproof shell could literally save your life if it starts raining, sleeting or snowing. You should also carry an extra warm layer to put on as soon as you stop for a rest, especially if you get sweaty.

Whenever you hike in the winter, think about the awful possibility of getting stranded on the trail overnight. Make sure your pack has extra clothes, including hats and gloves.

It gets dark early in the cold months. Bring a sturdy flashlight or – even better – a headlamp.

Winter hikers need plenty of food and water to maintain energy and avoid hypothermia and frostbite. Carry lots of high-calorie snacks like gorp, chocolate, cheese and peanut butter. (For winter campers, a handful of gorp at 2:00 AM is like stoking the fire and putting on an extra blanket.)

A thermos of hot bouillon or hot Tang will warm your insides on a below zero day. Drinking cool liquids tends to lower your body temperature.

Wrap your water bottle or thermos in a wool sock before putting it in your pack. This will keep the contents hot a bit longer.

If you're using a hydration pack, blow into the tubing after drinking. Otherwise, the water might freeze even with insulation around it. Also, keep the mouthpiece inside your jacket in very cold temperatures.

Prevent hypothermia by staying hydrated, well fed, and dry. The "umbles" are a warning! Be concerned if you start mumbling, fumbling and stumbling. More severe symptoms include vision problems, forgetfulness, confusion or fainting.

Prevent frostbite by protecting your skin from wind and wet and avoiding clothes that cut off circulation, especially to hands or feet. Remember that people who have been frostbitten before are much more likely to suffer a repeat injury.

*Inside: More winter safety tips on page 4 ... Memories of Burlington Section member John Brown on pages 2 and 3 ... Exciting News about our Annual Meeting on page 4 ... Activities for December through March on pages 5 through 7 ... Call for historic photos on page 7 ... Reservation Form for Annual Meeting on page 8*

Long-time hiker and GMC volunteer John Brown died last May. John made a big impression on everyone who met him. Here are some personal memories from Burlington Section members.

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*From Llyn Ellison*

I met John when we were both members of the Laraway Section helping build Spruce Ledge Shelter and working on the Butler Lodge renovation. He was there every weekend working on whatever project needed to be done, from windows to floorboards and more. He was a tireless, dedicated volunteer quietly doing the job he was assigned. His legacy lives on in these projects and in the lives of so many people he touched.

*From Linda Evans*

The first time I met John Brown was on a work hike to replace the old pit privy at Duck Brook shelter. I recall my first impression: Who is this doddering old man with the quaint blue toque on his head? What really impressed me though was his willingness to jump in and take on any task that needed doing, no matter how odious. Shoveling dirt into the old smelly poop-filled hole? That was John, pitching in.

My last memory of John involved a hike once again to Duck Brook Shelter, about a week before he passed away. We were doing some trail maintenance in the area and it had been a long sticky day of chopping trees and clearing water bars. A couple of the crew were worn out by day's end, looking for an easy way back to the car. John spoke up. "I know a shortcut," he offered. I vaguely remembered the shortcut too, so I offered to come along to help navigate. Well, we got incredibly lost. We ended up at the base of a steep ravine that led directly into a private gravel pit on the other side. There was no way out except to scale that steep cliff of prickles and underbrush, followed by an ignominious slide on our butts down the sand bank on the other side.

Through it all, I never heard John say a disparaging word. To me he represented the soul of a loyal Green Mountain Club Member; always cheerful, willing to offer whatever he had - time, elbow grease, money - to a cause that was very dear to his heart. He is greatly missed by us all.

*From Leo Leach*

*In memory of John R. B. Brown*

I first met John at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous\* in Essex Jct. The next time I crossed paths with John was on the Green Mountains Club's Long Trail. He let me borrow a pair of snowshoes for my first experience snowshoeing on the Long Trail. As the years passed, John and I became friends. Our friendship and my admiration for John were fortified by his selfless giving. He was an active member of AA and served on several committees. John helped many an alcoholic on their road to recovery from their malady.

John and I spent considerable time working with the Green Mountain Club. Again, John gave of himself generously. He served on committees for both the Burlington Section and the Laraway Section. He helped with the construction of Roundtop Shelter, Taft Lodge, Twin Brooks Tenting Area, Spruce Ledge Camp and Butler Lodge.

John was consistent in volunteering his time at Burlington's First Night celebration. And there were times when John was seen answering phones during the PBS fundraiser.

John will surely be missed. He will always be remembered as a historian, a mathematician, but most of all as being entertaining.

I will say that John lived a life of abstention from greed or hoarding. John gave of himself without expecting something in return. Sharing openly of his time and energy without obligation made John feel good. John felt that we do not need a lot of possessions to be happy. John knew that it is our relationship to this changing life that determines our happiness or sorrow. John knew that happiness comes from the heart.

And finally in his last exhalation John generously gave out his individual self to the universal world. Rest in peace my Friend. Our paths will cross again.

Love, Leo

*\*Editors' Note: Leo is not breaking confidentiality with John. John talked openly and honestly about his work with AA. His participation in a 12-step recovery program was included in his obituary in the Burlington Free Press. John's openness and honesty inspired others.*

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## *Memories of John Brown - continued*

Here are some additional facts about John's life. He was a graduate of UVM and the University of New Hampshire and worked in education, statistics, quality control, information sciences and computer systems. He traveled extensively, visiting Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Zambia, Iceland, western Canada and Alaska. John was involved in projects at Roundtop Shelter, Taft Lodge, Twin Brooks, Spruce Ledge Camp and Butler Lodge as well as the installation of numerous new privies. His last trail work outing as a GMC volunteer was just a week before his death. In addition to participating on work crews, John often volunteered to drop hikers off at trailheads when they were piecing together their Long Trail end-to-end hikes. He also enjoyed square-dancing and was active in a seniors biking group, the "Silver Streakers," joining them for a ride five days before his death.

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*From Mary Lou Recor*

### *A Farewell to John Brown*

John Brown's legacy to the Green Mountain Club may best be summed up in two words: windows and privies. His fondness for window restoration began and ended with the historic panes of Butler Lodge. As reconstruction began in the spring of 2000, John volunteered to refurbish the windows. He carefully removed them from the casings, carried them down the mile and a half to the trailhead and spent countless hours scraping, cleaning and painting in his basement. I don't think he appreciated the enormity of the job he had undertaken until he was well into it. As for privies, John was rightly proud of being part of the work crews that built composting outhouses for both Duck Brook and Buchanan Shelters. With quiet humor, he willingly took on almost any job.

John also introduced his daughter Deb to hiking and to the Green Mountain Club. She was active in the Burlington Section for many years leading outings, showing slides and serving on both the GMC Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

On a gorgeous Sunday last October, Deb organized a memorial hike for her father. More than a dozen GMC members from both the Burlington and Laraway Sections gathered at Spruce Ledge Camp to share memories of John. We talked of his dedication to the rebuilding of Taft Lodge and of his work on Spruce Ledge Camp, which replaced Ritterbush, as well as the many interesting colors of his hair.

After a lunch of northwest smoked salmon, fresh bread, fruit and cheese, Deb laid out a variety of non-profit t-shirts in the lodge and invited us each to take one as a memento from her father's life. She explained that in some Native American cultures, the family of the deceased brings a few of his or her possessions for the mourners to take home as remembrances. So we hiked back to Route 118 wearing John's Tour de Cure, Green Mountain Club and "Bernie" t-shirts, as well as square dancing scarves and bandannas.

I have attended many funerals and memorial services and I think John Brown's was among the most meaningful. Because we were a small group and there was no script, we each had a chance to say a few impromptu words about John as we gathered around the porch of Spruce Ledge Camp. I can think of no better way to be remembered.

## *Advice from experienced winter hikers - cont.*

We heard from Burlington Section Member Frank Gibney, who said he's "one of those 30+ year members that lurks, but does still get out". Over the years, he's guided hundreds of folks to places where they've been challenged by high altitude and cold weather. He recently took several Burlingtonians to hike Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Frank has found that people who are experienced hikers often seem to have the biggest hang-ups with regard to being willing to stop and take care of potentially dangerous situations. Just assuming that they're OK isn't always a good idea. Frank recommends looking folks in the eye and asking, "Can you feel your toes and fingers?" If there's any hesitation at all, it's time to stop and deal with the situation right then and there. He hopes that this kind of pro-active behavior will prevent frostbite incidents.

## **NEWS FLASH!**

### **NOTED WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING**

#### **BURLINGTON SECTION ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER**

Saturday, January 19, 2008

Faith United Methodist Church

899 Dorset St., South Burlington

5:00 – Social Hour

6:00 - Supper: Lasagna and garlic bread plus potluck extras (See page 8 for what to bring.)

7:00 – Business Meeting

**8:15 – Famous wildlife photographer George Wuerthner will share some of his incredible pictures. George's photos have been featured in *Audubon Magazine*, *National Geographic*, *NY Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Outdoor Life* and other publications. He has won prizes for writing and photography. His pictures have been displayed at the Smithsonian and many other museums. George has been a wilderness guide, backcountry ranger, surveyor, teacher, botanist for the Bureau of Land Management and biologist at Fortymile River in Alaska. He has explored hundreds of mountain ranges from New Mexico to Alaska and has visited hundreds of national parks. He's also taken photos in more than 350 wilderness areas in the United States.**

**Don't miss the chance to share an evening with George Wuerthner!**

Directions: From Burlington, take Route 2 to Dorset Street (location of Barnes and Noble, Healthy Living, etc.). From farther away, take I-89 to exit 14E and then turn right on Dorset Street. Faith United Methodist Church is on the right, 0.3 miles from the Kennedy Drive-Dorset Street intersection. There's plenty of parking. The cafeteria is at the far end.

## *Volunteer Opportunities!!!*

Dear Burlington Section Members,

During this time of the year, a Nominating Committee is formed to review the volunteer leadership positions within the Section. These positions include President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer as well as leaders who are in charge of specific functions of the Section. These volunteers keep track of membership, manage publicity, write and edit *Ridge Lines*, support shelter adopters, plan special events and educational offerings, organize and schedule outings, and work to keep our trails in the best possible condition.

In order to keep the Section leadership strong and fresh, the Nominating Committee is looking for new members who might want to get involved. If you have any interest in becoming part of this fine team, please call 899-2375 or e-mail [jc61945@yahoo.com](mailto:jc61945@yahoo.com).

Sincerely, Linda Evans, Paul Houchens, and John Connell - Nominating Committee