

# ADVENTURE TALS

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STORIES OF  
SCRAPES,  
STORMS AND  
RUN-INS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ADIRONDACK CENTER FOR WRITING

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM FROESE





# HUNTING WITH COY-WOLVES

BY SAM SERVADIO

In November 2007, I headed deep into the McKenzie Mountain Wilderness, using the last few hours of daylight to hunt. I'd hunted in these woods before, during the same month, only to find myself in knee-deep snow. But today it was in the mid-40s and I didn't need gloves or a hat. As I left the cabin my wife reminded me that she was making chili for dinner and not to be late.

Since I was headed west, the sun appeared bright for the time of day. But I really didn't know the time because I had gotten out of the habit of wearing my old mechanical diver's watch. Since I almost always had my cell phone, I used it as my timepiece. But since there was no cell service at camp, I left the damn thing in my Jeep's cup holder. Without an artificial means of determining sunset I was lulled into complacency as I kept plodding along toward the bright, low autumn sun. It wasn't until I turned toward

camp that I realized how late it was and how dark it had become.

So I walked north until I cut the state line that delineated a trail toward camp. As the sun dropped into the horizon, the night became cemetery-still. I only had about a half mile to go when they found me.

I heard a howl that made my hair stand up. It was close and I knew its purpose: to call the pack together. When heard from the comfort of your cabin it is a pleasant sound, but if you're alone in their woods, it's eerie. After a brief silence the long howl was followed by a series of shorter yelps on each side of me. At this point I realized these were locating calls and the coywolves were hot on my trail. My pace increased to match my heart rate.

I knew these were eastern coyotes—what most North Country folks call coydogs. They are a breed about 30 percent larger and heavier than their western cousin. Some people mistake them for wolves, but there are no longer wolves in the Adirondacks.

I guessed the coywolves tracking me were not a pack, but rather a family group. This was reassuring, because at least Mom and Dad were doing something fun with the kids.

As I neared camp, they closed in. Even when they weren't howling, I could hear them thrashing through the dense forest. Occasionally, in the moonlight, I'd catch a glimpse of a bold one darting alongside of me. They were becoming more vocal and I detected excitement in their howls and yelps. Since I could also hear the brook, I reasoned that I was almost to the cabin.

I wanted my wife to hear this rare spectacle of Adirondack music, so I continued my stealthy pace until I stepped on a stick that snapped and all around me was silence. The serenade was over and I was alone in the woods again. At least I could see the amber glow of the camp's oil lamp. I couldn't wait to dig into a big bowl of that chili. ▲

# THE LEGEND OF PINPIN

BY CHRISTIN LIBERTY

I choose to believe it was him. The rest of the details are foggy, but what I remember clearly is his backpack pulling away from us down the trail.

Between the ages of 12 and 17 I spent my summers working my way to becoming an Adirondack 46er. My mother had done it before me and joined me for many of the hikes, including my last, Whiteface. At the summit she presented me with my own 46er T-shirt. She'd refused to let me wear hers, insisting I had to earn it before I could put one on.

Not counting Cascade, which I suspect every able-bodied kid has climbed, my first 46ers were on a sixth-grade camping trip, where a few experienced preteen hikers and I chose to climb Gothics, Armstrong and Lower Wolfjaw. The day was overcast, and we could barely see three feet in front of our faces, never mind a view from the top. Still, I decided I was going to be a 46er. As I said (ad nauseam, as a precocious and attention-seeking child), "four down, 42 to go." Between my mom and summer hiking programs I bushwhacked my way through the High Peaks list every summer. Those group hikes with other kids were where I learned about the legend of Alain Chevette and PinPin. Chevette was known for climbing all 46 High Peaks every year, sometimes finishing all of them in days. He could be recognized by his astounding pace and the stuffed rabbit, PinPin, attached to his backpack.

He seemed like a myth, but I had proof, handwritten clues of his existence. I was one of the last generation to hike in the age of canisters: metal tubes affixed to a tree at the summit of trailless peaks, containing a bent and water-warped notebook and stubby pencil for hikers to write their name and the date, a record of their summiting. Forty-Sixer

membership is based on the honor system, but the canister notebook worked as a form of proof. I had to write the three names that appeared ahead of mine when I registered, consulting the notes I took in the back of my equally water-warped trail guide. The trailless mountains usually attracted only the most serious climbers with membership ambitions; a single notebook would last for years. Most just wrote the date and their name before moving on, but a few took the time to describe their day, the mood, the weather. If we had time, we would flip through previous pages, looking for fun anecdotes. Chevette and PinPin made several appearances. They were easy to spot because PinPin's signature was a simple drawing, several loops that became a self-portrait. The drawing was a barometer for how the weather was that day. A lovingly drawn picture meant fair weather and a good hiking pace. A hastily drawn squiggle meant heavy rain.

I don't remember which trail I was on, neither especially enjoyable nor ambi-

tious. It has the quality of a dream, not a memory, but I know it happened. I was in my youth hiking group and walking along a ridge between mountains. A man behind us said softly, "Excuse me," and passed us, moving at a rapid clip. We were experienced hikers and moved aside without question. We watched a small stuffed bunny recede ahead of us. We exploded into furious whispers, wondering if it really was him. We couldn't be sure, though we discussed running back to the last summit to see if his name was written in the canister notebook. We finished the hike with a sense of satisfaction, a second achievement unlocked.

Now I live in New York City. It took a long time to figure out the right combination of words to Google, but I eventually landed on a hiking forum conversation from 2005. And a user posting as PinPin Junior. Another thread has stories just like mine. The sound of heavy footsteps, a passing blur, a stuffed bunny staring back at them as Chevette disappears down the trail. Some even post photos. They don't look familiar. The hiker looks too young, the bunny too big. I wish I hadn't looked. In my memory he was a man of the woods, stooped and wiry, long beard like Rip Van Winkle. But Alain Chevette is a real person. I hope he and PinPin are well. ▲

# CONQUERING AZURE MOUNTAIN

BY TIM BASHAW

Mike's topless Jeep rattled down the Blue Mountain Road in slow motion. He and I scanned the densely forested shoulder for any sign that the directions our grandmother had given us were based in reality.

"Well, it's been decades since your grandfather and I climbed it," she had recalled an hour earlier, at our camp on Lake Ozonia, "but I seem to remember that once you reach the bathtub, you pull over. That's where you'll find the trail to the top of Azure."

My brother was older and perhaps had more trust in Granny. As the youngest sibling and frequent butt of the family's practical jokes, I was more skeptical. We're looking for a bathtub in the woods?

Nevertheless, I was excited: home from college for a long fall weekend in 1987,



and we were finally going to climb the mountain we'd seen thousands of times from the lake.

Mike suddenly veered off the road and we hopped out next to a cast-iron, clawfoot bathtub. A two-inch galvanized pipe led out of the woods and spilled spring water into the basin.

We were both in jeans and sweatshirts. And sneakers would have to do, since we hadn't thought to bring boots to the lake.

"Can you see a trail?" I asked, peering suspiciously into the thick brush.

He shook his head. "No, but think about it—it's probably really overgrown after all these years. Let's just start hiking in, and once we see the terrain start to rise, we'll know we're heading in the right direction. After all, it's the only mountain in the area!"

Despite 18 years of experience in seeing where Big Brother's instincts led him, I had to admit that this time his thinking held a certain logic.

"After you," I said, motioning to the thick forest. He disappeared into the trees.

It was a true bushwhack. Forging shallow streams, mucking through ankle-deep puddles, climbing under, over and through deadfall after deadfall, it was at least an hour of hiking before we noticed that in the darkness under the canopy, a line of boulders seemed to mark the bottom of a slope.

"See?" said Mike with a confident grin. "Just like I predicted."

Of course, anyone seeing us at that point would have been leery of advice from either of us. We were covered in bruises, mosquito bites, mud, pitch and pine needles.

My brother scaled the first car-sized boulder and began the assault on the summit. I followed.

If the first hour of the hike was grueling, the next hour brought us to near-exhaustion. Climbing around and through deadfalls while trudging uphill had us both gasping for breath.

Finally, when we were each on the brink of turning around and following our path back to the Jeep (we hadn't merely "blazed" a trail through the woods; the carnage we created was more like that left by a blowtorch), some late afternoon light began to stream through the canopy.

"We must be getting close to the top!" Mike shouted back to me.

"I hope so," I panted, as I caught up to him.

That was when we turned to each other in confusion.

"Do you hear voices?"

Slowly, we continued in the direction we'd been hiking.

A child's laughter filtered through the trees. "How did a kid get up here?" I said. Mike shrugged.

An elderly woman's voice was the next sound we heard. This was getting ridiculous.

"How is that possible?" my brother asked.

Our once-nimble steps were by now stomps of frustration as we broke through the underbrush and crashed out onto what was practically a sidewalk on the top of Azure.

The happy family that was starting the descent to their car gave us hellos and friendly waves as they passed us, but out of kindness didn't comment on our muddy knees, torn shirts or scratched-to-the-point-of-bleeding, bug-bitten faces.

And we didn't comment on the elderly woman's cane.

No, not a walking stick. A cane.

We followed the wide, smoothly flattened path to the open summit, took in the distant view of Lake Ozonia, and climbed the diagonal girders to the fire tower's cab as the overcast sky grew darker.

Soon enough, we followed the well-groomed trail in what was only a minutes-long descent. When we reached the parking area, we stepped out to the middle of the road and spotted the Jeep parked a few hundred feet away.

Next to the bathtub. ▲

## STICKING IT OUT ON CEDAR RIVER FLOW

BY PATRICK & WILLIAM ANGIOLILLO

In September 2015, my brother Will and I decided to take a shot at camping on Cedar River Flow, in the Moose River Plains Complex. We collected dry-bags, cooking utensils, sleeping bags and new canoe paddles. We decided to rely on our childhood tent for accommodations. We were confident its rain tarp would combat any light showers forecast that weekend. We seized the moment.

We put in near Wakely Dam in the north-west corner of the lake. Paddling against the current, we zigzagged three miles across Cedar River Flow. We counted only two other campers on kayaks as we made our way to our campsite. Following the guidebooks like the Boy Scouts we never were, we pitched our tent near shore, under the cover of some birches, and even dug a diversion channel around the tent to redirect any runoff in the event of light showers. Now we were camping.

We took to the water again and floated lazily on the placid lake. The afternoon wind rustled the swamp grass as Will took photographs and I tried writing a poem. We searched for moose, beavers and bald eagles, but were content with the rolling hills splashed with color and thick white clouds hanging against a glassy blue sky. As evening approached, the sun sank over the horizon and the sky turned a deep purple. Dinner was cut short by a spatter of rain, but nothing too daunting. Inside the tent, we noticed a few drops of water, so we tightened our rain cover. It was fine. We heard a loon's somber call as we settled into bed. "Sleep well," we whispered to one another.

We grumbled awake about two hours later, as the rain started again. Within minutes it was a deluge, charging over Cedar River Flow. It was too much for our tent to handle. Like a ship lost in an Atlantic squall, we were taking on water as the temperature dipped below 50 degrees.

We tried to duct tape the vent on the roof, but the tape yielded to the force of the rain. We cornered anything that was still dry and scrambled outside to throw the damper of our two sleeping bags over the top of the tent. The sopping sleeping bag resisted the rain better than the rain tarp, but we still had a long night ahead of us.

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## THE DEADLY DERECHO

BY MICHAEL MOORE

The scenery at Lake Lila—pristine waters and old growth forest—can take your breath away. On July 15, 1995, one of Lila's trees nearly killed us, felled by a derecho: an intense, destructive storm of straight-line winds.

I was canoe camping with two 11-year-olds, my daughter Erin and my niece Elizabeth. Paddling in, we passed our favorite campsite. The girls had named it "Blueberry Point" for the berry bushes that sweetened our breakfast flapjacks. Unfortunately, it was occupied. The couple there waved as we floated by. We found another site near a tree topped by an osprey nest. The weather was blazing hot. After a cooling evening swim, we flipped our canoe over at the shore and turned in.

Raindrops began spattering the tent fly sometime before dawn. I closed the tent and lay back down. But the rain got harder. The wind began rising. And kept on rising, until it sounded like a freight train approaching. When

the tent stakes pulled out we knew this was serious. We were now holding the tent down from the inside. We could see tall trees swaying like blades of grass.

"Will a tree fall on us?" Liz asked.

"No," I replied. We never heard the sound of the tree breaking and falling. We were just suddenly pinned to the ground, hard, under wet nylon and aluminum poles.

"Elizbeth is dead!" Erin screamed.

Something had knocked the wind out of her. Liz revived, but we could not find the tent zipper. I cut the tent open with a pocketknife and we escaped into darkness, roaring wind, stinging rain, and branches and debris flying. We ran to the beach and took cover under a large log. Erin began to pray. Time seemed to stand still, but the world finally quieted and the sun came out.

Other than a bruise on Liz's back, no one was injured. But our tent was crushed; the

trunk of a huge tree lay next to it. Some larger side branches had apparently held the trunk off the ground just enough to spare us serious injury or worse. The camp stove, soaked and dirty, would not start, but our food and clothing were dry. We changed clothes, ate a somber breakfast, and then realized that both the tree with the osprey nest and our canoe were gone. The girls' already fearful mood sank further. "Let's go look for the canoe," I said.

We walked along the shore and found our boat about a quarter mile away, leaning against a tree, intact. We waded in the water back to our campsite, trailing the canoe behind us.

In a backwoods emergency, you are supposed to wait for help to find you. My young companions wanted out, so we packed up the canoe and set off. We were stunned by the sight of great evergreens sawed off in midair as if by a giant lawnmower. Passing "Blueberry Point," we learned that the woman who had waded to us had been killed by a fallen tree; other campers had gone with her husband to seek help. We found the trailhead to the parking lot, beached the boat and picked our way over, under and around fallen trees to reach the lot. There we found the husband, with a nasty head wound, and our car. It was undamaged, but the six-mile road out was clearly impassable. We went back for our gear, laid it out to dry, and I prepared the girls for a night or two in the car. "What if no one comes?" they asked. I tried to assure them that someone knew there were campers in distress at Lila. Right on cue, like some mythical hero, a forest ranger came striding out of the woods with a machete, a backpack and a radio.

He immediately took charge, called for a state police helicopter to airlift the injured man out, and told us he was taking our canoe. We sheltered in the woods when the chopper landed, and before it took off, I asked one of the troopers to call my wife and tell her we were OK.

The sounds of whining chainsaws on the access road filled the afternoon. They finally broke through, with more troopers, and then cleared the trail to Lila. The other campers, all uninjured, emerged and left, so we walked back to the lake to wait for our canoe. The ranger and troopers returned with a body bag: the woman from "Blueberry Point." We helped carry her out. No one said a word, but we were all thinking, That could have been one of us. ▲



# COSMIC SHOW—STOPPER

BY KATHARINE LOGAN

## My father's career fashioned our lives.

He was sometimes not home for months, working in places as diverse as the deserts of New Mexico or the Mount Washington Observatory, in New Hampshire.

We moved at least every five years, so our surroundings were temporary; you either loved it or hated it. I was 10 when we moved from the idyllic coast of southern Massachusetts to the Adirondacks.

The forest behind our Wilmington home was unbroken for miles, the abandoned work roads bordered by patches of wildflowers. My sisters and I explored these roads extensively. There were red trilliums, pink lady's slippers, white star flowers, yellow trout lilies, mysterious jack-in-the-pulpits, rich yellow buttercups and ghostlike Indian pipes, all tucked in along the trail's edges.

And then there was Whiteface Mountain. In the summer I would sometimes accompany my father to the summit in an open-sided World War II Jeep. There were no seatbelts in the 1950s and the sensation of soaring was profound.

The Whiteface Veterans Memorial Highway's hairpin turns afforded breathtaking views as we rose above the surrounding peaks, climbing from the toll house to the sturdy stone castle and the pièce de résistance ... the summit, 4,865 feet above sea level. It is set apart from most of the other High Peaks, offering a 360-degree view. On a clear day, I could see Vermont, Lake Champlain and Montreal, 80 miles to the north.

I have read that few places in existence below the tree line match the fierce conditions encountered by plant life on Whiteface's summit. The trees are testimony to the brutal conditions and high winds of winter. They are stunted, enduring the force of winds that occasionally rocket to 130 miles per hour, and the windchill has been measured at minus 100 degrees.

The Whiteface highway allows for transport of sensitive instruments to the top, and my father was brought in to start up the weather project. The observatory is now a state-of-the-art scientific research station. *Continued on page 67*



## STICKING IT OUT

*Continued from page 28*

Back inside the tent, Will and I squeezed into a single damp sleeping bag on a thin sleeping mat, barely an inch above the soaking tent floor. Will suggested running for the car—"Let's just throw everything in the canoe. It's a straight shot for the put-in." I countered with the fact that three miles of dark lake, strong winds, and wildlife stood between us and the Jeep. We had no choice but to stick it out. Teeth chattering and bodies shivering, we huddled in the sleeping bag for the next six hours, trying to keep warm and dry. This was not camping, this was surviving.

When daybreak finally came, the wind continued to whip. We broke camp as fast as possible, haphazardly packing everything into the canoe. With red hands and drenched boots, we took off for the put-in. We soon learned that in the course of the storm that night, the current had switched directions, so we had to shove against it once more, muscles aching, the choppy waters spraying cold mist in our tired faces.

Still, a sense of solemnity settled across the Adirondacks that morning. Everything seemed to have surrendered to the storm the night before, waking up as worn out as we had. Then a magnificent bald eagle appeared, only feet from our canoe. We were awed as the bird swooped and climbed, dove and rose, again and again, until she snatched her prey. Success.

At the put-in, we were greeted by an older couple heading out for some morning kayaking. We weary fools hurried past them toward our car and set off for home. But as the miles grew between Cedar River Flow and the two of us, we felt the desire to go back. We got a new tent that year. ▲

## MAKING A BEELINE

BY NOAH DAVIS

My family hiked back to our car after spending three days at Flowed Lands. We were tired. A thin film of DEET greased our skin, the Mountain House packets only filled our stomachs halfway, and two nights of sleeping in lean-tos made our hips ache.

My brother, Nathan, led us down the trail. I followed next, trying to keep time with his mud- *Continued on page 61*

# WICKED WEATHER

BY MARK WATERMAN

It was the summer of 1988 and I was home for a short leave from the military. The summer had been hot and dry. During the week, my brother and I discussed what we could do "up north" on the coming Saturday, and in the course of our conversation we both recalled a postcard we had seen at a little store near Piseco Lake, not far from our uncle's rustic log cabin. The picture on the postcard displayed a magnificently tall, cascading waterfall. When we had asked the store clerk about it, he told us that it was T-Lake Falls, and that the trailhead was just down the road. That picture had made a lasting impression on both of us, so we decided to go find T-Lake Falls.

It had been warm all week, but that July Saturday was forecast to be oppressive. By the time we got to the trailhead around eight, it was already in the low 80s and the air was thick with humidity. Each of us was equipped with a single bottle of Gatorade (bad decision), and after we sprayed ourselves down for bugs, we headed up the trail. As we ascended, we chatted about the quality of the trail, since it was full of roots and rocks—real anklebusters. Being veteran hikers, we trekked on like a couple of mountain goats. Eventually, T-Lake itself came into view.

We sauntered our way along the trail towards the falls, which we were greatly anticipating. The temperature had risen since beginning the hike, and it now felt like it was in the 90s, with high humidity and an overcast sky. We reached the falls only to find that it was about three inches wide because of the drought. We were only mildly disappointed because we still enjoyed the hike.

We started back down the trail, and right about then something ominous began to manifest itself in the atmosphere. What faint breeze there had been suddenly ceased. Even the birds stopped chirping. It seemed like all of nature just stood still. Then we heard a rumble of thunder in the distance. We quickly decided that we should pick up the pace and started jogging down the trail. We didn't want to break into a full sprint and risk injuring ourselves, but we also did not want to be out in the lightning.

And then it happened.

The only other time I have ever seen weather explode like that was the Labor Day storm of 1998. Besides a torrential downpour, the lightning seemed to be everywhere all at once. Many times the thunderclap was simultaneous with the flash of lightning, and a couple of times I caught sight of a bright orange burst in my peripheral vision. We reached the point in the trail where we began to descend, making our way through ankle- and calf-deep water that cascaded down the natural runoff. Eventually, the storm started to abate and by the time we reached the parking lot the temperature had plummeted about 30 degrees. Fallen limbs and branches were everywhere.

The moment we stopped moving, we were stricken with crippling leg cramps. We dropped to the ground and whined like babies while we massaged out the cramps for about 20 minutes. Once we were able to, we jumped in my truck and headed to a store to get some hydration. Later that night, while having dinner with our parents, we chuckled about it all. To this day it remains one of my fondest memories of spending time in the woods with my brother. ▲



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**MAKING A BEELINE**  
Continued from page 31

streaked calves as he hopped from rock to rock. Mom and Dad trudged behind, their packs more of a burden than ours.

Then, with a speed that can only come from the frontal lobes of nine- and 12-year-olds, Nathan and I began to run. Mom and Dad, knowing they couldn't keep up, or simply happy for the time alone, called after us to blow our whistles to deter bears.

We were pulled down the mountain by fatigue. An energy birthed from hunger and a desire to quit discomfort. We fantasized about swimming clean in Heart Lake, the newts that tailed in the sand shallows, and floating on our backs, listening to the blood beating in our ears. We vaulted over streams, skipped across logs, picked our way through roots. We planned our orders at Stewart's: black raspberry milkshake, Peanut Butter Pandemonium in a waffle cone, a banana split to share.

Nathan and I didn't notice the weeping boys until we were among them. Four or five scattered on the trail, red-cheeked from the salt in their tears. We slowed, but none of them seemed to notice. Because they were together, obviously some common pain between them, Nathan and I decided they weren't in danger. Likely upset at the realization at how far they'd come and how far they still had to go. Within a minute we could no longer hear their crying.

We drifted back to thoughts of our beds awaiting us in Tupper Lake. The goose-down pillows and barking dachshunds. Our grandmother, Helen, telling us to look at the loons before breakfast.

Reaching the parking lot at the Adirondack Loj, we found our Jeep and sat down against a tire. We rehydrated.

Nathan and I watched the groups of hikers drift through the mouth of the forest, weary steps kicking up dust. Some were familiar, people we'd passed on our run, and we waved. Others, down from Algonquin, smiled. We waited close to an hour until the shapes of our parents formed at the kiosk to sign us out.

Mom had a red welt on her forehead—an extra, swollen eye.

We helped our parents lift off their backpacks as they told us about the crying boys.

There was a wasp nest the troop had disturbed and enough of their party were

**MAKING A BEELINE**

stung to scatter them through the woods. Mom and Dad had paused on the trail, unaware of the wasps, but puzzled by the boys moving away from the trail.

Out of the bushes, someone pointed and yelled, "Wasps!"

Mom looked up and saw the paper-gray globe of the nest. Out of the single hole, a wasp climbed and hovered down like a helicopter, landing on the slick platform of her forehead. It planted its sting deep into her skin and she screamed and ran. Dad followed, stings rising on his arms and neck. All the while the boys were still crying.

Mom and Dad said their stings were numb now, that Stewart's was probably the quickest path to relief.

As we loaded up the trunk and peeled off our sweaty socks, the crying boys who were now dry-cheeked, filed out of the woods, arms and legs polka-dotted. They covered their eyes with their hands to either hide their embarrassment or block the sun. We still waved, and they waved back. ▲



**ICY CYCLING**  
BY RUSS SKEA

In the spring of 1966, my KARMA fraternity brother Jeff Smith and I thought we had a good idea—an eight-hour spring break motorcycle trip from Clarkson Tech in Potsdam, where we were senior engineering students, through the Adirondacks to Long Island. Jeff had sold his motorcycle to buy an engagement ring, so we would be riding tandem on my BSA Lightning Rocket. Our planning may have rested somewhere between sparse and nonexistent, but having youthful optimism, we were undeterred.

The morning of the trip dawned cloudy and drizzly, and we only made it about a mile out of town before we were soaked. We turned around and appropriated all the dry clothes and plastic bags we could to cover our legs. We once again plunged into our adventure.

As we gained elevation in the mountains, it began to snow. Not just flurries, but those heavy, wet snowflakes of spring. The snow quickly built up on the road and traction became almost impos-

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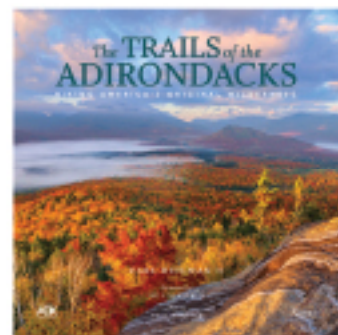
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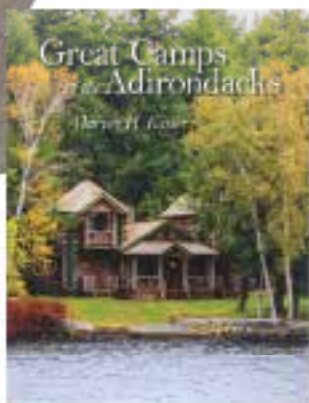
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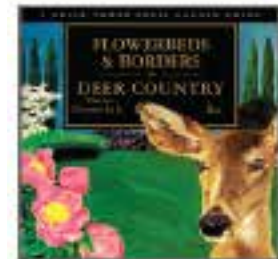
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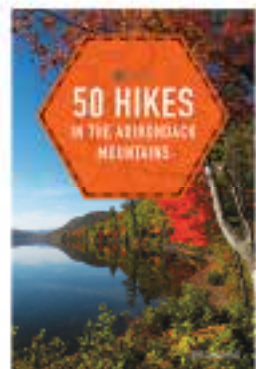
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## ICY CYCLING

sible. Predictably, and despite riding with our feet down, we fell a few times. In those days, bikes didn't idle—you had to keep revving the throttle to keep a motorcycle engine running. When you let go of the throttle, the engine died. Falling in the snow and sliding silently down the mountain road was an eerie, slow-motion sensation.

There was little traffic that day, but I recall being passed by a carload of our fellow Clarkson Tech students. We saw them staring out at us through fogged-up car windows in astonishment: two guys in a snowstorm on a motorcycle in the Adirondack Mountains.

We stopped to warm up at a bar in Long Lake. It was hovering just above 32 degrees and we were really cold. I remember the next leg of the trip through Wevertown, where we cruised through a stop sign when I couldn't uncurl my cold, stiffened fingers from the handlebar to grab the front brake lever.

Finally out of the mountains, through Lake George village and down the New York Thruway, there was no snow, and temperatures had warmed. We were droning along when things came to a sputtering halt. The three-gallon BSA tank, good for about 150 miles, had run out of gas. We had to push the 41-pound bike to the next service station. By now we were hypothermic and shaking. I remember getting some stares, as I was wearing an old army jacket that had "LSD" printed on the back. We ate something to warm up, then continued the journey.

When we reached my parents' house in Long Island, we had been on the road for 16 hours.

My return trip would be solo. On the final leg of that ride, the morning was overcast and cold. I hammered north of Albany on the BSA into the Adirondacks, and by now a familiar weather pattern emerged: it started to snow. I was slowed to about 20 miles per hour, riding in the tracks of a car that had preceded me. I got as far as Long Lake and stopped at the same bar where we had warmed up on the way south. I rented an upstairs, three dollar per night room, and left the door open to take advantage of heat from a potbelly stove in the hallway. The next morning I went out, brushed the snow off my motorcycle, and completed the trip back to Potsdam. ▲

## COSMIC SHOWSTOPPER

Continued from page 30

My father had a key to the toll-house gate, offering access to the summer night sky from on high. On moonlit nights we would sometimes drive to the summit to watch the lights of houses twinkle in the valley. Full moons were incandescent when the clouds were below us and constellations always seemed closer. To this day I greet Orion as an old friend.

One night we were above the clouds, the valley secreted below. My father told me to get ready, there was a spectacular solar storm in the wings.

I've seen the Northern Lights in Alaska, gossamer Kashmir green curtains undulating in a solar storm breeze. I have sat in chilly September night air in the northern interior of Maine, shivering as comparable curtains illuminated the sky. But this, the aurora borealis, was cavorting on the clouds, with green and purple flashes of vaporous streamers, dancing and pulsating. The lights dazzled like a gathering of couraging bumblebees hovering, dipping and zigzagging in search of honey in the haze. The lights would shrink and then expand, spinning into translucent globes of color. They would evaporate, then return and intensify, at times appearing like the sprites my father said danced above thunderheads when he flew B-29s over the South Pacific during the war.

I was a meteorologist's daughter, living in a world of experiences sometimes apart from those of others, exposed to the beauty and force of nature and schooled in the science of how it fit in the world. To propose that a person belongs in only one place in the world is rash. To hint that there is much to gain from a variety of stabs at life is unparalleled.

There were lessons for me in this itinerant life. We moved about. Life was sometimes chaotic. I learned as I went and some venues were more rewarding than others, yet each provided me with lifelong lessons.

To paraphrase Nietzsche, chaos in your soul gives birth to a dancing star. And there were many stars dancing in that sacred night sky above Wilmington. ▲

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