

BOOTPRINTS

Volume 9 Issue 4

July 2005



Moroccan Adventure

By Norm Plante

Many thanks to Marcia Kelly for organizing a hiking trip to Morocco in Northwestern Africa from April 29 to May 9, 2005. Five adventurous souls from P.V.H.C., Marcia, Donna Blanchard, Jeanne Tsatsos, Mike Carrier and myself departed J.F.K. airport New York and landed in Casablanca, Morocco. A gritty and busy city by the coast. Having had no sleep for 37 hours I was pretty much a zombie by the time I went to bed on Saturday night. I can tell you it's a real thrill to ride in a Moroccan taxi, there were six of us (an Englishwoman joined us in cab) Stuffed (and I mean stuffed) into a Mercedes cab that looked like it hadn't seen maintenance since 1969. It was us plus all our luggage (thanks girls, for traveling light. NOT!!) in the cab.

{Norm's Morocco cont' on page 5}

Morocco '05

By Marcia Kelly

For the past 4 years we had traveled to Ireland hiking but this year the ante was upped and we had a meeting where it was open where we would go. The decision later was Morocco and 4 decided to take the risk and join me. We started planning last October and I had picked a British company that offered adventure travel. In this case it was hiking in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Before we considered the exchange rate with the British pound the price seemed pretty reasonable. I convinced everyone to spend extra time in Casablanca as our trip left from Marrakech.

There were many emails back and forth to Simon asking all the questions about every detail.

{Marcia's Morocco cont' on page 6}

Northern Presidential Traverse – Of Sorts

By Richard Harris

The idea of the Northern Presidential Traverse was born with an image of a beautiful June day with the sun shining and the northern peaks beckoning to a band of intrepid hikers. Unfortunately (or fortunately), nature did not get the message. So, on a morning of misty rain (and some downright downpours), the five hikers (Bob Morgan, Alison Cook, Kathleen Damon, Gary Tompkins, and myself) set off from the Appalachia Trailhead off Route 2 shortly before 8:00 a.m. with the intent of hiking to Mt. Madison, Mt. Adams, and Mt. Jefferson.

The first several miles along the Valley Way trail were really nice and nontoxic. We enjoyed the numerous flowers (including Pink Lady Slippers) and lush green plants. While we hoped the rain would pass, it did not. Approximately 3 hours after setting out on the Valley Way, we reached Madison Hut (we could barely see the hut for the clouds – very reminiscent of last year's hike on the southern peaks). Once in the hut, we were cautioned by the Hut Manager about the slippery rocks as several hikers



had been injured and bandaged from



slips earlier in the morning. We also listened to the radio communications of a rescue underway on the Sphinx Trail where a hiker was being treated for hypothermia. This information gave us more reason to use caution as we proceeded on the hike.

Since two of the group had already hiked Mt. Madison and had no desire to repeat the event, 3 of us set out for the first summit. The cautions of slippery rocks were well-founded, but after a bit of a hike (35+ minutes), Bob, Gary, and I reached the Mt. Madison's summit – though we could not see anything but the signs and the cairns atop the pile of rocks. Amid the misty rain and cold atop Mt. Madison, we were joined by a few birds who chose to perch themselves on Cairns.



After hiking back to the hut and having a quick lunch (and buying a hat and shirts), all five set out for Mt. Adams. While the plan was to take the Gulfside Trail to the Air Line Trail and up to the summit, I failed to clearly communicate this message to the

others in the group. After taking a group photo and telling the others to proceed because I would catch up with them, I caught up with the others 2/10 of a mile towards Mt. Adams on the Starr Lake Trail (the shortest, but steepest trail to the summit). After hiking, scaling, crawling, and creeping up 1 mile over a 1-1/2 hour period of time, we all reached the summit. On the way up Mt. Madison, we were also informed of another rescue (we later learned the second rescue was of a heart attack victim). After taking the necessary photographs (way too many cameras given the conditions), we quickly decided, with the frozen precipitation bouncing off the rocks, to forego the hike to Mt. Jefferson and proceeded to identify the easiest, safest, and quickest route off the summit to tree line. We then proceeded to hike down Lowe's Path and the Spur Trail via the Gray Camp (a Randolph Hiking Club hut – more hats and shirts were purchased there) to Randolph Path, Air Line Trail and the car.

We had planned to hike 11.4 miles, 3 summits, and be done by 5:00. Well, we did approximately 11 miles over 2 summits and finished at 7:20 p.m. Despite the conditions, it was a wonderful day of hiking and a terrific group with whom to hike. We decided on the way down from Mt. Adams, that next year's traverse will include Mt. Jefferson and Mt. Clay – probably 10-12 miles.

This hike was one of education about nature, hiking, weather, using good decision-making skills, and the value of clear communications among persons with whom you are hiking. It also provided a refresher course on water crossings – not of the John Klebes scale, but a few that were a bit



challenging. We almost lost a hat to one of the streams and one of the group had to finish the hike after going knee deep in a cold mountain stream.

Due to logistics and weather concerns, we had to alter the original plan of hiking up to Mt. Jefferson and across Mt. Adams and Mt. Madison. The hike also demonstrated one of the benefits of the Friday evening meeting which Al arranges as part of the White Mountains Sampler. Mike and Monica Gross cautioned about slippery conditions and how we would need to hike slower than normal – were they ever correct!

Montalban Range Backpack

By John Klebes

Hiking in the Whites along the Montalban Range was a challenging adventure with lots of above treeline views. Rick Briggs, Rene Houde and I started in bright sunshine on Saturday morning on the Mt. Stanton Trail climbing over Mt. Stanton, Mt. Pickering, and over the Crippies to Mt. Langdon. All three have great views from rocky summits. I would definitely recommend this less traveled area. From there we dropped down to the Mt. Langdon shelter and with great luck saw the only rain of the day thirty seconds after getting to the shelter. We waited 15 minutes and the rain stopped, sun shined, and we moved on over the Mt. Langdon and Mt. Parker trails to the summit of Mt. Parker. It was along this part of the



trail that Rick discovered a large moose antler. I always wondered where those antlers go every fall.

Mt Parker has a beautiful summit where we lingered in the sunshine with some of the best views of Mt. Washington from the Oaks Gulf side. We had a 360-degree view around the whole area – fantastic. We headed out toward our destination for the night at Mt Resolution Shelter but decided to camp short by two miles just off the trail.

The next day we hiked along the Montalban ridgeline over the summits of Mt Parker and Mt. Resolution.

This is another must climb set of peaks with even better views of the snowfields on the summit of Washington and all the peaks around us. As we dropped down to the trail junction near the Resolution shelter Rene took an



unfortunate slip on the rocks; hurting his wrist badly. It's a small consolation but of all the spots on this remote hike this was the one spot that had a side trail escape route. We carefully wrapped what we thought

was a sprained wrist and gave Rene some inflammation meds. Rene assured us he would be fine and with the keys to my car promised to meet us at the end of our trip. We would later learn that Rene had actually broken his wrist so perhaps we really should have hiked down with him.

But diehard hikers that we are Rick and I continued on the Davis Path over to Giant Stairs on Stairs Mountain. This is a fantastic spot that has a great campsite area that is not on the maps at the rock ledges. Looks like it's popular with rock climbers. Definitely would like to return and camp here; it's the perfect spot to eat dinner while watching the sunset from these high ledges.

Continuing on to the steep spur trail to Mt Davis we hit rain but still enjoyed this fascinating summit with open bald rock summit and mixed very low spruce. Reminded me of "The Brothers" in Maine. As we headed above 4000 feet on Mt Isolation we had constant rain and hit our first patches of snow then large drifts. The blowdowns, snow drifts, and mud were merciless. My second time on the Summit of Isolation was slightly more visibility was none-the-less poor. At least I saw the outlines in the rain of all the mountains this time.

We were not able to find the old site of the Mt. Isolation shelter where we planned to camp. It either is so overgrown with the tight spruce cover or buried in snow. We strained to find a suitable campsite in the snow, ice,

water, and dense spruce - finally settled on a wet and uneven spot just on the edge of Mt. Washington's slopes.

We awoke in the rain and made a difficult climb up toward Boot Spur to about 5500 feet, over the ridge and down the Glen Boulder trail and out. Despite the cold, wet, rainy weather and mixed snow and ice we still had mystical views in the mist of the fantastic above tree-line terrain of this section of Mt. Washington. It's a difficult way out with full backpacks.

Another great hike for some of us. Hope you are feeling better Rene.

- John Klebes

Solstice Death March

By John Klebes

On what is becoming an annual event Ed Laroche lead us on a successful Solstice "Death March" through the Pemigewasset, delayed a day to Sunday due to rain. Six of us stayed in Lincoln Friday night and after decided the weather sounded bad for Saturday decided to postpone the hike to Sunday.

Saturday we kept talking about an easy hike but when ever we got close to going it rained harder so we spent the day in the hot tub, sauna, and pool instead! Nice relaxing day before the hike.

We started Sunday morning at 3:15 am from Lincoln Woods. Climbing Franconia Ridge (Mt Flume, Mt Liberty, Little Haystack Mtn, Mt Lincoln, and Mt Lafayette), Garfield Ridge (Mt Garfield, Galehead Mtn and past Galehead Hut), and out over the Bonds (South Twin Mtn, Mt Guyot, Mt Bond, Bondcliff), and back to Lincoln

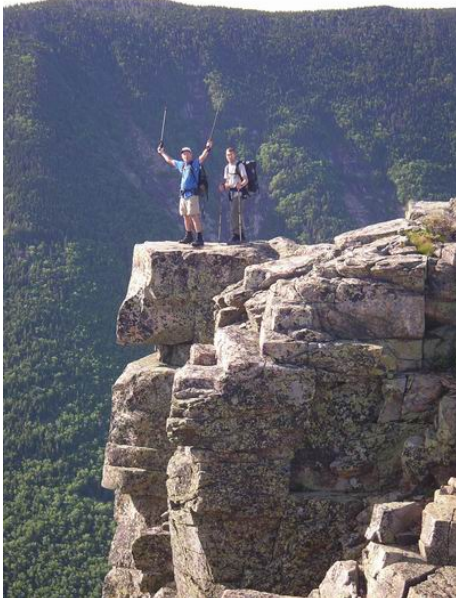




woods via the Wilderness trail. Made it out before sunset at 8:45 pm.

Thirty-two miles in seventeen and a half hours. Three hours under book time. Boy do my feet hurt.

Nice views of sunrise from Flume as we broke in and out of the clouds. Mostly in the clouds but occasional views going up to Lafayette. And finally it really opened up around Garfield. Looking back at Lafayette from Garfield was fantastic. And the views from South Twin, Mt Bond and along the Bondcliffs were crystal clear.



If it weren't for the fact we had to drive home at the end it would have been perfect. Ann Marie, Sybille, and Wendy climbed the whole Franconia Ridge and since they were out a little before Rick, Ed, and I finished the whole loop they met us at the end with beer and pizza! Hope all the dad's had a Happy Father's Day.

Mt Hood, Oregon

By John Klebes

In mid-June Jonathan Stevens and I made a springtime attempt at the highest point in Oregon. Mt Hood is

an 11,237 foot volcano just outside of Portland where it dominates the skyline. It is the fourth highest in the Cascades – and is both spectacular and deadly. It is heavily glaciated; twelve glaciers and named snowfields cover approximately 80% of the cone; and receives staggering amounts of snowfall every winter. It has erupted twice in the past 200 years, has numerous fumaroles emitting steam and other gases on its upper sides, and many believe it will erupt again in the next few years.

Five of us set out for three days on the mountain along with two guides, but quickly encountered soft snow and wet conditions. Two of our group decided they were having a lousy time and turned back halfway up the ascent to our 8,500-foot camp with one of the guides.

That left Jonathan, myself, and West-Coast Ed (a friend of mine from our 2002 Mt Rainier Expedition) together with the one remaining guide. We set up our tents in howling wind on an exposed ridge just before the sloping snowfields leading to the ridge of snow called the Hogsback.

It took all four of us to hold down and secure the tents in the gusting wind. Despite the early hour we could do nothing but crawl into our tents and listen to the howling wind. It was impossible to light the stove in the storm so we had a cold supper and



long difficult sleep. That is until Jonathan was awakened by our guide asking for help when the wind snapped two of his tent poles. Jonathan braved the hypothermic conditions in an attempt to secure our guides tent from the elements in a near white-out but ultimately our guide ended up crowding into our tent where we spent the next two nights crowding four people in a three-person tent. The snow and wind kept up all night filling our tents vestibule with a foot-half of snow.



The next day it finally cleared a little and we got our first views of the bergschrund, a deep crevasse at the top of the hogsback ridge, which is the crux of the climb.

We had a chance to dry some of our gear, practice climbing and roped glacier techniques, and check our equipment, before we going to bed early for a 1:00 am summit attempt. We were in good spirits at first, expecting great weather, but around 9:30pm the wind, snow, and rain returned. Hoping for clearing weather we set out for the Hogsback at 1:00 am in high winds and freezing rain but soon realized we would not be able to summit under these conditions. Covered in sheets of ice, wet to our core, we headed back to our crowded tent hoping for another attempt around 3:20 am.

It was no use, high wind, snow, and finally relentless freezing rain ruined our summit attempts, and on our third day we hiked out in wet, windy weather. A disappointing adventure that humbles one to the whims of Mother Nature.

It is with some consolation that Jonathan and I explored the Great Multnomah Falls, highest water fall in Oregon, and second highest year-round waterfall in the nation, on our way out to the airport. After a great hike from the base all the way up to the very brink of the falls we flew home.

{Norm's Morocco cont' from pg 1}

All the other drivers were swearing at our driver for being greedy and not sharing. I learned some new Moroccan hand gestures that day.

We went to a Souk, which is an open air market for the girls to get their shopping fix. From the time we set foot in the Souk until we left two hours later we were shadowed and hounded by two Moroccan's who wanted to guide us and would not leave us alone no matter how many times we told them to leave. These guys gave new meaning to the word relentless.

After shopping we walked to a beautiful mosque by the coast and later had dinner at Rick's Café, modeled after the movie "Casablanca". The next day we took the train to Marrakech and Mike and I met a Moroccan businessman in our booth who invited us all to his place of business to have a real Moroccan meal on his roof in the Souk. He even took us from the train station to our hotel and then the Souk. We had a genuine and delicious Moroccan dinner there with fresh mint tea afterwards. Then he showed us his rug business and after two hours of them showing



us rugs it dawned on me that they saw a possible sale from us rich Americans. We politely declined but thanks for the ride and the great meal from our host Abdellatif!

On Monday we met the British contingent of this exodus trip. They were Ruth Findlay, Suzanne Bardgett, Tony Barrato, Mike Autherson, Alison Pease, Connor & Debbie Bannon. We also met our wonderfully kind, soft spoken, gentle and compassionate Berber Moroccan guide Mohammed, whose phrase YELLA (We Go!), we would all fear to hear when trying to stretch out our breaks while hiking in the barren and unforgiving yet beautiful high Atlas Mountains in the relentlessly hot Moroccan sun. That day was the cultural part of our trip though and we toured the Marrakech Souk, the Marrakech Museum, a school of the Koran, a mosque and a pharmacy in the Souk, and yes they do practice Black Magic there (about 80% believe).

On Tuesday all twelve plus luggage rode in a van on a very nerve racking ride through the Atlas Mountains to our home for the next five days, a GITE (pronounced JEET), a simple yet comfortable mud and wood dwelling in the village of Wawriykt in Tighza. We had to hike to the Gite after lunch in a tent at the trailhead in Animiter. It took us two and a half hours through lush green fields of barley, fig, and date trees and numerous crops used by the Berber mountain people to survive and use for cash crops. We had to navigate through an amazingly complex maze of irrigation channels carved into the mountain by the people there, which had to be extremely physically demanding. Different villages were allotted set times to irrigate their fields by channeling the Ouarikt River. They would be working twenty-four hours, even at night using flashlights.

After the mildly strenuous hike to our Gite we had fresh mint tea there before dinner. The meals were simple yet tasty, usually a Moroccan soup followed by flat bread and tagine cooked vegetables and always followed by mint tea. Meat was scarce, a precious commodity there. We had a scorpion in the Gite that night which caused some excitement. The Moroccans sprayed it with insect spray, which we thought was scorpion spray until they used it again on Thursday night in the girls'

room for a mouse (which freaked Jeanne out) so we dubbed it "scorpion and mouse spray".

On Wednesday we did a ten-mile hike up to an 8000-foot mountain col and had a mule driven lunch by a waterfall on the Ouarikt River. On Thursday we hiked up a steep mountain behind our Gite, Mt Oughlagal and after lunch we had mint tea, flat bread and biscuits at a Berber villagers starkly bare straw and mud dwelling. For people living such a hard life they were extremely friendly, kind, and filled with surreal contentment. I'll be forever touched by their beautiful children's smiling and joyous faces who would always come out and chase after us as we hiked through the villages shouting "Bon Jour! Bon Jour!" at us. We felt like Pied Pipers at times.

On Friday we had our most difficult and demanding hike, actually two hikes. Mike Carrier, Mike & Alison did a twenty mile hike to Lake Tamda while Mohammed led me, Ruth, Tony, Conner & Debbie on an eighteen kilometer hike. The sun was brutal, very minimal shade and temp was 90 F. Both groups met up at the lunch spot at a rock outcrop by the river. Again lunch was delivered by mule. Ask Marcia, Donna and Jeanne about their mule rides.

The Friday night dinner at the Gite was an emotional one for me and also I think for Marcia as tomorrow we would leave our Gite and head back to Marrakech and have to say goodbye to our very dear new British friends and also the amazing and wonderfully loving and warm Berber mountain tribesmen. I think the experience there truly touched everyone in our group. During our dinner Jeanne filmed everyone to get comments of their experience there and there were quite a few moist eyes.

On Saturday we left the Gite and hiked the road to our ride "The Death Van" parked in Animiter. On the way in, and on the roads in view of our Gite, there was a stirring ceremony performed. As traveling emissary for the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and by the power vested in me by the President and Vice President of the club I hereby forever proclaim and decree honorary membership to our British contingent, Ruth, Suzanne, Tony, Mike, Allison, Conner, Debbie, and also to our great Berber

Moroccan guide Mohammed on this day May 7, 2005. After the ceremony we proceeded to Marrakech and had a celebratory and final dinner that evening at the Islane Restaurant consisting of a very tasty buffet of different Moroccan Tagines. Some of us took our last walk in Morocco after dinner and a visit to the open air market at the Souk which seemed surreal with it's food hawkers, snake charmers, monkey handlers, black magic fortune tellers, acrobats, dancers & musicians. Most of the group took mini taxis back to our hotel Du Pacha in Marrakech but the diehards Mike, Suzanne, Ruth and myself hoofed it back down the busy streets risking life and limb at the hands of the reckless Moroccan drivers.

On Sunday, May 8th, after breakfast at the hotel, there were many emotional moments as we all said our goodbyes and prepared to head off to our respective homelands and a life far removed from the Berber Mountain People of the High Atlas. I'll close now with some memories of this amazing and heartwarming trip.

1. A week of sleep deprivation in the Gite because of howling and barking shepherd dogs, braying mules, Tony's snoring and 4 a.m. calls from the mosque for prayer.
2. The Asian toilets, which basically were a hole in the ground. There were a few flush toilets but you couldn't put toilet paper in them, you had to deposit it in a basket next to the toilet.
3. Fresh mint tea served to us after every hike and at lunch and dinner.
4. The warm and easy camaraderie we shared with our fellow British hikers.
5. The beggars in the streets and Souks of Casablanca, both very young and old.
6. Women dressed in traditional Islamic attire along with those dressed very revealingly.
7. The red dust covering your body, boots and clothing after the hikes.
8. The achingly beautiful and waifish Berber children of the High Atlas.
9. Our last day in Marrakech when Marcia in need of her final shopping "fix" and having spent all her money, had to sell her watch to a merchant in the Souk in order to make a purchase. At a future club meeting we are planning on having an intervention held to confront her addiction.
10. Special mention to Ruth Findlay from Scotland now living in London. A very brave and very pretty Brit (trailname London Babe), who in spite of her limited hiking experience hiked with us on each hike and improved each time. Way to go Ruthie! Your warmth, kindness, great sense of humor and hearty laugh was much appreciated.
11. Trying to sleep at hotel Ibis our last night in Casablanca with no a/c, our room facing a street with heavy traffic all night, smelling exhaust all night, barking dogs and a broken toilet running water all night. Come morning I was a basket case.
12. Marcia tripping over Jeanne's luggage and falling on her butt on the train platform after disembarking the train at Casablanca airport in an attempt to rush over to tell Donna and I we needed to get off train. (we already knew that)
13. Rushing through Casablanca airport to catch our flight home because they had moved our flight up one hour early and we

didn't find out till we got to the airport. Good thing we didn't go to the beach that morning like Marcia wanted.

14. The woman from Sierra Leone who sat next to me on the flight home who was so afraid of flying that she kept her head on her tray table with a blanket over it the entire flight. I told you we would land safely Vera!
15. The friendly banter we shared with our British pals about the differences in culture between England and America. Thanks for all the insight Ruth! Don't forget to use your torch to look under the boot and just remember, we won the revolutionary war.
16. Our guide Mohammed's extremely compassionate pace on all our hikes, almost like baby steps. He could easily have left the most seasoned hiker in the dust having hiked in the High Atlas since he was three years old. Your kindness, warmth and genuine affection toward us will always be remembered.
17. Driving back to Marrakech after our stay in the High Atlas on the harrowing roads of the High Atlas Mountains in a 12-passenger van with a Moroccan equivalent of race driver Richard Petty and having Suzanne in the back pleading to please slow down. Moments earlier Mike Carrier had spotted the burned out shell of a vehicle in the bottom of a ravine.
18. The Shepherds living for months at a time in the High Atlas with their sheep and goats moving to different grazing areas, living a remote and desolate existence in the barest of rock shelters.
19. For many of the past 13 centuries the High Atlas Mountains, some of Northern Africa's most remote and forbidding territory have been controlled by armed Berber warlords who refused to submit to the Arab Sultans ruling Morocco's plains. The proud and nomadic Berbers (most prefer the name Amzigh, or Free Person) are fiercely protective of their land and language (Tamazight) and are distrustful of the government since being driven into the High Atlas by their numerous conquerors, among them, The Arabs, Romans and the French. The Berbers are truly an amazing people. For their kindness and friendship I thank them from the bottom of my heart. May Allah be with you always.
20. Highest praise to Marcia for all the time and effort she put into organizing this trip. No small feat indeed. Thanks for the memories Marcia.

Norm Plante



Richard Harris takes us on a tour of North & South Sugarloaf on June 4, 2005

{Marcia's Morocco cont' from pg 1}

One of the stumbling blocks for us was repatriation insurance which is required for most companies that provide high risk activities. The last holdout bought her insurance the day before we left.

Norm was nervous about being kidnapped and was convinced he would also starve for the week because he wouldn't like the food. This is the man who cooked hot dogs in his room in the coffeepot last year in Ireland. Everyone else seemed excited about seeing a part of Africa. For me it was an important trip as I had been here 30 years before and had also lived in Kuwait for 4 years.

Finally April 29th arrived and we drove to Kennedy and overnight to Casablanca. We took a train from the airport into town and looked for a taxi to get to a hotel. The taxi driver insisted he could fit 6 (we had an Aussie join us) and all of our luggage. Quite a sight and he overcharged us. Intense dickering and renegotiation to settle into our rooms took some time. Eagerness to be out and exploring cut short our rest. The first visit to the medina was traumatic for some. I had told them before we left home not to answer anyone's questions or respond in any way but someone did so we had self appointed guides we could not discourage. At that point I thought here goes the whole trip down the tubes Lack of sleep and the newness of a non-western culture was jarring at first if you have no experience.

Mike had been excited about seeing Casablanca because of the movie and we found Rick's café where we had an enjoyable dinner.

On to Marrakech by train for three hours Sunday morning. We eagerly watched for the mountains but mostly saw expanses of brown dirt with some greenery and plenty of goats and sheep. I had never been further south and it was exciting to be heading into unknown territory for the coming week. Donna, Jeanne and I sat in one compartment and Norm and Mike were in another. Norm periodically came back to tell of the progress with Abdullatif, a Moroccan man who was in their compartment. He wanted to take us to a real Moroccan lunch on the rooftop of his place of business. He wanted to show us the best places in the medina. Eventually I went back to meet him but Norm said I couldn't talk to him because he was very holy and he was saying his prayers. Norm came back to report he wanted to take us next Friday for a special couscous but we would still be hiking.

We came into the train station and Abdullatif brought us to our hotel with his van and driver. Here in Marrakech the streets were wide; tree lined and flowers visible everywhere. We were taken to the medina and square, which we walked through to get to the place of business. We were taken up to the rooftop where we were served a delicious meal. Really impressive. As we were eating there was a lot of bustling about and as we finished we were brought into the carpet show room where we were shown a wide array of carpets. You guessed it all this was to sell us rugs. When Mike and Norm realized they were ready to leave. We thanked them for the meal and left to wander about on our own... Donna and Jeanne were entranced for there were local crafts of all kinds everywhere. Every narrow alley had something. It was all so colorful and exotic.

Soon we returned to our hotel, which was what we would want in Marrakech. Beyond the lobby was an open courtyard with a jumble of plants trees and flowers with some fountains with resident turtles. You had to be careful or you might walk on them

This North African country actually has pretensions to join the European Union. Despite having some modern, partially 'westernised' cities from its period as a French Protectorate, it is however a vastly different nation to any in Europe. Morocco is one of the last remaining monarchies in Africa, it is a country of desert, semi desert, and green terraces, walnut and Almond groves, Juniper and Eucalypt woodlands and date palms. In other words it is perhaps the nearest place to mainland Europe that could be described as Exotic: In the sense of its landscapes, people, colors, smell noises and flavors. A land of vibrant market souks, mosques and minarets. There is a great tradition of Islam although it is generally moderate. There has also been the history of the independence of the Berber peoples of the Atlas Mountains, famed for their civility, sense of humor and strength as a mountain people.

If you are a 'foody,' there is some excellent cuisine to be enjoyed from French inspired dishes, to famous Berber ones - such as Tagine and Couscous. At their best they have influenced world cooking. Then there is the inevitable Mint tea or 'Whisky Berber' as the locals like to joke!

The highland regions of the nation run obliquely across the middle and form the chains of the fabled Atlas Mountains rising to high peaks such as Toubkal and Mgoun that are over 4000m high.

To the south the Atlas ripple into the lower Jebel Sahro, which eventually merges into the Sahara desert. Mountain treks to these places commence from the red city of Marrakech, a place that used to be the hub of an empire stretching as far as Timbuktu in Mali. It is an amazing place where in the central square, The Djema El Efna you will find a mediaeval

evening wondering who our fellow hikers would be. We looked over each westerner as they came in trying to decide which ones they might be. Finally we asked and the other Mike introduced himself and so finally we knew who one was. He was talking to a Moroccan who turned out to be Mohammed our guide for the mountains. He was soft spoken but exuded a quiet confidence. We still had 6 more to meet

Tuesday morning we had our city guide to show us around -Mustafa, who took us on a tour of Marrakech and gave us some history and culture also. This was the first time all 12 of us were together but we had to follow Mustafa and listen to him so we were not really interacting at that point. First we went to the gardens and around the mosque, which was across from the medina, the minaret was is focal point to come back to no matter where you are. We had already started to get out bearings but this solidified our sense of direction...

Again we went into the medina but in purposeful directions seeing the museum and a former Koranic seminary that has maintained its building. A stop at the bank and a buffet lunch. The afternoon we were on our own. It was already mid afternoon but we plunged back into the medina. The 5 of us went together, Norm soon tired of it, headed back to the hotel, Mike and I lost Jeanne, and Donna so went up on the rooftop to view the square. We saw them come across the square with their hands out in front of them. They had been stopped by some of the women and had their hands and feet hennaed. They were told it would last for weeks.

They next day Mohammed

arrived to take us into the Atlas Mountains. Our entire luggage went on top and the 13 of us in the van with a driver. And we over four hours we climbed before dropping back into the valley. On the way we stopped and visited a Kasbah that was no longer lived in. Some of it was in excellent condition and parts had started to crumble. We drove on to Animiter where we stopped and had lunch under goatskin tents. It



was warm and we had a walk to our gite. We walked through the valley and crossed probably the same stream many times. Also some irrigation ditches while our guide explained the

irrigation system. There was constant irrigation 24 hrs /day. Each farmer had their assigned time. In the winter they grew wheat and rye. In the

summer they had peach, fig and apple trees. Along with tomatoes squash, cucumbers and onions to name some. On the way we saw school children on their way home. The only schools in the area were primary schools. To advance the older children would have to go to Marrakech and the family would have to pay room and board so not many had the opportunity.

Our guide Mohammed grew up in these mountains he was guiding us in and had gone to college in Marrakech but did not complete his degree. He worked for a while but with a family to support went to the mountain guide school in Morocco and became a licensed guide. He told us he takes his family back to the mountains in the summer but there are more opportunities for his children educationally in Marrakech.

After we settled into our gite we had time to relax with tea and then later a wonderful Moroccan dinner. Our gite was basic. Mattresses in the "bedrooms: One western toilet and two eastern. Showers and one sink with 2 faucets. There was an open area on the 2nd floor with lines for our clothes. That night Mohammed described the next days hike as he did each evening. We began to get to know our fellow travelers that evening but it was not a late night as breakfast was 7:30 and on the trail at 8.

Suzanne, Ruth and Donna all decided to do a shorter version and came out with the mules and joined us for lunch. The lunches were pretty incredible in that heat. We had a large freshly made salad, fresh bread and of course mint tea.

Two of the days hiking we were told we would be having fish for lunch. Well we did



spectacle every evening featuring music, snake charmers, acrobats, orange juice makers and kebab cooks. It is unique place to experience African nightlife. In winter the snow-clad peaks of the High Atlas provide a backdrop to its distinctive skyline of crenellated walls, palm trees and minarets.

We never were hungry that night after our lunch but we did sit in the courtyard that

canned sardines, which we soon realized was a staple of the Moroccans in the mountains.

We needed a guide, as there were many intersecting paths all along the way. It was always amazing that Mohammed calmly and nonchalantly led us but always knew where he was going. Mike and Allison were always so helpful and generous on these hikes especially to me. They were the sweep and always encouraged who was slower. They made up for it on Friday, as they along with Mike Carrier were the only ones of our group to do the 20-mile hike with the 13 yr old guide in his sneakers. When they reached their destination he took a break and went fishing. They made it back in time to have a second lunch with us.

As we waited for lunch that day I thought I saw a mirage. Coming toward us were 2 men on mountain bikes. They were from Wales and France and every year they biked a section of the Atlas Mountains. It was hot and we were truly out in the middle of nowhere in Africa!

Our last night at the gite Jeanne put all of our comments on her video recorder. One of the most moving events was tea at a local family's home. Their house was very basic with little furniture or decoration. There was a clock and a calendar in English on the wall. Inside the main room, the man of the house boiled water for tea in a small charcoal grill and used a bellows to fan it. The little girl about 2 was totally uninhibited and enjoyed the attention. The mother and other children were much shyer. The son at 13 had finished primary school and helped his father each day with farming. There were 3 generations of family living in a few rooms. We felt a sense of awe to be welcomed into their home. It was also jarring to realize here we were on holiday with our hi-tech gear and they had so little.

Connor and Debbie who came from the north of England shared a lot of valuable information with us for future trips. We also realized they are at times accident-prone as they told of more than one mishap in their travels. I think from us Tony discovered the joys of hiking with others. From sharing space with norm and mike he certainly fit in with us. Our last night in the gite was really our farewell dinner. Although we did all go out together our last night in Marrakech it was a hot and noisy night

Saturday morning we had to hike back down to the van and we were slower than Mohammed wanted us to be. We had our reputation to uphold as taking longer than most groups. We stopped for some quick shopping in Telouet and then a harrowing ride out of the mountains. Back in Marrakech for a final trip to the medina. Sunday some of us got up in time to send off the Brits and Ruth from Scotland... Mike, Jeanne and I went to Le Jardins Majorelle, which is now owned by Yves St Laurent. The gardens are beautiful and the buildings are a royal blue.

Time for one last dash to the medina. Mike and Norm stayed behind waiting. It was crazy bargaining. For things we didn't really need. I even traded my watch. We had to get back to take the train to Casablanca. We hadn't realized it was a Sunday afternoon and everyone was returning from Marrakech as we were. We had to divide up and were very lucky

to get seats. The aisles were jam-packed. Jeanne, Donna and I were in a compartment with a middle class Moroccan family that talked nonstop. They were very kind but spoke little English. One of the woman had as scarf and long jellaba while the other woman was uncovered and had sandals and shorts underneath. There was a small child was one of the most well behaved children you would



ever meet. I think the 2 men were part of the king's security force as the king had been in Marrakech for the weekend. It was very hot on the train and no AC. We kept buying water. When we reached Casablanca we did not know how we would ever get off the train with all of our luggage. These 2 men took our luggage and got another passenger to help. We couldn't see our luggage as we squeezed down the aisle. A cardinal rule is to never let it out of your sight. When we finally got off there were the men with all of our luggage.

Our last night we stayed at the hotel by the train station. And talked about our trip. We all agreed it was the best one yet. We are not sure we can top it. I think some were leery about coming and the first day started out iffy... That first vision of Marrakech. Changed our perception. Meeting the British and having a wonderful guide all created this positive feeling. The food was wonderful; the gite while basic was fine while we were there. The Moroccans themselves especially in the mountains were very welcoming and helpful to us. The scenery was incredible as well as the art and architecture. We will definitely come back to Africa someplace.

Marcia Kelly - June 05

Carpool Directions:

Dear Members:

There has been some confusion regarding the directions to the carpool location we use in Westfield for our clubs events. There are two Tighe and Bond facilities and while our directions are accurate people are sometimes directed to the wrong Tighe & Bond facility. To fix this problem we will change all our documentation to list this carpool location as:

(Westfield) 53 Southampton Rd

This reflects the large sign at the driveway that says "53 Southampton Road" and will be used instead of Tighe and Bond on our schedules from now on. Please understand this is still the same place right next to the Friendly's across from exit 3 in Westfield.



A sampling of pictures from Heather Wyman from the White Mountain Sampler and Greeley Pond Hike on June 17-19, 2005

A bit of news...

Jennifer Sagan gave birth to a baby boy on May 24th. Connor Thomas Sagan weighed 5 lbs 5 oz. A future outdoor enthusiast to be sure. Both mom and baby are doing fine. Leo Sagan



Morocco School Children...

Marcia Kelly, on her return from her Morocco Adventures, would like to collect a donation of hats, gloves, and/or a dollar or two for postage from those interested in contributing them to the Moroccan School Children high in the Atlas Mountains. While working through some of the mountain villages it seemed like the little ones had torn, dirty ill-fitting clothes. In the winter it gets cold and snows so I thought sending a box of hats and gloves that could be given out at the school. The only school in the area is the primary school.

If you would like to donate to this worthy cause please bring any good condition hats, gloves, or postage donations to the next club meeting.

PVHC SUMMARY OF MAY 3, 2005 MEETING

Four hikes were rained out. Bartholomew Cobble-this year thanks to TECNU no one suffered from poison ivy clearing and burning brush. Good turn out, thanks to all who participated. We were fed well again and the climb up Heublien Hill is well worth the effort. Hen hawk trail is a new trail which follows lots of forest roads. The hike was rainy and very wet with no view. New trail marks made following interesting at times. Rick Briggs and John Klebes journey to the Catskills for a 17-mile loop backpack. Highlights of the trip included adventures of the down bag eating mouse vs. one hiker armed with duck tape and trash bags. Result=large orange taco filled with Rick Briggs, who only wanted to sleep without the nibbling of mice. John brought culinary delights of 10+ year old MRE's and edible shellac coated trail mix. Backpacking with John and Rick will probably be a trip long remembered and along the way you'll see some beautiful views. A decision was made to have both the annual club picnic and the clambake at Remington Lodge. Picnic volunteers are: Mike Reed, Gary Dolgroff, and Bill Burger. Possible dates: July 9th, or July 16th, Aug. 13th, 20th, or 27th. Details to follow. Clambake is Sept 13th cost \$35.00pp, pay at the lodge no sign ups needed go on your own. A new brochure has been made and more business cards are available. Working to clarify the Westfield parking area. Correct address is North side Medical Center, 53 Southampton Rd., Westfield. Look for sign for Medical Center not Tighe and Bond. Same place just the name had to be adjusted. Be prepared for temperature changes. Lighten up the winter gear and bring bug stuff and sunscreen.

PVHC SUMMARY OF JUNE 7, 2005 MEETING

The canoe/kayak trip of May 8th was cancelled. The group is back from Morocco and a clinic will be forth coming with many details of this wonderful adventure. We have been asked to collect gloves and hats to send to Morocco for the children who are very needy and have very little. We will accepting donations throughout the summer to send over in the fall in preparation for winter. Breakneck Ridge was nice hike with good weather. The Catskill back pack brought our good friend Sybille back from Wisconsin to join John and Rick. It was an enjoyable trip and included a young man on his "vision quest". He hoped to have the area to himself only to be joined by our group. Efforts were made to give him his space. Due to rain the Boston trip changed to Museum and Restaurant trip. 11 1/2 miles along the 7 sisters was pleasant and no rain till the end. Stanley Park was cancelled. South Hadley has acquired a trek of land to link to the Holyoke Range and volunteers will be needed to map the area and create a trail. Tower Square Health Fair booth was very successful and we have been asked to return next year. Adirondack Day Hike less rain more black flies. Montalban Range backpack brought back a good friend and member Rene Houle.

However, on the 2nd day out he slipped about 4 miles in and broke his arm. Up till then the trip was beautiful no rain except when they were in the shelter. After the accident Rene went off to the hospital and John and Rick continued the trip in the rain. They did find a Moose antler. The Quabbin hike was highlighted by 2 Moose 1 cow and her calf. Grand Canyon trip was fabulous awesome good people, good hikes, good rapids, great guides, and terrific food. Carol and Arlene have volunteered to bring refreshments to the next meeting in July. Budget of \$500.00 for the Club picnic was voted and approved. \$5.00 for guest, members are free just bring salad or dessert to share. Date is July 31st at Look Park. \$4.00 fee to get into the park. New M & M Trail book is out with photos and recognition given to PVHC for our work on the trail Sections 1 & 2. The work to have the M & M trail designated a National Scenic trail continues the reports are going to Congress for review. Clinic was presented by Nate from EMS, Hadley on Map & Compass skills. Sept. 17th or 24th there will be a follow up hike to Long Mt. MA using Map & Compass. Mark your calendars.

Check your schedules for more events. Happy, safe hiking.
Your secretary, Monica Gross

Important Notice

Last Chance: We want you to remain members and will be sorry to see you go:

<u>Past Members</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
Scott Aschenbach	200504
Luann Bousquet	200504
John Choinere	200504
Brian Craig	200504
Debora Guiel	200504
Scott Hall	200504
Charlotte Lee	200504
Susan McCarthy	200504
Susan McGurk	200504
Robert Merriman	200504

The following memberships are up for renewal:

July Renewals:

Douglas Borgatti
Rick Briggs
Robert Church
Elaine Furtak
Jeanne Kaiser
Marcia Kelly
Norm Plante
Robert Schechtman
Karin Spencer & Family
Barbara Taylor

Aug Renewals:

Harry Allen
Marie Bienvenue
Stefanie Capite
Daniel Devlin
Meg Eakin
Connie Fogarty
Roz Gwozdz
Charlie & Louise Inman
David Keith
Liz Kugler
John D. Leary, Jr.
Ann Mundy
James O'Donnell
Florinda Peck
Catherine Perina
Gail Schoonover
Gary Tompkins
Juliana Vanderwielen
Ann Marie & Leah Visconti
Heather Wyman & Family
Conrad Yanis

Please renew early, and renew by mail. (*Make checks payable to PVHC*) Mail your renewal with your name and any address or phone number changes to:

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
c/o Wilderness Experiences
P.O. Box 265
Southwick, MA 01077

(Dues are \$25 member, \$40 family, and \$15 for students)

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Officers & Committees

Ann Marie Visconti, President (413) 547-2729
 John Klebes, Vice President (413) 519-1859
 Monica Gross, Secretary (413) 536-6611
 Mike Gross, Treasurer (413) 536-6611
 Scott Cook, Wilderness Experiences Unlimited
 Ray Tibbetts, Founder

Standing Committee Chairs

Hike Planning Coordinator: *Sue Forest & AnnMarie Visconti*
 Backpacking Coordinator: *Ed Laroche & Mike Rattelle*
 Trail Maintenance: *Ed Laroche & Rob Schechtman*
 Web Page Editor: *Dick Forrest*
 Email Correspondent: *Rob Schechtman*
 Email List: *John Klebes*
 Quartermaster: *Jack Leary*
 Bootprints Editor: *John Klebes*

Bootprints is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Send your story contributions to the editor at: j.klebes@ieee.org (Email) or by USmail to John Klebes, P.O. Box 51385, Indian Orchard, MA 01151.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

- ❑ Next Club Meetings:
 Aug 2, 2005, 7pm at **FBC**
 Sep 6, 2005, 7pm at **FBC**
- ❑ Next Hike Planning Meeting:
 Aug 9, 2005, 7pm at **WEU**
- ❑ Deadline for Submissions for next BootPrints is: Aug 23, 2005

FBC – First Baptist Church, West Springfield
WEU – Wilderness Experiences Unlimited

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

Join the PVHC Email List by sending a message to: pvhc2000@hotmail.com

fold here



A publication of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
 c/o Wilderness Experiences Unlimited, Inc.
 P.O. Box 265
 Southwick, MA 01077

July 31st
Is the PVHC Picnic



Happy 4th of July

