

SLEEPING UNDER THE NORTHWAY...  
or, MY ATTEMPT AT THE DIX RANGE  
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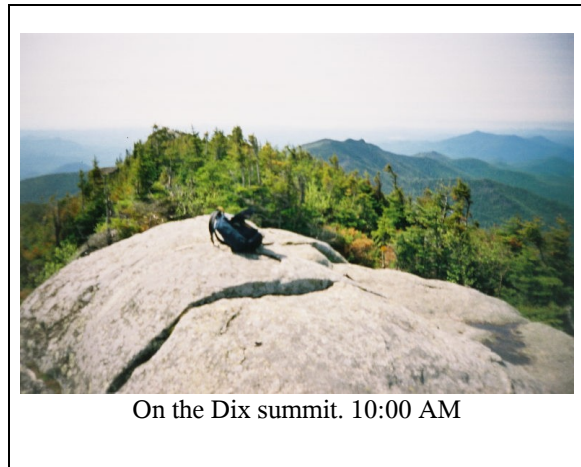
June 11-13, 2003

On Wednesday, June 11, 2003, I left our Newcomb camp to start my first venture into the Dix Range south of Mount Dix itself, which I'd hiked from the north in the summer of 2002. The Elk Lake parking lot took only 50 minutes to reach (9:00 AM to 9:50 AM; 61,179 to 61,211 miles on the Toyota pickup), and I left the trail register eight minutes later. Exactly one hour after that, at 10:58 AM, I paused at the Slide Brook Leanto for a drink, chatting briefly with two men who'd spent the previous day hiking and were headed back to the parking lot later in the day. When I told them a little of my plans to ascend to the ridge and tackle the trailless peaks, they urged me to ascend by the Dix Trail to The Beckhorn, and, when I reached the col between Hough and Pough, to avoid the herd path that seemed to leave its fire ring at about 240°. Making note of their advice, I left Slide Brook at 11:11 and arrived at the Lillian Brook Leanto at 11:58, exactly two hours from the trailhead. By 12:12 PM I was sipping freshly pumped water and swinging in my hammock.

After lunch I considered heading for, oh, perhaps Hough, but it was a dreary cool day so I decided simply to relax in my dry clothes, take a nap, plan a bit, and hit the peaks tomorrow. I strung a clothes line in the leanto to try to dry my damp hiking outfit, hung the bear bag, and filled the water sack. Finding it cool in the hammock, I crawled into the Marmot bag about 2:35 PM, emerging from it—after a good rest—at 4:10 PM. To my dismay the water sack, which had been dry for nearly a year when I filled it, had leaked and was almost empty, but it seemed to function properly later so perhaps it just needed soaking. Two college boys from Plattsburg, brothers Gerald and David, arrived around dinnertime; nice enough fellows but with poor equipment and few camping skills. They'd parked on Route 73, hiked over Dix, and, after asking me about the feasibility of going to Elk Lake and hitchhiking to their car, decided to return through Hunter's Pass. They said the trail down from The Beckhorn was very steep and slippery. We saw a patch of blue sky about 6:30 PM, as I was working on my dinner (half of a three-cheese lasagne and half of a pasta Parmesan two-person dinner), but by bedtime, at 8:30 or so, the overcast gray/blue curtain had returned. My new Z-rest pad worked just fine; fully as comfortable as the Thermarest at a saving of about half a pound.

Thursday, June 12, 2003 was bright, cool, and clear when I left the Lillian Brook Leanto at 7:11 AM with my Jansport daypack. I crossed Lillian Brook, identified with an Elk Lake sign, at 7:16 AM, first noticed Dix Pond on my left at 7:29, and met the intersection with the yellow-marked trail to Dix via the Beckhorn at 7:39 AM. Up we went, and it wasn't really all that steep or slippery. Sections of the trail were level, smooth and duff-covered, winding through short spruce and firs, and the cool wind whipping through them in the bright morning sun was delightful. I paused at 8:45 AM, removing my hat to let the wind at my hair and extending my arms into the wind, holding that position for a while and attempting, futilely I knew, to memorize that combination of sensations forever. I had to think of all of the wonderful descriptions Louis L'Amour offers of the western high country in many of his novels, including my current bedtime reading, *Radigan*.

At 9:05 AM one of the west-facing Dix slides came into view, as did The Beckhorn, straight ahead of me but much higher. (It's a lower but distinctive outcropping just south of the summit of Dix.) The "Arctic Alpine Zone" sign arrived at 9:21 AM and at 9:30 I was snapping photos (#1 and #2 of the Cameo roll) at the Beckhorn's summit, the former from the summit 212° to my daypack and the latter reversing direction, over the daypack to the summit. Photo #3 was snapped on the peak of Beckhorn toward the summit of Dix (a few degrees east of due north), where I arrived at 9:45 AM. Setting the Jansport down where it had been, from the Route 73 trailhead, last summer, I tied my hat on with my headnet against the stiff cool wind and briefly enjoyed the sharp views in all directions, including shining metal roofs on the east shore of Lake Champlain. Snapping a photo or two, I left Dix at 10:02 AM, headed for Hough.



On the Dix summit. 10:00 AM

Back at The Beckhorn at 10:09 AM, I easily spotted the herd path at the edge of the cripplebush, heading south (well, 170°) along the ridge, and moved right along. This was a narrow but clearly defined path, not maintained by DEC but fairly well used, and there was no chance of becoming lost. Within a few minutes the path appeared to require a descent of perhaps eight feet down a boulder, where it continued as level dirt trail; by gripping trailside roots and stretching down backwards with a little jump I accomplished this, but it seemed a bit dangerous and not auspicious for the rest of the path... is this, I wondered, representative of a "trailless" path? Maybe one should expect that it would be more dangerous, less comfortable, than a maintained trail... but almost immediately I noticed that the true path had cut to the right around that uncomfortable downward step, and I vowed to look harder for such "shuns" ("shun trails," I call them, generally "shunmuds" or "shundowns," like the "shunpikes" by which people used to shun the pike pole to avoid paying the toll on old toll roads) in the future: If something looks too dangerous to be part of the herd path, I told myself, it probably isn't.

At 10:38 AM a good west-facing overlook toward Elk Lake came along, and at 10:46 another spectacular rock overlook, this one to the northwest. At 10:50 AM, thinking I should have a photographic record of the nature of this path, I snapped a photo (perhaps #6) along the trail, headed south. There were several, perhaps six, blowdowns that required hands and knees work, a job for the reinforced knees of my Weatherpants for sure, and one nearly took a prone crawl. But at 11:08 AM I reached the base of the Beckhorn-Hough Col, and at 11:30 AM the summit of Hough. It's my High Peak #25, and I snapped two photos (perhaps #7 and #8), north to The Beckhorn and 240°WSW to Elk Lake. It was a beautiful spot, with good views in the cool bright sun at noon, but I discovered that I'd lost my pocketed headnet in one of those blowdown crawls and the blackflies were awful. I tried to cope with them using my two bandanas, but writing in my yellow trail notebook was definitely discouraged. I finished lunch, stretched out on my back in the glorious sun with my boots off, warming and drying, then departed for South Dix at 12:30 PM. My lunch stop had taken exactly my usual one hour.

Descending until 12:55, I reached a small wet area with a fire ring, taking it to be the col between Hough and Pough. A herd path departed at about 240° or 245°, just as the man I'd spoken with at the Slide Brook Leanto yesterday had mentioned, advising me not to use it. I was going on to South Dix anyway, and just passing through.

At 1:02 PM I paused for a drink at a pleasant spot in the trail, with the cool wind blowing through lots of thin firs that hindered good views, taking it to be the top of Pough, but at 1:09 I reached a higher point and think perhaps *that* was Pough. Descending, I met two nice young men who were headed north. They're parked at Elk Lake, as I am, and ascended the Macomb Slide to do Macomb, East Dix, and South Dix, and are headed over Hough to Dix, returning to Elk Lake by the Dix Trail. My goodness... I don't know if they're stronger than I am, or have planned better, or can be a little less conservative because there are two of them, but that's a more vigorous day than I have planned for myself. I asked them to retrieve my headnet if they found it, not wanting to contribute to trail litter, and they said they'd leave it, if found, at the Elk Lake register!

An excellent view to the south and west, from a rock outcropping, arrived at 1:30 PM, but I wasn't sure it was South Dix. My time seemed a little early, compared to those mentioned in Barbara McMartin's guidebook, and she says the views are only to the south and east. I snapped a photo of the Jansport there, just in case, and continued south along the ridge path for a while; it seemed to be descending, and the only rise I could see through the trees



**South toward Hough from the Beckhorn**



**WSW from the Hough summit; 11:30 AM**

seemed quite distant, probably Macomb. Convincing myself that I had now bagged South Dix, I headed back the way I'd come, north, to a small cairn adjacent to the ridge path, just north (I mean not even a hundred yards) of the outcropping that I took to be the summit, pausing at the cairn at 1:47 PM to try to figure it out. It identifies a path headed west, to my left when I was headed north. Briefly I thought it could be McMartin's trail #67, between the Dix Trail and the South Dix-Macomb Col, but then realized that I was on the north side of South Dix so that couldn't be it. I decided to try to find the path to East Dix, thinking that if I could equal the times McMartin speaks of it would take only two hours for the round trip, putting me back at the ridge path about 4:00 PM and leaving plenty of time (well, not plenty, but enough) to locate a herd path down to the Dix Trail. But at 2:05 PM I noted that I was feeling tired, and was heading back to the Hough-Pough Col to find a path down to the Dix Trail. I was becoming less confident of the ease with which I could locate one of the herd paths down off the ridge, and thought I might appreciate the additional time.

Back at the peak of Pough at 2:15 and the Hough-Pough Col at 2:29 PM, I paused for a drink and a brief rest, then decided to head down that 240° trail, despite McMartin's advice to use it only as an emergency escape route (if it really is her trail #66) and the Slide Brook man's recommendation not to take it. It started off clearly, but after about fifty feet the path just seemed to disappear; where did those people go or come from? I maneuvered through several blowdowns and down a couple of steep short sections, but became discouraged and thought I must not be on the path, so I turned around and returned to the Col's fire ring at only 2:40 PM. I thought I'd better look further into that cairn just north of South Dix, not eager to climb over Pough yet again but it was necessary for my plan.

A sharp click of a Trek'R'3 pole on the rock, ascending Pough, told me that one of my rubber tips had pulled off. I was sorry, but was willing to look back over only perhaps twenty feet of trail and had no intention of looking back further. I reached the cairn again at 3:05 PM, aware that time was clicking away, and took a brief break for a drink, then headed to the right, west, down the path identified by the cairn. At 3:10 PM I came out on a large rock outcropping, with plenty of loose stone, much larger than the previous "summit of South Dix" I'd identified, and I thought perhaps *this* was the summit and snapped a photo or two. In yet another five minutes, at 3:15 PM, I found yet another rocky outcropping which might be the summit, with good views to the south and west... but Barbara said south and east... my goodness. Well, that cairn appeared to identify simply this (or these; there may have been two of them) rock outcropping, and not a path down off the ridge; at least I didn't see where it continued down past the second outcropping. So I headed back to the ridge, more and more confused and concerned and beginning to feel a little desperate.



**Rocks on west face of South Dix; 3:15 PM**

Heading for Macomb seemed like a good idea for three reasons: I'd be heading toward that popular slide (my way down to the Slide Brook Leanto), I'd be certain to hit the true summit of South Dix, and I'd also knock off Macomb. So I headed south on the ridge path, past the outcropping I'd reached nearly two hours earlier at 1:30 PM, and came upon an outcropping at 3:20 PM that I was immediately sure was the true South Dix summit, my #26. Its views were, indeed, to the east and south, and I snapped a couple of photos of the Jansport. But time was getting short, so I moved right along, to the southeast along the ridge path, toward Macomb.

At 4:02 PM I reached the summit of Macomb (my #27), and snapped a couple of photos with the Jansport atop a spectacular high boulder. One of them attempted to capture the Northway, clearly visible to the southeast far off in the distance. I had some water and one of my two remaining Powerbars, and looked around for the slide. Unable to locate the herd path coming out of the bushes that would lead to it, and increasingly concerned about the late time and graying skies, I decided to return to the col between Macomb and South Dix and to find, for sure, Barbara's trail #67. I was confident that I could find it, this time, knowing the area just a tiny bit better than a couple of hours ago and having read the trail description several more times. It sounded much shorter than the slide, a much faster route down the the Dix Trail, so at 4:10 PM I left the Macomb summit headed north (northwest, actually) back along the ridge path.



**SE from E. Dix; I thought it was Macomb. 4PM**

Back at the col, I was unable to locate any herd paths coming in from the left. There is a small stream exiting a

tiny swampy area, and McMartin mentioned a herd path to the left of the swampy area, so I decided to simply head down into the woods, thinking I'd come across it soon. My recorded digital notes reveal: "Uuh, I don't like this, but I don't really know what else to do. I don't want to get stuck up here, uuh, at night," recorded at 4:31 PM.

There was a huge boulder leaning north against another boulder, forming an inverted V-shaped opening between them, through which the tiny outlet stream of the small swampy area flowed. My compass reading showed about 220°, SSW I guess, but it was generally west and not east, so I assumed it was OK and I headed off the ridge path and into the woods, on the south (left) side of the huge boulder.

No herd path was evident. I just kept pushing branches aside, climbing through, under, or over blowdowns, and trying to watch my footing on the leaf- and moss-covered ground cover that often concealed dead branches, rocks, or holes. This was tough, slow, going, and I had no eye protection except my reading glasses, which I could not wear for this. Sometimes I'd try to push through stiff dead spruce branches, only to find them pushing back harder, springing me backward and requiring finding another way. I kept the stream to my right, never getting far from it, and continually descended. I do not remember checking the compass again, confident that this watershed drained to the west, toward the Dix Trail on which I would emerge somewhere.

My line of progress was exceedingly jagged, as I searched for the clearest way down through the trees and brush, possibly multiplying my actual linear travel distance by, say, 1.5. Rotted, moss-covered logs on hillsides were stepped behind or, at the risk of a slip, on, and dead blowdowns sported stiff, sharp, strong stubs of branches to be wedged between. When a relatively open area with clear, solid, footing came along, I rejoiced and traversed it quickly. It was getting later, but I was still confident that I had time to reach the Dix Trail before dark; after all, I had probably three hours.

At various points I found the going to be less hindered on the right side of the stream (placing the stream on my left), and I switched back and forth between left and right banks when a move seemed likely to be profitable. I was beginning to feel a bit lost and desperate, and was blundering along, when suddenly the landscape ahead looked strange. It looked far away. Stopping at once, I looked back over my left shoulder to check on the stream, and saw that it had taken a great drop, forming a high waterfall. Looking again at where I'd planned to walk, I discovered that I was about twenty-five feet from the top of a high cliff, perhaps fifty feet high. It may not have been quite vertical, but very close to it. Walking off it would have meant a serious injury, in all likelihood, and it would have been quite easy to do, for its top edge was utterly indistinguished from the ground leading up to it. It was as if someone had taken a normal section of Adirondack forest floor, drawn a line across it, and dropped one side of the line fifty feet lower than the other side. Looking at that level forest far below me was terrifying. At 5:05 PM I jotted down this audio note: "Jesus, I just came out on the top of a huge cliff. This uuh, stream I've been following... there's a big waterfall ... I crossed over to the north side of it, the slope is a little less steep, I'm moving down it now."

Moving farther to the right, farther away from the stream and its waterfall, I found a less-steep means of descent and started to wend my way down, gripping roots and small trees. At one point a mossy wet rock slab appeared in my path, dropping perhaps twenty feet at a steep angle to more-level ground. I couldn't see a convenient way around it, so I decided to edge my way down its left side by gripping roots. Stepping across it, though, my boot shot out from under me, and I landed on my right hip and began a rapid slide down that rock. I rolled onto my stomach and grabbed for anything I could reach, but my hip caught a water-filled pocket in the rock and I stopped sliding with no injuries except some abrasions to my right hand. Another incident that could have had serious adverse consequences.

I continued to weave back and forth, as the terrain and growth suggested, moving slowly downward and generally keeping the stream on my right. At 5:40 PM I was thrilled to see an old, rusty, trash can, indicating—I hoped—that I was getting near civilization. My audio notes record "I believe this is Slide Brook, the longish one, but I sure couldn't find the other one." At 5:44 PM my path seemed to cross just below the base of the slide, and soon I found a red nylon pack strap, proving what I'd thought from the occasional broken branch and abraded ground: that other hikers had been here. I was sure I was on the bushwhack herd path to the base of Macomb Slide.

At 6:15 PM I stopped to pump water, and drank a liter of it. Anticipating Slide Brook Leanto any minute now, I pumped only one extra liter to carry with me, and returned to my generally weaving journey.

Progress continued to be very difficult, with large blowdowns blocking a direct path and gulleys coming in from the side that had to be traversed one way or another. At 7:05 PM I perceived a flat area, along the right side of Slide Brook, with a large metal stovepipe, some kind of tenting area (I presumed) that further indicated I was reaching the end of my journey. I kept anticipating Slide Brook Leanto, and several times was sure I saw it up ahead. These mirages always turned out to be merely fallen logs that had hung on other trees at the same angle as a leanto roof. The brook kept making turns; around every turn, instead of a bridge and leanto that I desperately wanted to see, was a stretch of brook, its banks covered with blowdown and brush, and yet another turn.

At 7:25 PM I encountered what was clearly an old road, and the going was comfortable: it was wide and smooth, and not overgrown. There were a few pieces of old iron lying around, again reminding me of the old wagon parts

near Slide Brook Leanto. At 8:00 PM, I was picking my way with great difficulty through a low area with converging streams, high grass, blowdowns, and raspberry bushes, in the growing twilight, when I noticed some kind of marker on a tree on the opposite bank and found that it identified some kind of road. Excited, I walked right through the brook, which had grown considerably in size from the ridge swamp outlet, soaking both feet through my boots. Moving along the road, which became grassy about 8:15 PM and was now marked with red DEC trail markers, I suddenly perceived traffic noise... heavy traffic noise. My audio notes recorded: "Sounds like the Northway!," and "Christ's sake, it *is* the Northway. Now what am I gonna do?"

I really had no idea where I was, except that it was starting to get seriously dark now, so I ignored two small roads that intersected on my right and continued walking along the dirt road that continued the foot trail I'd been on. To my surprise it passed through two concrete tunnels under the southbound and northbound lanes of the Northway. Since Macomb was west of the Northway and I'd just crossed under it, I figured I was headed east and would emerge on Route 9 sooner or later. My vague thought was to wander into a bar or restaurant and see if someone would give me a ride back to the Elk Lake parking lot, perhaps for \$20. I walked along the sandy dirt road, past some sand or gravel pits, curving to the right until I encountered a "Private, Posted, No Trespassing" sign. I ignored it and continued on.

At 8:30 PM I became dissatisfied with this strategy, noting: "I'm gonna turn around and go back and take those Ausable Club roads. See if they can get me to the parking lot." Of course this was just a slip for Elk Lake roads; I don't know how sure I was that those roads really were part of the Elk Lake complex, but I certainly hopeful that they were. They *had* to be! If I was going south—as I believed I was—and those roads were to my right, they went west, and that's where Elk Lake was.

I was back at the gate with the two barrels suspended on it at 8:50 PM, and it was almost completely dark by now. I selected the road that went more acutely to the right and headed down it, soon coming to a cricket-filled pond (Jug Pond, I learned later) and a small clearing with a travel trailer and a tiny adirondack-style leanto, perhaps six feet across. Continuing on, I saw bright lights ahead. Aha, I thought, human life... life that might drive me back to my truck! But at 9:00 PM I found what it was: the Rest Area on the Northway, north of North Hudson, and it was securely surrounded by chain-link fence. I stood outside, piteously looking in at the brightly lighted restaurant or whatever was there, like Dan Ackroyd in the rain looking into the restaurant at Eddie Murphy in *Trading Places*, trying to figure how to get over that fence. I walked along it a bit, but it's continuous. Finally I decided I'd better reverse myself and go back to the red-marked footpath. Finding that little rear access road required more fumbling through light woods, this time in the dark, but I got back to the underpass under the southbound lanes at 9:15 PM.

The game was up, I knew, and I sat down in the dark on the concrete road, leaning against the vertical wall of that small one-lane underpass and hugely grateful to be able to sit down and rest. I knew then that I would spend the night there, and would give my little "emergency kit" red stuff-sack its first trial.

My night was not the most comfortable, but I actually got perhaps six or seven hours of sleep; I'd check my watch, drift off, awaken and glance at the watch anticipating a time perhaps ten minutes later but find that two hours had elapsed. The concrete beneath me was the principal source of the cold, as I had nothing to lie upon. Immediately after deciding to spend the night I'd donned my full Goretex suit, and unfolded the seldom or never used "space blanket" from my red stuff-sack "emergency kit." It was actually fairly warm, reflecting my own body heat, but of course did nothing underneath. Changing position perhaps eight times during the night, I tried lying flat on my back and on my side, and sitting upright against the side of the underpass; lying, my daypack served as a pillow, and sitting as back support. Early on, a piece of the space blanket perhaps fifteen square feet in area tore off, and then a smaller piece, so I tried to be cautious about pulling it over my feet. About 5:30 AM on Thursday, June 13, 2003 I arose for good, snapped a photo, and packed up, leaving my I-87 underpass camp at 5:45 AM.

My spirits were good, facing a fresh day, knowing where I was and how to reach my destination, and having enjoyed some rest. Choosing the right fork in the sandy region, because it seemed that it would bring me out further south on Route 9, I ignored "Private Property" signs and passed through a sand-and-gravel company's property, walked past the northbound rest area (on my right), and emerged on a public road. Convinced I was headed north and should therefore turn right, I checked my compass and was informed I'd been walking south and should turn



**It was a cold, hard night under the Northway...**

left; “believe your compass,” the slogan said, and my left turn soon brought me to Route 9 at the North Hudson Cemetery. I made no note of the time, but it must have been about 6:15 AM.

Road walking... mile after mile, walking south along the berm of the northbound lane with my socks still wet from West Mill Brook and a light drizzle finally provoking use of the Gore-tex jacket. A “North Hudson” sign was welcome, but I knew that meant little about how close the General Store and the center of town were. Just over the crest of the next hill, maybe, I hoped... but there’s another long stretch of Route 9 with a turn or another crest of hill at its end. A Chestertown Electric van, headed south, paused beside me and I thought I’d have the offer of a ride, but it was just a request for “north or south?”. I looked forward to the pleasant little North Hudson Store so I could call Helen, and have some hot coffee and maybe a bite to eat. When I finally reached it, though, it was not yet open for the day; nothing else in North Hudson was either, so I just moved along, reaching the Blue Ridge Road at 7:41 AM, about two hours since leaving the underpass.

Chugging along, I renewed my pledge to myself (made about half-way down that stretch of Route 9 north of North Hudson) that I’d reach Elk Lake Road by 9:00 AM and the truck by 10:00 AM. A man in a small sedan asked if there were a restaurant open, and I said no and that I’d wished for one myself; he replied that he guessed that if anyone would know, I would. He must have taken me for a local, since I was walking. I moved along, trying to muffle the Trek’R’3 pole that had lost its rubber foot by keeping it in my left hand at the road edge. The Blue Ridge Campground arrived at 8:34 AM, and Elk Lake Road at 9:06. I was feeling some blisters, from the wet socks and all that road walking, but otherwise felt good. The light rain was unobjectionable, though it was dampening my Weatherpants.

Up we went, and that road never seemed to end. Finally, about 10:10 AM, I stopped to pump a liter of water from a stream that crossed under the road, drinking a liter while I was at it. I’m afraid I’d allowed myself to become dehydrated. Until this point, the only water I’d had was the extra liter I’d pumped at 6:15 PM on the way down from the ridge the previous day. Eventually the paved portion of road ended, and the seemingly never-ending dirt road began. But at 11:05 AM, a bit beyond my optimistic target, I reached the Toyota, gratefully enjoying the full blast of its heater as I tried to dry my socks and drank that liter of water. I have no idea how far I walked in those past five and a quarter hours, but it was challenging.

The cab was comfortable, but something had to be done, so we parted ways at 11:34 AM as I headed for my gear at (I hoped!) the Lillian Brook Leanto. I was beginning to feel a bit tired, and it was 12:46 PM when I reached the Slide Brook Leanto. I didn’t stop there. The cairn for the herd path up to the South Dix-Macomb col arrived at 1:15 PM, and the Lillian Brook Leanto at 1:35, where everything—including my bear bag—looked in order. I packed up quickly and left at 2:08 PM, arriving back at the Slide Brook shelter at 3:11 PM and the truck at 4:40 PM, in a fairly heavy, steady rain. I chatted briefly with a New Jersey man who, with his two teenaged sons, was heading in for a trip to Mount Dix. He complimented my pants and I told him about them, and he acknowledged that while the weather could be more appealing they’d been planning this trip for a long time. I realized, once again, how exceedingly fortunate I am to be able to take a trip like his virtually on a moment’s notice.

I left the parking lot (forgetting to check out at the register) at 4:49 PM with 61,211 miles on the odometer, reached the Blue Ridge Road five miles later (that’s what the odometer said! It took me two hours to walk...), and home at 5:54 PM (61,243 mi.). I’d just shucked my wet Weatherpants but not yet my other damp clothes when the telephone rang and I was able to answer a very anxious Helen, who’d been calling off and on all day. (I’d said I planned to be home Thursday night but perhaps would return during the day on Friday.)

It was quite an adventure, and—as someone has said—adventures often simply indicate poor planning. I had considerable detective work ahead of me before I figured out exactly what happened, despite my later jokes about thinking “E” on the compass stood for “wEst.” Immediately ahead were quite a few calories of restorative eating and the welcoming mattress and blankets, so different from the concrete pavement of last night’s lodging.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Later analysis and conversation with other hikers have produced a solution to this trail-finding error. When I thought I was passing on through South Dix to Macomb, I was actually going to East Dix. (That explains, for one thing, why I never could find the point at which the path to East Dix branched off from the South-Dix/Macomb path; I was already on it. The cairn on the north side of South Dix, so obvious and clear but leading to no obvious path that I saw, could have marked the continuation of the ridge path on to Macomb.)

A hiker I met a few weeks later said Macomb’s summit contains a sign identifying it, and he said my description of the large boulder at the peak of the summit I was on identifies it as East Dix.

Topo maps show that a small origin of West Mill Brook has its source at the col between East Dix and South Dix. When I was heading back toward South from East Dix, this stream would be on my left, as would the source of Slide or Lillian Brook have been if I had been headed from Macomb to South Dix as I’d thought I was. So: I thought I was walking north, from Macomb to South Dix, and was turning left down a stream draining west, but I was really

walking west, from East Dix to South Dix, and turning left down a stream that drained south.

Being on the totally wrong mountain was a pretty large error. I'd assumed that the obvious and main ridge path would simply continue from Hough through South Dix to Macomb, largely in a straight line, but apparently it took a turn at South Dix while the path that seemed to continue straight to me was that to East Dix. Of course paths are never continuously straight, and even a north-south path can have portions oriented east-west when they weave around obstructions. A traveler heading south on a path could even be walking north for short sections, looping around something.

\*\*\* THE END \*\*\*