November’s eight trips included one called the Lookout Cookout, which involved luging grills to the summit.

The trail is a fairly easy grade, running along old horse trails built to bring travelers up to Mount Washington. They reach the summit by mid-day, and pause to take in the 360-degree vista of the Presidential Range.

Lunch, however, quickly becomes more important than admiring the view. Since they forgot to bring utensils, they eat gorp, peanut butter, hummus, pita bread and veggies with cold fingers. Nobody complains. Complaining is actually something in very short supply on club trips due to the No Discount Policy, which bans demagogy, hurtful, negative or insulting talk. The No Discount Policy, plus the No Drug and Alcohol Policy, define the attitude and philosophy of the club, and the attitude is upbeat, even when the going gets tough.

Which is just what lies ahead. Recent rain and snowfall have turned the trail to Mount Jackson into a sheet of ice, and the hikers grab trees, roots and rocks to pull themselves up the steep grade. By taking along old horse trails built to bring travelers up to Mount Washington, they learn the hard way that they need to plan ahead.

Ten years later, Lauman completed the entire 2,167.1 miles of the Appalachian Trail in 178 days, starting on Springer Mountain in Georgia and ending on the summit of Maine’s Mount Katahdin. For Lauman, the journey led to the publication of his first novel, 1, Joseph Kellerman.

“Writing and hiking for me are really companion activities,” she explains. “I know where to start, I know where I’m going, but getting there is the fun part, and the challenge.” While hiking, Lauman heard a story from another hiker that captured her imagination, and she began formulating a character. “I wrote at night in my tent with my flashlight in my mouth,” she says. Although Lauman was working as a paralegal before she hiked the Appalachian Trail, she has since decided to write full-time. She credits the Outing Club with the direction her life has taken.

The Outing Club gave me a huge boost of confidence at a point in my life when I needed it most,” she says. “Everything that I’ve learned about myself and everything I’ve become goes back to the Outing Club and the opportunity it gave me.”