

Humor in the Wild

It is bleak, very bleak if one rejects outright the concept of humor while in the wild areas, for is it not the wild that draw us back again, again, again, again and again? Sitting inside a tent on the side of Chesuncook Lake, Maine and be danged who opened the flap to allow the tent to fill with no see ums? Why is after climbing ice all week up in the Whites one awakes to being pulled out of the tent by climbing partners because one's feet smells, so they claim of month-old cheese? Hey, I saved weight by wearing the same socks, jeez what's the big deal. Now I know George Hurley will not be enthused to wander about NJ, lost on back-roads skirting Musconetcong Mountain until on the second day while looking down a snow covered glenn he murmurs "one would never know one is in NJ". Yelp pulling that old traverse up on Cannon. I know I promised him a meal what's wrong w stopping at a road house and offering the remains of a super bowl party. Heck its food... What you let go of the rope and your now stuck no rope and no-one in sight 300 feet off the ground thinking do I toss me climbing partner after the rope or sit back and relax and let the issue gain a proper perspective, course laughter did not occur until late the night sitting in bar drinking a cold John Courage discussing what looks like a wolf on chain glowering back at one.

John Anderson Humor in the Wild Essay

More often than not freaking when something goes wrong in the wild is not helpful. Epics though, good epics are carried forth on humor. Honest Mr. Ranger, I know we were not supposed to bivvy here, you can turn a blind eye to us for we are just some folks climbing, a ticket, really, but we was drinking beer w you the night before last, honest we won't do it again, yes of course we said that the last time, OK so a ticket we get. Let's plot his demise. Opps his belay. Take it in stride. Laughter is the best medicine.

High above on the Squamish wall's your partner says eh my leg hurts...you think of jeez now what. He starts rubbing his leg and seems to twist it about and then pull his lower left leg off. He's Canadian you know. Oh yes, I lost my leg in a climbing accident up in the Yukon but for sure I still climb. Do you think you could have said something about that before we were 2 days into a climb? Well he says your lead w an evil smile and laughter erupts from us both. Comrades on a climb seeing humor in a proper way. It is easier to be sucked down then up for in the wilds one will all ways have issues. Really now I did not mean to melt the whisper lite stove into a molten mass of metal, it seemed like a good idea at the time to attempt to make an oven in the sand here below Kineo's expansive girths. What's left to eat, a pudding pack. Rather we suffer that than head on back. You dang fool, I promise it won't happen again.

Sure, it was easy to pull down the grape vine to get fresh grapes, how was I to know that big ole wasp nest was to come down upon us. You at least got away by diving into the mud pond. What a choice wasp stings or the mud pond, ahh epics live on through humor and

John Anderson Humor in the Wild Essay

smiles. In seriousness we laugh at ourselves to lower tensions and allow our minds expansions. To release a pent-up frustration by yelling and hootin and hollering is but a counter-productive way of being. Though one can think laughter and the tincture of time allows us to think out side the box and push forward against adversity.

Diagnosed w MS, Christmas on a stick. Let's go up to Willoughby and get in some good ice. Them dang doctors don't know what they are talking about. I will be uncoordinated, what do they know.... Ship on a stick, cut the rope w an uncoordinated swing of an ice axe. Now what, well all's well now am back at the bottom of the ice. Bet it will be simple enough to glissade down to the road-way. Gathering speed, you realize this was not a good idea. You attempt to gain control and before you know a huge snow bank seems to stop the gathering speed of an unchecked slide. Momentum carries you through the drift depositing one on the roadway much to the surprise of other climbers about. Yeah, that's right, I do that all the time as you walk off to the frozen lake embraced by cold winter winds holding one's soul in peace. Humor in the wild goes hand and hand w being in the wild. You make the best of a muck-up and its often, more often than not its humor carrying you to further climbs and into wild areas.

We hide the brutal realities focused on being in the wild, for we hear the mountain streams a laughing, the stars all twinkling, the granite mirth as you get spit off that Selkirk ridge. Oh, thunder claps, like Rip Van Winkle bowling beckon one onward. So, you forgot the rope,

John Anderson Humor in the Wild Essay

guess you have to go back to the car down in Pickham and get it. Me I will sit here on Lion's head awaiting your return. The chickadee, an owl the gliding hawk all call me name. Ahh your back, I think it's best we sit and watch the world pass on by on wild mountain currents. Its not the climb that makes us smile, though it helps, it is being here, alive, vibrant, a dynamic of dances only found when out among the edges. Whispering the dawn erupts in a sun warmed blanket, what yep, I forgot my harness. So, let us wander about the alpine meadows laughing w the sky.

It is said that we in the wild often have that far- away look of dreamers in our eyes. But of course, we have that depth of perception that touches us in ways we never think. Death is but a reality in the mountains and in the wild, we must except that humor blunts the tensions, the thought we encounter being 40 days out and overdue, I know the map said it's only a 2-week hike across the tundra. Didn't say it's a month-long slog across a wilderness so touching. Of we curse, we cry, we yell, we scream, we trash about. We stop on reaching civilization and laugh of the good time we had pushing ourselves to areas never found. Not alone but with others who see the edge and wander back along.

I can't imagine a day in the wild without laughter, smiles and humor as the independence climbing tool carried without fear or the weight of excess baggage. Am I supposed to cry because our tent has filled with a nice ice-cold rain or my hands burned from a nylon rope a ripping? Ah I do cry before I laugh, and you help w the thoughts we are fools quilted up in a

sleeping bag. Honest I know my feet reek to high heaven, pay back for putting me on the sharp-end, oh a nasty prank of which we sit around the roaring fire laughing deep inside, its after all your lead.

Your nuts you think to self, there is non-way I can pull that move nor run that rapid. No, it's better I cower away and never experience the edge of life. How dry, how unexciting the wilds would be to let and allow fear and hate to determine what we do. In the wild, humor is the willingness to push onwards to a 4th class scramble or a 5th class led. To go where others, have before all free and calm. It is humor that is the quilt of a down filled sleeping bag that we return for time and time again.

We speak among the pine trees, like minarets so tall, a pale blue rose a fire unquenched. We are tired, wet, physically drained, yet we push ahead. We seek the magic sweet spot of caring deeply for the wilds that we embrace with laughter and smiles. It is better to be in the wilds then stuck behind a desk laughing at a "joke" so dumb. I know I laugh for real and best when out among the wild river banks all tumbling, I know I am alive as fresh breezes brush softness on a mind a thinking, I know its humor that is the steadfast partner on a vivid 3-man rope. It is after-all the wishes of what we think inside that humor helps us see the whiteness calls when darkness comes. I can easily enough be sucked into a soulless life of a big old cookie cutter life in a megalopolis all the same.

I blunt the forces of reality with the illegal smile stuck in traffic, laughing at myself till tears do flow. How ever could it be you forgot the rope and I the harness. Its best then we follow the smile and if the tears flow, we follow them inside. Humor blunts self-doubt that we feel when in the wilds soaking wet as snow continues to fall all fresh. It is beauty exposed on an alpine ridge, a wonderful expression of naked truth. We confront, we challenge, we question reality every time we stride forth into wild areas. Is this the time of final epic or is this the time of unrelenting pain? We don't know until we return home to the fired warm hearth. Here we sit and watch the flames dance, beckon us inside, touching reality yes, we did get bogged down but we smiled and pushed ahead.

Oh, so simple to hide away among technology ohm which we all embrace. We find the "peace" of sameness. In the wild its is never the same for you and me and others. We go about because we seek to find something hidden, something real, something comforting. We push the envelope, we hike beyond the climb, we protect our safety as humor anchors all we do. It is a sad commentary on life when one can't laugh at self and other's in a party, decrying tensions, sparking dreams forever more. Without laughter we suffer. We become the asphalt parking lot, we become the strip mall of a soulless future. Simile you say we can't see the humor in this essay once and all. It is better, healthy true and true to get deep in an epic (but not that deep) to have humor as that bomber number 4 friend that escorts me to the wild. Oh, you think really now how can laughter help us when in the

wilds? Cynics embrace a world of do unto others as they do you, to fight for the big ole house and white picket fence. Yet in the wild my big ole house is my tent, my fence those we climb and be around, among the wild meadows as Orion glances down, constellations wicked funny winking at you from above.

How trite, how banal is it we treat humor and ignore its healing embrace. We divert out fears and worries for a minute on end through humor tales and thoughts. Surely you can see and taste the edge blunted w laughter. Those who wander the wild do so at the peril of our freedoms laughing deeply as we go. All seriousness, well we come to the wild for fun and enjoyment for are these not the sisters of reality? Humor build the wilds for did not the deities above have a sense of humor for bringing forth us into the wilds? Of we get teased when in the wild, we feel alive, we seek the higher road so welcome and all ways make sure to laugh a self before you laugh with others.

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