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## **Between Me and Comfort**

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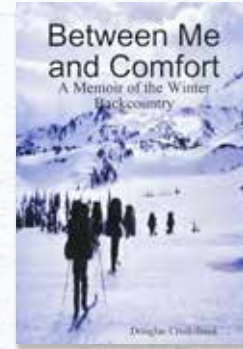
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# Between me and comfort



Frozen socks, snow shelters and biting cold. *Between Me and Comfort: A Memoir of the Winter Backcountry*, written by Doug Cruikshank, professor emeritus of education, is filled with Linfield student journal entries and photos.

Over 15 years beginning in 1981, Cruikshank and Drannan Hamby '55, professor emeritus of chemistry and physics, led more than 200 students into the snowy winter backcountry of Oregon for a January Term class, Outdoor Environmental Studies. Lincabin, a rustic dwelling (since burned down) located 10 miles southwest of Sisters, served as home base between backpacking trips. Students learned to telemark ski, build snow shelters and the basics of safety and preparation for winter camping. Here is an excerpt from the book.

**7 a.m.:** BEEP—BEEP—BEEP . . . the sound of my watch's alarm is almost imperceptible but my keen ears pick out this sound of civilization through the thick layers of clothes and the fluffiness of my bag. I awake but am not excited to test the temperature outside of my snugly pleasure dome of a sleeping bag. I poke my hand out first and the cold bites at it like an angry badger.

**10:50 a.m.:** I stand with my skis two feet deep in the snow and look back to see 13 people loaded for bear and ready to fight through a heavy snowfall.

**12:30 p.m.:** I am wet and cold and have lost the desire to plow through the snow in search of a goal that I have never seen. What is this Sun Notch that I see on the map? I see no sun ahead and I need a much larger space than a notch to set my tent up in.

**1:30 p.m.:** The order is given to find a home. This phrase is usually saved for shouting at stray dogs and feral cats but is music to my ears. I quickly find a place to pitch a tent and can only keep my frozen fingers moving long enough to tie a few taut-line [hitches] before I must change my wet clothes, don my puff suit, and jump into my bag to fight off the early shivers of hypothermia.

**7 p.m.:** It has only been 12 hours since I was last in my bag but here I am again for the night. Will I want to get out in the morning? No. But I will get up and I will ski, and I will be cold again. I will also think thoughts like... "Will my hands and feet ever be warm again" [and] "Can it snow any harder?"

However I am here and I am happy for some strange reason.

 [Learn more, dcruik@linfield.edu](mailto:dcruik@linfield.edu)

