A few general comments on fieldbooks after the Mt. Washington and Baker River exercises

A fieldbook is vitally important to any geologist. Many great insights have been forgotten or not fully developed because the understanding reached while standing on a deposit or outcrop is never recreated in the office. In your fieldbook you should write memory aids, essentially notes to yourself, so that the flashes of brilliance reached on a day in the field can be recalled later (sometimes even months or years later). The importance of clear organization for a fieldbook cannot be underestimated, particularly when your field site is far away or inaccessible. Since the labs for this course are over and done within a month, your fieldbook may not seem so important-- your short term memory should fill in the gaps (depending on how intact your short term memory may be). Some of you may have cut corners in the field while doing these exercises, which is OK, but not a habit that you want to get in.

A fieldbook is in many ways a personal document. You may make references or use abbreviations that only you will understand. You may use memory aids that would mean nothing to anyone else like, "Got a terrible blister." I think this is fine. Partially for this reason, your "grade" on the fieldbook is not going to be factored into your score on the field exercises. The A, B or C in the upper right hand corner of the sticky note on the title page of your fieldbook is just a marker to let you know how I felt your book fit in to the criteria listed below (almost everyone got a B, including me). Ultimately, it is up to you to develop a style that works for you. Here is my distillation of what people did well and what we could all improve on.

1. Memory aids. Important and fun. Each entry should start with a date, place, weather report and reminder of something that happened that day. Many people did not begin with even a date or a place which are the bare minimum. This provides a good excuse to record great quotes of the day like: "Famous Amos are good cookies."

2. Organization and headings. Related to memory aids. Some people began the Mt. Washington entry with a list of questions that they hoped to address over the two days. This is great. It's also really important to put headings on each entry to remind you of where this feature or process was discussed. You probably were not writing all day as we hiked up the Tuckerman Ravine trail and around Lion Head, although to look at many fieldbooks it would appear that this is the case: they are an unbroken string of observations without reference to where the observation was made. At each stop you should write a quick description of your location and the time. Even just numbering the stops will help later. This is particularly important on days with lots of stops.

3. Data. Arguably the most important thing you put in your fieldbook. Each table of data should begin with a short description of the method and location. This may be shared, so it's important that this is clear. I had a difficult time interpreting some people's transit data sheets. The clearer you can make your data in the field, the less headaches you will have later.

4. Legibility. Very much a personal thing. Most people (but not all) can read their own writing. It was tough for me sometimes, but I was able to decipher everything. This is most important on things that will be shared, i.e. data.

5. Maps and diagrams. Everybody did a nice job with these. To be able to draw great field sketches is a life quest for any geologist. I put an example from G.K. Gilbert (the king) on the back of this sheet for inspiration. It's a good idea to include scales, north arrows, and other labels.

6. Nuts and bolts. The beginning should include: name, address, reward information, table of contents.