DO-IT-YOURSELF SNOWSHOE BINDINGS

by Richard E. Hanners

Snowshoers are familiar with the problem of bad support in their bindings after turning tight hairpin turns while switchbacking or traversing steep slopes. The hinge-rod binding stops most problems of this nature.

Originally developed by the Army, a commercially available design is incorporated in snowshoes made by Sherpa Designs (and is protected by Patent Number 3,802,100). It uses curved metal plates and nylon bushings. A home-made version can be made using a "piano-hinge" design instead. It is a valuable feature on small snowshoes like the Green Mountain Bearpaw and the Maine, costing very little in time and money to make.

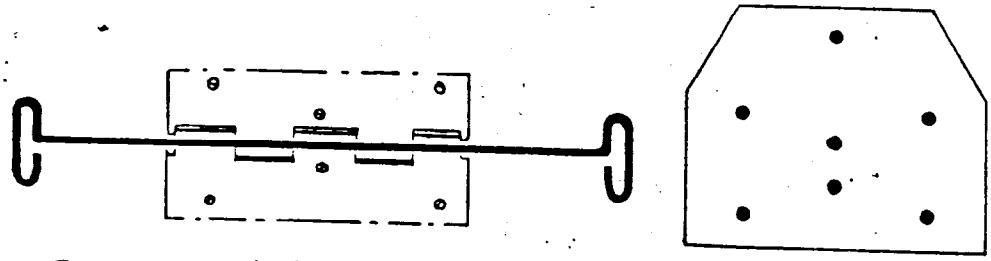
Start with a pair of brass door hinges measuring about three or four inches wide. Punch out the pin with a hammer and nail or saw the pin out using a hacksaw placed between the joints. Next, find a metal rod the same thickness as the pin and about a foot long. The rod should be made of softer metal than the pin but strong enough to support the weight of a snowshoer's foot.

Fashion a piece of lightweight metal into a shape like a truncated triangle as wide at the base as the hinge and longer than both halves of the hinge combined. Drill holes in the metal plate to match the holes in the hinge.

The best type of binding to use with the hinge-rod arrangement is the Sherpa but a Beck or Tubbs can be adapted. Position the metal plate on the bottom of the binding. The Sherpa binding should line up exactly even in front with the plate but the Beck or Tubbs must line up where the binding folds up over the boot. Locate the holes on the binding and drill.

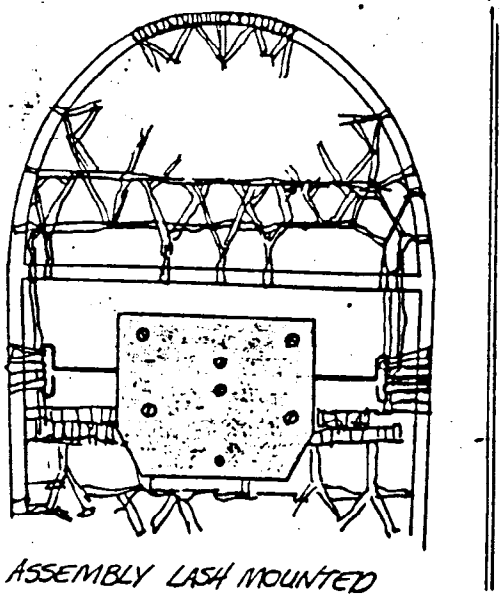
Assemble the parts together. The pin-side of the hinge should be down and the plate goes between the hinge and the binding. Use brass bolts, washers, and lock washers.

Bend an elliptical-shaped loop about an inch and a half long at one end of the metal rod using a vise and pliers. Push the rod through the hinge and then bend a corresponding loop at the other end. The overall length of the rod should be two inches shorter than the inside width of the snowshoe frame.



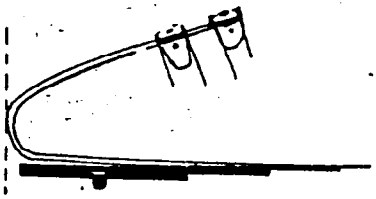
ROD WITH HINGE AND FORMED LOOPS

METAL PLATE SHAPE

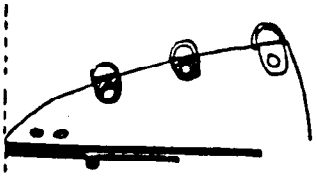


ASSEMBLY LASH MOUNTED

NOTE SIDEVIEWS



BECK OR TUBBS BINDING



SHERPA BINDING

Unlace the webbing in the area where the hinge-rod goes on the snowshoe. When relacing, thread the webbing through the loop and wrap it tightly around the frame. Each loop should be held by three pieces of webbing. (Note: that an alternative method is to attach the rod directly to the frame by drilling.)

Snow will stick to uncovered metal so the parts must be covered with some type of wax, paint, or a piece of vinyl tucked around the hinge and bolted in place. If the metal is not covered, snow will ball up around the binding causing problems in weight and balance.

It may be necessary to lubricate the rod occasionally since the metal may deteriorate from wear and water. Use a thick bicycle or automotive lubricant.

When everything is completed, think snow and try it out in the mountains. □