JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY November – December 2013

Warriors Walk off the War

INSIDE: The Power of Persistent Partnerships | The Art of Living

On the Cover:
Author, cover photographer, and former A.T. thru-hiker Cindy Ross joined a group of U.S. war veterans in Maine this past September for their completion of their "Warrior Hike" hike of the A.T. (page 18). "I loved being part of it with them," says Cindy. "I became cemented to them and the program on such a deep level." Since interviewing the men and women of the Warrior Hike, Cindy has decided to dedicate much of her writing to "get the word out" about the program and is now the organization's publicist. "The Warrior Hike has changed my life and given it new direction," she says. "I can continue doing what I love - writing, outdoor sports, and help a tremendously good cause."

Pictured from top row: Sharon Smith, Stephanie Cutts; Bottom row: Warrior Hike director Sean Gobin, Kevin Reed, Tommy Gathman, Steve Clendenning, Rob Carmel

For more information visit:
warriorhike.com
cindyrosstraveler.com

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A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Volume 9, Number 6
November – December 2013

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

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Ron Tipton at Jefferson Rock in Harpers Ferry

THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL is obvious to those of us who have experienced it first-hand. It is certainly the most famous and popular long-distance hiking trail in the world, whether you measure that by number of hikers or by the amount of positive publicity about the A.T. Indeed, the fact that about 13,000 people have completed the entire Trail during the last 60-plus years is in itself a unique benchmark for a more than 2,000-mile-long trail.

My perspective on the A.T. is shaped by many different experiences: as a Trail overseer, and with land conservation acquisition and management roles with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club; as an advocate for funding by Congress for A.T. land acquisition; involvement in controversies regarding proposed development adjacent to the Trail corridor (such as the major new power line with 200-foot-high transmission towers across the Trail within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area); and as a former member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Board of Managers. I also helped found the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA) 30 years ago. During these years, I have had the chance to get to know many dedicated people who work hard in one way or another to the benefit of the A.T. With that thought, I am very sad to note the passing of Jean Cashin who served from 1972 to 1996 as the ATC's official "Trail mom" in Harpers Ferry to myself and many hundreds of other thru-hikers. Jean was also a founding member of ALDHA and, during her 24 years as information specialist, she helped shape and personalize the ATC's hiker services.

As I begin my third month as the ATC's executive director, the most powerful experiences, which underscore my commitment to represent this wonderful organization, are the memories of my 1978 end-to-end hike from Georgia to Maine. It was truly a life changing experience for me in many different ways. Perhaps the most significant impact it had on my life is that it shaped my career goals to a focus on protecting our public lands, national parks, wilderness areas, and outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans.

For the past 14 years I enjoyed the opportunity as a senior vice president for the National Parks Conservation Association to advocate for the preservation of the natural and cultural resources of the 402 units of the national park system. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is one of my three favorite national parks, along with Denali and Sequoia/Kings Canyon. The A.T. is unique in that most of the day-to-day management of the Trail is delegated to the ATC through a 1984 agreement with the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service (NPS). Our staff works very closely and collaboratively with the NPS Appalachian Trail park staff; I have a weekly meeting with A.T. superintendent, Wendy Janssen, and we share information, ideas, and strategies on all aspects of protection and enjoyment of the Trail.

As our board chair, Sandi Marra, discusses in her column in this issue, the ATC is in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan, which will establish our priorities for the next five years. It is our intent that this document will be developed by the staff and the board with a great deal of input from our 31 Trail maintaining clubs, the four Regional Partnership Committees, and our Stewardship Council. This Strategic Plan is critical to expanding the ATC's role in preserving the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Appalachian Trail, and reaching a broader segment of our population.

The ATC, the National Park Service, the U. S. Forest Service, and the 14 Trail states have done a remarkable job in securing a permanently protected A.T. corridor from Georgia to Maine. We should be proud of what has been accomplished. It is my dream that we extend that protection to a larger natural and cultural landscape and a broader viewshed so that hikers can continue to have the kind of Trail experience for which the A.T. is famous. Equally important, I want this experience to attract more people of all ages, especially our youth. I also believe we must make the Appalachian Trail a place for the expanding diversity of our population to explore and enjoy, whether that be a long hike or an afternoon outing a short distance from Atlanta, Washington, D.C., New York, or other population centers near the Trail.

Together we can do great things!

Ronald J. Tipton | *Executive Director/CEO*

VIEW FROM SCHAGHTICOKE MOUNTAIN, CONNECTICUT – BY MICHAEL ADAMOVIC

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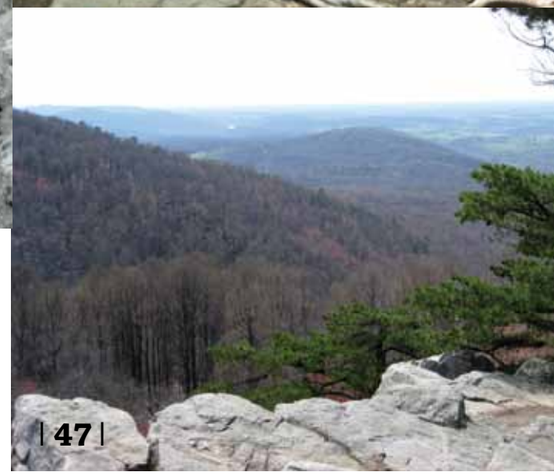
This past hiking season, a group of recent U.S. war veterans with the Warrior Hike program followed the A.T.'s white-painted blazes from Georgia to Maine, and became healthier, happier, and healed.

"Warrior hikers" near the end of their healing journey; Katahdin, Maine – by Cindy Ross



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THIRTY YEARS AGO, I WAS serving in the U.S. Marine Corps flying CH-46E helicopters off of the coast of Beirut, Lebanon, when my Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) membership notice arrived in the mail. I recall including a handwritten note back to [the ATC] with my membership renewal that basically said that even though I couldn't currently take advantage of enjoying the serenity and grand vistas of the Appalachian Trail, I had every intention of continually renewing my ATC membership to help ensure that the Appalachian Trail would be there for me to enjoy at some point in the future.

Sure enough, after I retired from the Marine Corps in 2000, I volunteered to be an assistant scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 350 in Madison, Alabama. In July 2002, my son was old enough to participate in Troop 350's first backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail from Standing Indian Campground/Deep Gap, to the Nantahala Outdoor Center in North Carolina. Just about every year since, I have been able to participate in A.T. backpacking trips each summer with Boy Scout Troop 350 and Venture Crew 007.

On this past summer's A.T. backpacking trip with Venture Crew 007, I was able to share my story and long-standing commitment to the ATC. I wanted them to know that the Appalachian Trail was not to be taken for granted and that its continued existence requires monetary contributions and countless volunteer hours to preserve and maintain the A.T. I even told them how I provided additional contributions after receiving your many pleas for monetary support so that the ATC could buy up private land in order to protect the A.T. corridor. And those several hundred miles of unprotected Trail are now down to about five miles left to preserve. Great job to everyone involved in making this preservation initiative possible! Again, after being a member of the ATC for almost 40 years, I am forever grateful to the [the organization] and its many volunteers who have worked to protect and maintain the A.T. so that I could share the A.T. experience with future generations of backpackers and potential ATC members.

Philip "Tony" Lindeman
MADISON, ALABAMA

[MY HIKE OF THE A.T. WAS] A tough walking meditation that helped me change as a human being. The experience of being alone with myself and then meeting so many wonderful, generous people both on the Trail and around the Trail was fantastic. It was humbling to think of all who helped me finish. I also have a good feeling for the future of my grandchildren because of those I met from Georgia to Maine over the last 11 years. Thanks to all who do so much on the A.T. in the way of maintenance and repair, they certainly helped make this a wonderful, life-changing experience.

Joseph G. "Mountain City" Savery
MOUNTAIN CITY, TENNESSEE

DURING MY 2013 THRU-HIKE I had the opportunity to pass by Fitzgerald Falls while the Jolly Rover crew was there ["Jolly Hard Work" *A.T. Journeys* July/August]. Although it was very early in the morning and they were just beginning to stir, I was amazed at the system of pulleys, slings, cables, and boxes used to move the large stones into place. My hiking partner, "Mot," and I made a point of always stopping and thanking any Trail workers we encountered along our hike and I would try to get a picture of them to upload to my Trail journals. Some simply snipped back errant branches that extended onto the Trail. Others, like the Jolly Rovers, moved huge stones. Whenever you encounter a Trail [crew or maintainer], make sure to say thank you, because they are the "keepers of the Trail."

Mark "Punkin Pie" Marchiori
BROCKWAY, PENNSYLVANIA

CORRECTIONS

In the September/October feature, "Vicious Vegetation," a photo caption incorrectly identified a photo of black swallow-wort seed pods as Japanese stiltgrass. Japanese stiltgras (pictured here) is one of the most widespread and detrimental invasive plants found along the A.T.

In the September/October feature, "Take a Load Off," a caption on page 22 incorrectly stated that Elmer Hall's son owns Bluff Mountain Outfitters.

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments.
The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives.
Not all letters received may be published.
Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Please send them to:
E-mail: **editor@appalachiantrail.org**

Letters to the Editor
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
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ENO will donate 100% of the net proceeds from every combo sale towards supporting the ATC's efforts to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail - ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

Justus Creek, Georgia by Barbara Kraus

Our ability to play a role with this effort is due in large part to building partnerships and determining a niche where we can best use our resources to support the program's goals.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) began developing a strategic plan for the organization. In consultation with staff and federal partners, the initial work, led by the ATC's board and its Strategic Directions committee resulted in what we call our Strategic Framework. The framework states our guiding, beliefs, and our intent; assesses our assets; determines our promises to membership, constituents, partners, board, and staff; and outlines our proposed five-year strategic outcome goals. The next step, now underway, is for the ATC staff, with support from the board, to develop a detailed strategic plan for the organization, using the framework as the guiding foundation. Heads-up: You will hear more about the framework and the plan development throughout the coming year!

So, why is this important? The ATC has always been committed to doing everything it can to protect and enhance the Trail and the Trail experience. As we move forward, it is critical that we have a process and structure by which we can determine our priorities and strategy for Trail protection and enjoyment. When staffing and funding are limited we need to know that our existing resources are deployed in areas that we have collectively determined to be within our core mission and goals. To continue delivering the quality of service our membership, partners, and public have come to expect, it is more important than ever that we apply both a critical and creative eye to our programming objectives.

In this issue you'll read about a wonderful new program in which the ATC has become involved. The "Walk Off The War" program is a noble and heartfelt undertaking, and the ATC is but one of several partners and sponsors. Our ability to play a role with this effort is due in large part to building partnerships and determining a niche where we can best use our resources to support the program's goals. Our strategic plan is likely to call for building more partnerships like this so that new and creative programs can successfully blend with our existing responsibilities. These relationships strengthen our mission and enhance our effectiveness in preserving and enhancing the Trail experience in collaboration with the National Park Service and other governmental partners.

Through strategic planning and a key focus on building new and more generous and diverse revenue streams, we remain committed to fulfilling our mission to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

Sandra Marra | *Chair*

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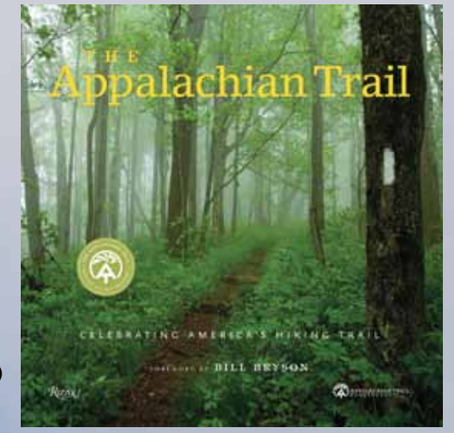

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Visit: **www.atctrailstore.org** anytime, or call toll-free 888-287-8673 Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

WINS, LOSSES, AND DRAWS

APPALACHIAN TRAIL ENTHUSIASTS HAVE celebrated the extraordinary success of the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service and, in many cases, our state agency partners in the remarkable achievement of protecting the footpath by bringing both the treadway and, often, significant adjacent corridor lands into public ownership. Unfortunately, our work is not done, and a protected Trail requires constant vigilance. While it's true that the treadway itself is almost completely protected, important features such as viewsheds, wildlife corridors, critical habitat, and soundscapes remain at risk.

This is especially true in the more urban populated states where the A.T. corridor is both narrow and vulnerable. The Trail community constantly faces a deluge of external threats, typically as a result of our culture's seemingly insatiable appetite for energy consumption and constant communication. Benton MacKaye envisioned the Trail as "a place where people could seek refuge from worklife in an industrialized metropolis" in the early 1920s. Just imagine what he might think of today's pace.

TEXT BY KAREN LUTZ
ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE EBERTS

Three longtime, recent, and current examples demonstrate the need for an engaged local citizenry to educate regional, state, and federal elected officials about the values of the Trail that we love and its iconic status — highlighting the extraordinary effort and expense required to defend the Trail. The Trail community simply cannot depend on public agencies to protect the A.T. without our public engagement and advocacy.

Supporters of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) rejoiced when the new owners of Alpine Motorsports agreed to sell the 354-acre property, ending a prolonged and expensive 12-year battle to prevent the construction of a "country club for sports car enthusiasts" adjacent to the Trail. Alpine Rose was intended to be a 3.4-mile race course that would have severely impacted the serene experience afforded by the A.T. in Eldred Township, Pennsylvania. Concerned local citizens contacted the ATC in 2001 to apprise them of the proposal to build the racetrack complex, including time-share villas, a hotel, condominiums, auto specialty shops, garages, restaurants, and a concourse, and to appeal for the ATC's support to defeat the proposal, which, in addition to the impact to the A.T. experience, would have degraded the migratory flyway of the Kittatinny Ridge, and the high quality cold-water fishery of the Aquashicola Creek. The ATC's (then) Board of Managers deliberated on the matter and voted to engage in the legal battle which ensued.

The services of Charles Elliott, Esq. of the Easton, Pennsylvania firm Elliott and Elliott were retained in 2002, and Elliott began the process of deposing witnesses (including ATC staff and club volunteers) and filing legal briefs and petitions to halt the proposed racetrack. ATC staff attended dozens of meetings with the local Appalachian Mountain Club – Delaware Valley Chapter and the newly-formed Blue Mountain Preservation Association. The ATC's legal arguments were based on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's 1978 Appalachian Trail Act.

Meanwhile, the ATC continued to pursue scientifically-based evidence to empirically define the potential impact. Throughout the effort, the ATC contended that noise from the high-end sports cars would be the major concern. The proponent's consultant used a traffic noise model to project the anticipated noise that would emanate from the course. Opponents found those projections questionable, and the ATC retained two separate acoustic specialists, including the world class experts, Massachusetts-based Harris, Miller, Miller, and Hansen (HMMH) who wrote the algorithms and developed the software used in the model. HMMH had significant experience conducting acoustic studies in other National Park Service units including Yellowstone and Grand Canyon and, perhaps just as importantly, experience providing court testimony. HMMH measured the existing ambient noise on the footpath (e.g., natural sounds such as wind, songbirds, insects, etc.) and determined those natural sounds to be in the neighborhood of 30 decibels, and that the track would generate noise of approximately 68 decibels within the corridor, which experts predicted, could be heard from as far away as 13 miles.

Much to the ATC and our partner's disappointment, judges in both the Court of Common Pleas and the Appellate court ruled against us, basing their decision on the ability of EMS responders to access the property and apparently dismissing the 1978 Pennsylvania Appalachian Trail Act. That decision brought to the ATC's attention the actuality that despite the fact that the act required land-use planners to "preserve the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic value and to conserve and maintain [the A.T.] as a public resource" the act was flawed. What followed was an intensive effort to strengthen the 1978 act by amending it to include language that requires each of the 58 municipalities through which the Trail passes in Pennsylvania to take action to protect Trail values. That new language, signed into law in 2008, states, "Such action shall include the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of zoning ordinances as the governing body deems necessary to preserve those values." It is widely believed that the reason the Alpine Rose proponents chose Eldred Township was the very fact that they were one of the few municipalities that had no zoning. Based, at least in part, on this case, they have since zoned their township.

PERSISTENT PARTNERSHIPS

In the meantime, the Blue Mountain Preservation Association and the ATC continued to engage in the public process, attending and testifying at various permitting hearings, which persisted for over a decade. All the while, other significant partners, notably the Wildlands Conservancy, quietly began a dialog with the new owners of the property, which (again in part due to the expense of the prolonged process) had changed hands from the original proponent. The downturn in the economy also likely contributed to a reduction in sales of expensive sports cars and the demand for this type of facility. The relentless pressure from the ATC and our partners eventually turned the tables, but not without more drama.

Just a day hike down the ridge brings an A.T. hiker to the Palmerton superfund site. Visitors to this part of the Trail may know that the denuded ridge was devastated by a zinc smelting operation that operated from 1898 to 1980. Efforts to restore the area to its original eastern hardwood forest and grasslands condition are well underway and represent a remarkable environmental restoration feat. In addition to that restoration initiative, a portion of the mitigation funds, controlled by the Palmerton Superfund Trustees, was slated to be used to restore A.T. values, including wildlife habitat and recreational experience. The ATC and the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office urged the Trustees to use a portion of the funds to acquire the Alpine Rose property. After prolonged discussions, field visits, and considerable cajoling, the trustee who opposed the acquisition relented, ending the 12-year battle, and the Wildlands Conservancy closed the deal — the title to the property ultimately rested with our partners at the Pennsylvania Game Commission. A great deal of credit goes to the ATC's committed members and the local citizens active with the Blue Mountain Preservation Association for their victory in this long, hard-fought battle.

Another example of the need for A.T. advocates to remain vigilant and engaged with local officials was a recent controversy over Berks County, Pennsylvania's proposal to upgrade their emergency communication system. The ATC strongly supports local EMS responders and advocates quality communication systems for their use. However, they believe that this project could have been designed differently. The Federal Communication Commission mandated the upgrade, and Berks proposed three towers very near the A.T. Two of those towers will have significant impacts to the Trail experience near the Pinnacle, the premier vista in Pennsylvania.

One of the towers was proposed for a tract of land that was gifted to the Borough of Hamburg with a clearly-worded restriction on the deed stating that no structures other than a standard A.T. shelter could be built on the parcel. The restriction further stated that if the borough was unwilling or unable to uphold the restriction that title to the tract would go to a charitable organization or public agency. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club, and the Keystone Trails Association are all named in the deed.

BENTON MACKAYE ENVISIONED THE TRAIL AS "A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE COULD SEEK REFUGE FROM WORKLIFE IN AN INDUSTRIALIZED METROPOLIS."

Again, after careful consideration, the ATC reluctantly filed a lawsuit to force the county into the proper court to seek relief from the deed restriction. The ATC's intent was to ensure that the provisions of the restricted deed would be upheld. The county was represented by a high-powered national law firm whose strategy was clearly set to spend the ATC out of the courtroom. A barrage of seemingly frivolous motions were filed, and all communications about Berks County, including hundreds of e-mail exchanges, were subpoenaed, and the ATC's regional director was deposed for more than eight hours. The cost to have the ATC's local

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS, ATTEND SOME PUBLIC MEETINGS, AND RAISE AWARENESS THAT THE APPALACHIAN NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL IS A VALUED, PRECIOUS, AND IRREPLACEABLE NATIONAL TREASURE.

counsel represent itself through the process proved to be unaffordable and the ATC's board and senior staff chose to withdraw the suit. Despite being named in the deed, the Berks County judge ruled that the ATC did not have legal standing in the case. The fact that the judge's office is in the same building as the county commissioners (proponents of the tower) is of interest, as is the fact that they control his budget.

Both the ATC and volunteers with the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club attended dozens of township and county meetings but, in the end, were unable to prevail in convincing elected officials about the value of the A.T. in their county and the towers are slated for construction. Although this was an expensive and somewhat bitter disappointment, all was not lost. In order to mitigate the impacts to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) the county will be acquiring an easement over the gifted parcel in the name of the National Park Service, and a privately-owned, high-priority, resource-rich parcel near Hawk Mountain Sanctuary will be purchased, again with an easement to NPS. The visual impact of the towers remains, and the impact to migrating raptors and songbirds on the renowned Kittatinny Ridge (an Audubon Important Bird Area) have yet to be determined.

One of the biggest, recent threats to the A.T. is a proposed double 500-kV powerline that the ATC and our partners contend will irreparably impair the Trail, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and the Middle Delaware National Scenic River. Again, after considerable deliberation, ATC joined forces with our partners the New York — New Jersey Trail Conference, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and numerous other conservation organizations in a lawsuit filed by Earth Justice. The suit contended that the National Park Service failed to adequately conduct an environmental assessment to assess damage to the three national park units. Earth Justice recently filed a preliminary injunction that would have (at least temporarily) halted construction until the case was heard in Washington, D.C. district court. That injunction was denied, clearing the way for the construction of the massive powerline.

Again, while A.T. supporters lament the loss of Trail experience, all is not lost. The two utility companies (PPL and PSE&G) will compensate each of the park units, and that considerable financial compensation will be used to replace the lost Trail values elsewhere, allowing very significant land acquisition and other priority projects to be accomplished.

These examples highlight the extraordinary work that the ATC, with the support of our members, increasingly faces day in and day out. Whether it's a mine in North Carolina, a wind farm in the remote peaks of Maine, or the examples highlighted in this article, there is no reason to expect these threats to subside. What we can do is to strongly encourage everyone who appreciates the Trail to consider going beyond volunteering to maintain the footpath. Contact your elected officials, attend some public meetings, and raise awareness that the Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a valued, precious, and irreplaceable national treasure. Talk to your friends, neighbors, and community leaders. Let your voice be heard. Don't give up. Your contributions to the ATC ensure that they won't give up. The A.T. deserves nothing less.

Protect the Trail
The 2,180-Mile Challenge

Now, more than ever, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy relies on our members for financial support. Our unique position as a private, non-profit organization allows us to continuously stay focused on our mission to preserve and protect the Appalachian Trail.

After reviewing our financial results, we have set a goal to raise $773,000 by the end of December to meet our current budget commitments, fill funding gaps, and move forward with important initiatives to protect the A.T. and expand the use of the Trail by new audiences.

Please support the Appalachian Trail with a donation as we approach the end of 2013.

Say, "**Yes!** I Want to Protect the Trail"
and Make a Donation at: **www.atc.vip.otg**

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ATC RECOGNIZED AS **EXEMPLARY** *Non-profit Organization*

The Week recognized the ATC for its unique cooperative management system, as well as its extensive network with volunteers, Trail clubs, and ridgerunners.

THIS PAST SUMMER, THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) was named "charity of the week" by *The Week* magazine. Each charity featured in *The Week* has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, which rates non-profits on the strength of their finances, control of development and administrative finances, and transparency of their operations. Four stars is the highest rating that Charity Navigator provides. *The Week* is a news magazine that provides various perspectives concerning the week's domestic and international headlines. The magazine aggregates news from a variety of editorial sources and global media to supply multiple political viewpoints.

The Week recognized the ATC for its unique cooperative management system, as well as its extensive network with volunteers, Trail clubs, and ridgerunners. The A.T. is managed under a unique partnership between the public and private sectors that includes the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and an array of state agencies, all of which work together to protect and maintain the Trail and the 250,000 acres of greenway the surround it.

The ATC works with 31 local Trail-maintaining clubs to manage more than 6,000 volunteers who contribute roughly 230,000 hours to the A.T. every year. Volunteers conduct Trail maintenance, build and repair shelters and other structures, protect the Trail corridor, monitor and manage rare plants and invasive species, and develop management plans for their Trail sections. The ATC also recruits, trains, and leads volunteer Trail crews to work on large-scale projects, such as relocations, treadway rehabilitation, and bridge and shelter construction.

Each year more than 30 ATC-supported ridgerunners and caretakers are hired by the ATC, one of the A.T maintaining clubs, or one of the land-managing agency partners. Those seasonal ridgerunners and caretakers interact with tens of thousands of Trail visitors every year, providing them with information on the Trail and how to minimize their impact on Trail resources. "Being named charity of the week by such an enterprising and well-read magazine is a great honor for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy," said Royce Gibson, director of development at the ATC. "We are immensely appreciative of the recognition our work has received."

The Week also highlighted the ATC's youth programs and stewardship of the Trail. The Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) program is a professional development program for K-12 teachers that provides educators with the tools and training for place-based education and service-learning on the A.T. Launched in 2006, in partnership with the National Park Service, the program offers educators the resources needed to engage their students in their local community and develop an experiential learning curriculum. To date, TTEC has trained more than 250 teachers and impacted the lives of 17,000 students.

ATC 11th Annual Holiday OPEN HOUSE

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL Conservancy (ATC). Enjoy homemade cookies and hot cider and shop for the hikers on your list. The event will also offer the opportunity to meet ATC staff, volunteers, and fellow hikers. Executive director Ron Tipton and his wife Rita Molyneaux will serve as hosts from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., and ATC publisher Brian King will sign his award-winning book, *The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail* from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. For a donation, you can have your purchases gift-wrapped with A.T.-themed paper.

Saturday, December 7, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
ATC Visitor Center, 799 Washington Street, Harpers Ferry, WV

For more information visit: a**ppalachiantrail.org/events** or to order *The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail* visit the Ultimate A.T. Store at: **atctrailstore.org**.

"RECORD NUMBER" *of Thru-Hikers Reach Harpers Ferry Again*

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY VISITORS CENTER IN Harpers Ferry, West Virginia photographed a record 1,130 northbound thru-hikers this year — surpassing last year's 1,012. Based on analysis of the register at Amicalola Falls State Park (signed by slightly less than half of northbound thru-hikers), an estimated 2,700 prospective thru-hikers started at Springer Mountain, Georgia this year. That number is higher than any year except the millennium year of 2000, when an estimated 2,900 started.

Section-hikers and thru-hikers who complete the A.T. can report their journey to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy by filling out the Appalachian Trail 2,000-Miler Application.

Call for ***2,000-Miler*** *Applications*

Section-hikers and thru-hikers who complete the A.T. are encouraged to report their journey to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) by filling out an Appalachian Trail 2,000-Miler Application. Hikers who report their hike of the entire Trail will be added to the ATC's roster of 2,000-milers, have their names posted in the 2,000-Miler List in the March/April issue of *A.T. Journeys*, and will receive a certificate of recognition and a 2,000-miler rocker and A.T. patch.

To fill out an application visit:
appalachiantrail.org/ATcompletion

Left: 2013 – NOBO # 687 – Amiththan "Swami Bittergoat" Sebarajah. Above: 2013 – NOBO # 937 & 938 – Ian "Kiwi" Song and Cathy "Bear" Gong

WARRIORS

WALKING OFF THE WAR

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CINDY ROSS

Kevin Reed
United States
Marine Corps
Infantry Mortarman

Tommy Gathman
United States
Marine Corps
Infantry Rifleman

Sharon Smith
United States
Air Force
Medic

Steve Clendenning
United States
Marine Corps
Light Armored
Vehicle Crewman

Rob Carmel
United States Army
Field Artillery

Sean Gobin
United States
Marine Corps
Armor Officer

Stephanie Cutts
United States Navy
Hull Maintenance
Technician

Veterans with the Warrior Hike program converge with other celebratory A.T. hikers on Katahdin

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE, the veterans talked of the kind of nightmares that jar them awake in the middle of the night; and of how they check and recheck windows and doors when they hear a sound. They talked of exploding bombs and the memory of a suicide bomber who drove his dump truck into the Marine post. They talked about how their best buddies were killed and, how, afterwards, they got put on a dozen different meds. The kind of stuff that makes them forever vigilant; always watching doorways and never sitting with their back to a restaurant entrance. Even years later, after they are home, it continues. They don't ever sleep well, they have a hard time finding peace, and if they get snippets of it, it doesn't last. It is all so exhausting. Until, they find themselves walking the Appalachian Trail.

Last year, United States Marine Corps Captain, Sean Gobin thru-hiked the entire 2,000-plus-mile Appalachian National Scenic Trail after returning home from active duty in Afghanistan. What occurred to him while following the white-painted blazes that lead from Georgia to Maine, was that he was walking the war out of his system — becoming healthier, happier, and healed. This idea of ridding one's psyche of demons by walking in nature is not new. The first A.T. thru-hiker, Earl Shaffer, did just that in 1948 when he walked World War II out of his system. In that vein, Gobin spearheaded the Warrior Hike "Walk Off The War" program, which supports veterans transitioning from their military service by thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. Veterans who are selected to participate in the "Walk Off The War" program receive the equipment and supplies required to complete a thru-hike, Trail town support with veteran and hiking organizations located along the A.T., and assistance with job placement opportunities upon completion of the hike.

In March 2013, thirteen Warrior hikers left Springer Mountain, Georgia, with their eyes set on reaching Katahdin at Baxter State Park, Maine six months later. When they came through Pennsylvania, my husband, Todd Gladfelter, and I hosted them. When a long-distance hiker reaches Pennsylvania on the Appalachian Trail, they are usually at a psychological low point. The Tuscarora Sandstone rocks exposed on the long, spiny Blue Mountain can trip up the fittest of hikers. The elevation map reads like a cruising trail with little or no elevation change, except for an occasional water-gap break. So they expect to motor through the miles. The heat and humidity also soar in July, when most end-to-enders come through our fair state, and the denuded oak trees on the ridges, eaten by gypsy moth larvae, provide little shade from the oppressive sun. The half-way point of the A.T. is in central Pennsylvania. One thousand miles is a nice chunk of Trail to have on your boots, so quitting can become pretty darn attractive. It is a time when support and encouragement are much needed to get over the "Pennsylvania hump" and continue the long push towards Katahdin.

Todd and I knew this problem intimately, as we both completed the entire Appalachian Trail and ran a hostel for years along the route near Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Eckville under the Volunteers in the National Parks Program. We now only

occasionally bring home hikers and host them, but for the Warrior hikers, we opened up our hearts and our home. I enlisted the help of my friends who wanted to meet them and also had a history themselves in the military. We had a big potluck dinner around the campfire and utilized my Rain Stick to pass around and use as a Native American talking stick and share stories. What poured out from the Warriors was unforgettable.

Veteran Steve Clendenning told of a being plagued by a recurring nightmare: he is trapped in an abandoned building in Iraq, pinned down — and always dies. Steve's vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) during his service in the United States Marine Corps. He spent a week in the hospital with a traumatic brain injury and substantial hearing loss. Every year since the attack has been a challenge as he struggled with thoughts of suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder. But the dream has finally stopped, he reported as he sat by the fire at our backyard get-together. So have his companions' nightmares, as they sleep cradled in Mother Nature's soothing woods.

Since 2001, more than 2.5 million veterans have returned home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but many of them have never transitioned from their experiences. This is evident by the recent report from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which stated that more than 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. And even more startling, every day, 22 veterans commit suicide.

That the Warriors are finally able to sleep is monumental in their healing process. This achievement was worth every minute of work needed for Sean to orchestrate the Warrior Hike and every blister, arduous climb, rainstorm, and sore muscle that the Warriors have experienced. When speaking with Sean, he shared with me that the Warrior hikers had some of the typical long-distance hiking challenges — the sore knees, deep snow in the southern mountains, intense heat waves, and long, wet, rainy stretches to deal with.

For retired Sargent Major Rob Carmel, one of the hardest things for him on this hike was not being in charge, but taking a back seat, watching his comrades engage in perhaps questionable behavior and not stepping in, just letting them go to find their own way, "hike their own hike." This group of diverse ages and backgrounds had been brought together and stayed together, for the most part, throughout the entire 2,000-plus miles. This is not always the norm for thru-hikers. Because the Trail exposes all your character flaws and highlights, all your true colors come through. It enabled them to watch each other go through the rough lows and spectacular high points. They watched the transformation of their hiking comrades occur before their eyes.

Stephanie Cutts, the Navy mechanic, who lugged herself up Springer Mountain and is now 60 pounds lighter from the entire hike, explains, "the Trail has changed me back to who I used to be." Another Warrior reports that he did not realize that he had issues (anger and such) until he began the A.T. It has been a

Clockwise from right: Following their climb, the Warriors lead the parade at the Trails' End Festival in Millinocket, Maine; Sharon Smith nears the end of her thru-hike; Steve Clendenning (left) and Adam Bautz, U.S. Marine Corps — who had to leave the Trail in Pennsylvania due to family matters — discuss some of the traumas of being a war vet during a relaxing stay at the author's home in Pennsylvania; Rob, Steve, Stephanie, and Adam on the Trail in Pennsylvania.

Clockwise from above: Sean Gobin and Rob Carmel en route to Katahdin; The Warriors attended events coordinated with the VFWs and American Legions in Trail towns along the way; Steve and Adam enjoy some refreshing recreation near the author's house in Pennsylvania.

journey of self-discovery for him, one of personal awareness and insight. This is the first step to healing — understanding and admitting that you have issues that need to be dealt with. That is one of the gifts of spending a long time on the Trail — you might not solve all your personal problems but you do come to learn who you are and attain a level of acceptance.

It has been a struggle for Sean to see his vision of the Warrior Hike through. The road blocks in getting the program off the ground were many. He began by building a website, then sent out applications seeking combat vets, set up sponsors, organized gear, arranged for the vets' transports, all while he was at the University of Virginia working on his MBA. Sean said Warrior Hike has multiple purposes. A big one was to set up events coordinated with the VFWs and American Legions along the Trail towns. This helped create visibility and educated the general public on the Appalachian Trail and the Warrior Hikers themselves. This exposure resulted in broadening local community support for the Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and reaching people who may have known little to nothing about the A.T. and what it is like to actually hike it. It informed folks of the therapeutic outcome of an extended hike on the Appalachian Trail, for combat vets and for the everyday lay person. The ATC is proud to be an integral partner to this program. "The ATC helped promote the Walk Off The War hike, and we love the fact that the A.T. experience was so meaningful to all of the Warriors who participated," says the ATC's executive director Ron Tipton. "This is a great example of the value of the Trail to our country."

People came from everywhere to offer their support. In Vermont, help from "Trail angels" was off the charts. Sean said they could count on one hand, how many times the Warrior hikers were offered full-hearted hospitality, so generous and giving were the Vermonters. Often, checks were presented to the organization to ensure that future vets in the upcoming years will be able to participate in this very worthwhile program.

Another wonderful outcome was all the beautiful camaraderie and connection the Warrior hikers made with the older vets who they met at various events. They were in their shoes 40 years ago and there was positive talk of "a light being at the end of the tunnel." Sean wanted the Warrior hikers to socialize, forcing them to communicate and interact at the events, helping them to learn how to be with regular people again. The rule was — you didn't have to hike as a group, but you needed to attend the events as a group. This schedule forced them to stick together and, as a result, come to care about each other.

Sean sent group e-mails to all the Warrior hikers and personally talked to many of them on a daily basis. Throughout the entire Georgia-to-Maine journey, he was there for them. He was able to remain removed and offer guidance. In the Marine Corps, Sean served as a Company Commander. His job was to make sure that his people completed their mission. But this isn't the military and the Warrior hikers were here to heal, so treading lightly and leading with a bright, illuminating light was necessary.

Today, all the Warriors have seen remarkable improvement in the wilderness of their minds. Two of the Warrior hikers, who

From top: Sean and Rob carry the Warrior Hike banner to the peak of Katahdin; Emotional Warriors take a moment to enjoy their amazing accomplishment.

took a break from the Trail half way through, reported that they were surprised when the bad dreams and their anger, triggered anew by rude behavior, returned. They realized they needed more time in the maternal cocoon of nature, more miles walking to sort things out. Hopefully, the second 1,000 miles did just that.

The Warriors reached Katahdin this past September. Four out of the thirteen who began reached the summit having remained on the Trail for the entire six months. They are: Rob Carmel, U.S. Army, Stephanie Cutts, U.S. Navy, Thomas Gathman, U.S. Marine Corps, and Sharon Smith, U.S. Air Force. Two others, U.S. Marine Corps veterans Steve Clendenning and Kevin Reed rejoined the Warrior hikers for the final climb of Katahdin, as well as the 100-mile wilderness, after briefly leaving the Trail to contend with injuries and family issues. Following their climb, the group attended the Trails' End Festival and a barbeque hosted in their honor at Millinocket, Maine's American Legion Post 80. The 2,000-miler Warriors are thinking about what to do to create more peace when they return home to further nurture their connection with the natural world, be it relocating to a wilder environment, finding a job outdoors, or some other action. Sean has also connected Warrior Hike with Orion International — a successful military job career placement organization, which will help the Warrior hikers find and succeed at their next step.

This first year for the program has been a testing ground. Sean shares that next year's program will be even better after a poll is taken and feedback gathered. Ron Tipton believes the ATC will continue to support the program in the coming year and it will also, hopefully, be endorsed by the federal government. The Pacific Crest Trail Association is on board to sponsor an end-to-end hike on that 2,600-mile national scenic trail and three of this year's A.T. Warrior hikers hope to be on that team. The Continental Divide Trail Coalition is also hoping to sponsor Warrior Hike.

Tom Gathman, who lost friends during his deployment in Iraq, said, "As we hiked from Georgia to Maine, we came to terms with some of the things that we have seen, experienced, or may have had to do. And we got plenty of time to think about those things." Steve Clendenning feels the same way, "With everything I was dealing with, PTS, I thought hiking the Trail would help me. It is so peaceful and calming in nature. Out here, I sleep like a newborn baby. I might hurt all day long from hiking up a mountain, but when I get to a lookout and can see forever and reflect on what God has created, and the people in my life that I have lost, and I have lost more than thirty friends...I really needed this hike. I'm going to live my life for those that couldn't."

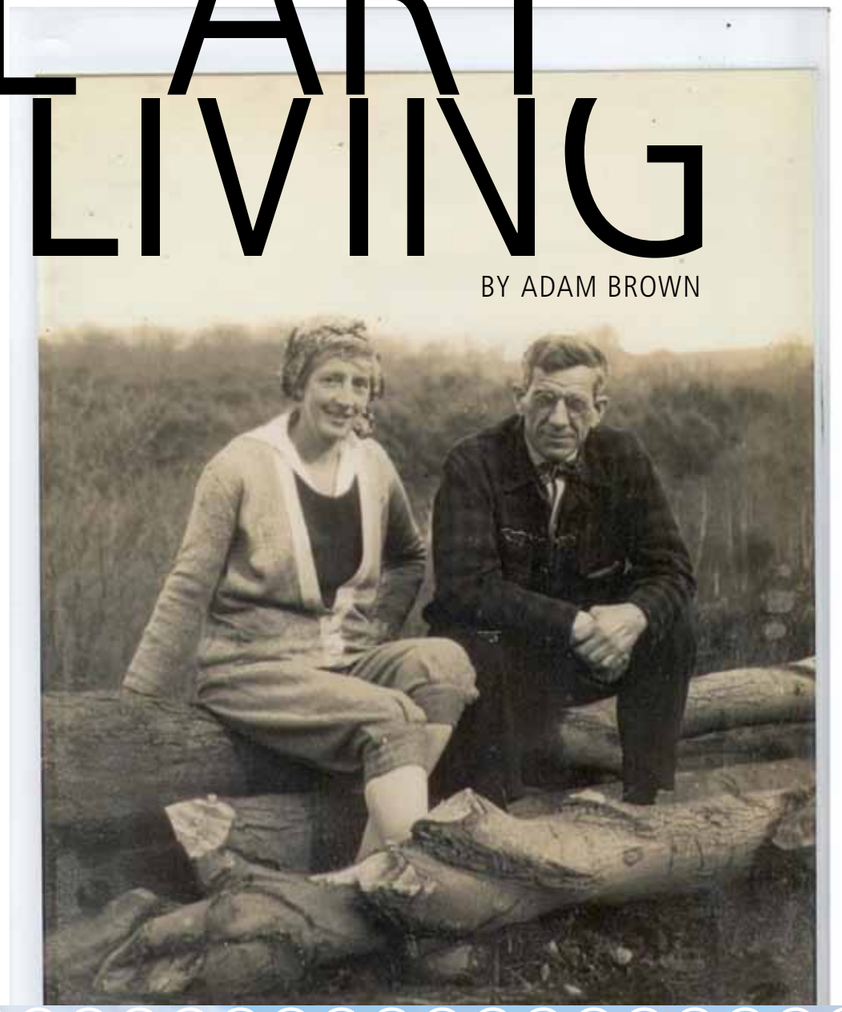
There is more hiking and more healing ahead for these combat vets and, hopefully, for many others like them. The fact that the Warrior hikers now know where to go when they need to find peace is monumental. Saint Augustine's Latin quote, "*Solivtur Ambulando*" — it is solved by walking — could not be more true.

For more information about the Warrior Hike program visit: **warriorhike.com**

THE ART OF LIVING

The nation's first therapeutic community of its kind celebrates its 100th anniversary

BY ADAM BROWN



From top: MacKaye with his sister, Hazel, at Gould Farm – photo courtesy Gould Farm; Guests take part in the agricultural operations on the farm – photo by Adam Brown

ALTHOUGH OFTEN VIEWED AS SOMEWHAT of a cliché, the human tendency to ask ourselves "what is the meaning of life?" is a persistent one. It is a heady question to be sure, and quite a few philosophers, ministers, comics (and likely a lot of A.T. hikers as well) have taken a stab at it at some point on varying levels. A few of my favorite attempts from the realm of pop culture fall into the category of comedy: according to the closing lines of Monty Python's sketch comedy movie, *The Meaning of Life*, the answer to the seminal question is given somewhat apathetically as "try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations." Another approach is proffered by Douglas Adams in his cult-classic book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in which a super-computer, called Deep Thought, takes 7.5 million years to calculate an answer to the question and finally coughs up the number 42. Admittedly, these comic attempts to distill such a profoundly mind-boggling question down to a digestible tidbit serve to lighten our outlook and help us deal with the burden of the human condition.

Benton MacKaye — Appalachian Trail visionary, forester, philosopher, and regional planner — also took his turn on "the question," albeit from a slightly different and more serious angle. His attempt to define what is meant by "living" is a pervasive thread running through his book *The New Exploration: A Philosophy of Regional Planning* and the basis for many of the points he brings forth. In one paragraph, he writes: "The word 'live' is a very little word, but its thorough comprehension is something which never perhaps will be attained by our present limited human minds. And no comprehension of it can, perhaps, be attained except through an understanding of the very deep and yet simple psychologic relation which exists between such notions as ... between work and play."

In *The New Exploration*, MacKaye also briefly endeavors to define "art" and arrives at the idea that art is effort inspired by our human tendency to be invested in the outcome of something. In a letter to a Mrs. Hoyt of New York City in 1932, MacKaye addressed what he calls "the art of living." His conclusion was that living, when done correctly, is an art made up of work and play, industry and culture. The subject of that letter was his impression of Gould Farm, which is

a centerpiece of the quaint, vibrant town of Monterey (population 961) located about nine miles east of Great Barrington and just south and east of the A.T. as it passes through nearby Beartown State Forest amidst the bucolic Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts.

Gould Farm — the first residential therapeutic community in the nation dedicated to helping adults with mental illness move toward recovery, health, and greater independence through community living, meaningful work, and individual clinical care — shares a very close connection with the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye's sister, Hazel, went to the farm in November of 1927 suffering from a nervous breakdown and stayed there as a guest into the 1940s. During her time there, MacKaye became a regular presence, making close friends at the farm through extended and repeated visits and getting to know one of the founders, Agnes Gould. (Agnes's brother, Will, had co-founded the farm but passed away before Benton and his sister became fixtures there. That Will was no longer around meant Agnes Gould could consult MacKaye for his opinions on the forest and knew that they reflected Will's philosophy.) MacKaye became involved in the management of their forest parcels, offering expertise he had gained as the first graduate of Harvard's newly-formed School of Forestry and as associate to Gifford Pinchot, founder of the U.S. Forest Service. His 1921 proposal, outlining the concept of an Appalachian Trail, addressed the problems inherent with modern living, covered recreation and leisure, nature, natural resources, as well as possibility for physical and mental healing through immersion in the outdoors and the Appalachian environment.

Clockwise from above: Bob Rausch (left) and Jon Greene, longtime friends and A.T. volunteers, preparing to do some Trail maintenance – photo by Sherene Smith; Maple sugar season is a rite of spring at the farm – photo courtesy Gould Farm; The farm is one of only 21 certified Model Forests by the Forest Guild in the U.S.; Local Monterey resident and visitor to the farm, Hannah Fries, enjoys one of the many trails built and maintained by the farm; The farm's Harvest Barn – photos by Adam Brown

We have an intact model forest that is part of our process of healing, which allows people to get out of their heads and into the woods and into the soil with their hands and feet.

The 670-acre farm, celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2013, comprises about 500 acres of northern hardwood, red oak, and white pine woodlands that have been designated a Model Forest by the Forest Guild — one of only 21 across the entire country to achieve that status — and is also a certified Tree Farm. These designations are due in large part to the efforts of Bob Rausch, forest manager at the farm for 34 years, who has long been an advocate for responsible forest stewardship and was instrumental in helping to create a forest management plan to guide current and future land stewardship decisions on the property. Bob has also been a dedicated A.T. maintainer for the past 23 years. "I frequently take Gould Farm guests out on my section of the A.T. (Beartown Mountain Road to Fernside Road)," Bob notes, "to do basic maintenance — work heals!" Guests often begin their stay at Gould Farm by joining in the work of the Forest and Grounds team, led by Bob, that maintains the farm's network of woodland trails, grounds, and indoor common living areas. This allows guests to become acquainted with one another, settle in to working in a team environment, and get to know their surroundings.

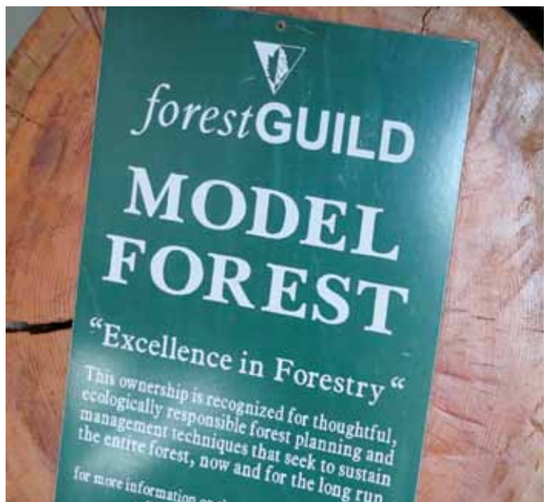
The healthy and diverse forestland at the farm is utilized in a variety of ways per the management plan: for saleable timber, maple syrup production, recreation trails, and for supplemental fuelwood to heat the 35 buildings on the campus. All of these provide a very practical economic benefit to the farm but the over-arching land management goal is for the property to be a healing environment for its guests. Indeed the 100 or so members of the Gould Farm community (about 40 guests and 60 staff and family members) find regular solace through a variety of ways in this forest. Acting executive director Donna Burkhart succinctly sums this up by observing that, "in our world today there is a loss of connection to humanity, particularly for those struggling with mental illness. There is a psychological influence on people when they enter the woods at Gould Farm — we have an intact model forest that is part of our process of healing, which allows people to get out of their heads and into the woods and into the soil with their hands and feet."

The psychological, physical, and spiritual benefits of time spent outside in nature while engaging our bodies and minds in either exertion or contemplation is not a particularly new concept. It gained in popularity through the latter half of the 19th and into the early 20th century as the U.S. population began to divest itself of a rural lifestyle and move into cities. MacKaye witnessed that divestment and came to believe that the possibilities for health and recuperation from the city lifestyle by spending time outdoors along the Appalachian mountain chain were multitude. He wrote, in 1921, that "oxygen in the mountain air … is a natural resource (and a national resource) that radiates to the heavens its enormous health-giving powers … Here is a resource that could save thousands of lives." The same is still true; even as I sit here and write these words, veterans in the process of transitioning from their military service back to civilian life by thru-hiking the A.T. as participants in Warrior Hike "Walk Off The War" program are on the last steps of their journey and summiting Katahdin today. This effort to ease veterans back into daily civilian life stems from the same sentiment as MacKaye's philosophy that many sufferers of mental illness could be cured not simply by "treatment" but by immersion in the natural world. The way he put it was that, "they need acres not medicine. Thousands of acres of this mountain land should be devoted to them with whole communities planned and equipped for their cure."

In his 1921 vision statement for the A.T., MacKaye laid out four primary features: the Trail, shelter camps, community groups, and food and farm camps. The A.T. as we know it today does not necessarily retain all of MacKaye's original vision voiced in that document but the first two elements are basically intact. The third and fourth have not become a pervasive part of the A.T. culture but are where Gould Farm fits into MacKaye's vision, and probably why it so captured his attention. With regard to community groups, he noted: "These communities would be used for various kinds of non-industrial activity. They might eventually be organized for special purposes — for recreation, for recuperation and for study … it should stimulate every line of outdoor non-industrial endeavor." And about food and farm camps: "Their development could provide tangible opportunity for working out by actual experiment a fundamental matter in the problem of living. It would provide one definite avenue of experiment in getting 'back to the land.'"

Gould Farm is in many ways the manifestation of the community group that MacKaye dreamt of along the A.T. and hence the reason he came to view the farm as "a school in the art of living." The concept of community is a central part of the healing process and culture at Gould Farm that includes regular socialization and the chance to be creative, learn new things, and broaden one's horizons. All guests who come to the farm spend 30 hours per week working on various "teams": forestry and grounds, farm, garden, harvest barn (a bakery), kitchen, maintenance, or the Roadside Store and Café. Hungry A.T. hikers should take note of the Roadside Store and Café, which is open to the public and located a few miles east of the Trail crossing of Route 23 — the sizeable homemade pancakes topped with the farm's own maple syrup are hard to beat.

Yet another answer to "the question" is provided by a popular bit of pithy bumper sticker wisdom: "the meaning of life is to live it." Whether or not one views the human tendency to continually question the meaning of life as the consummate cliché or not, the fact remains that if a life is lived with a focus on feeding and improving the physical, emotional, and spiritual corners of humanity, then that living becomes art. MacKaye realized this early on and found that Gould Farm shared his outlook as he witnessed guests (including his sister) receive a way to reconnect with humanity, nature, and the daily cycles crucial to regaining control over their lives and begin to follow Henry David Thoreau's advice to "reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aid, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn."



Adam Brown is the ATC's conservation stewardship manager
For more information about Gould Farm visit: **www.gouldfarm.org**

Scenic Serenity

Susan Stanton has spent years traveling and photographing the beauty and rustic charm of the southern Appalachians. Her life took a turn toward professional photography during her career in the pharmaceutical industry. "Tired and stressed from work, my husband and I took a spontaneous vacation and found ourselves standing at the base of a North Carolina waterfall with camera in hand," she explains. "Although the scenery was incredible, the achiever in me had us running from waterfall to waterfall, trying to photograph as many as possible. Days later, in a moment of clarity, everything changed. While sitting at the base of some unknown fall deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains, my mind and body let go ... and I simply breathed."

"I saw the world for the first time — really saw it," she continues. "It took time away in nature to open my eyes and rejuvenate my spirit. Today, my photographs are a reflection of freedom. Through my photography I hope to communicate a sense of peace and understanding and to enable the viewer to take a moment and simply exhale."

susanstanton.com

"Fog Swept" – Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina

"Dusting of Winter" – Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina

"Winterscape" – Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina

The Long Way Home

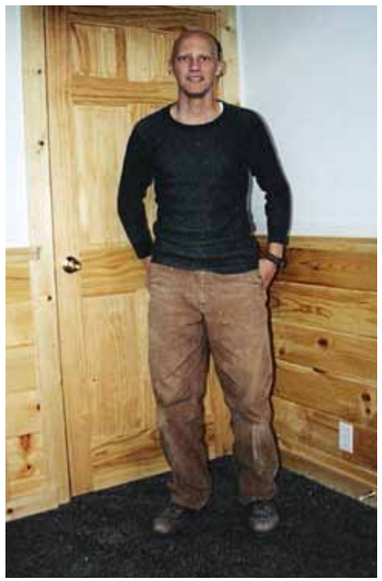
BY MARK BOOTH

IN THE SUMMER OF 1999 OUR FAMILY MOVED to a small town near the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee to work at a children's home. My son, Jonathan, and I had always loved the outdoors and this move gave opportunity for our newly-birthed backpacking habit to mature into a burning passion. It wasn't long before Jonathan began to talk about hiking the A.T. before he started college. He soon asked if I could join him on this adventure. With the full support of family and friends we set out on our journey on March 5, 2002. It was a magical time for father and son to enjoy the beauty of the southern Appalachians and experience the adventure of a lifetime.

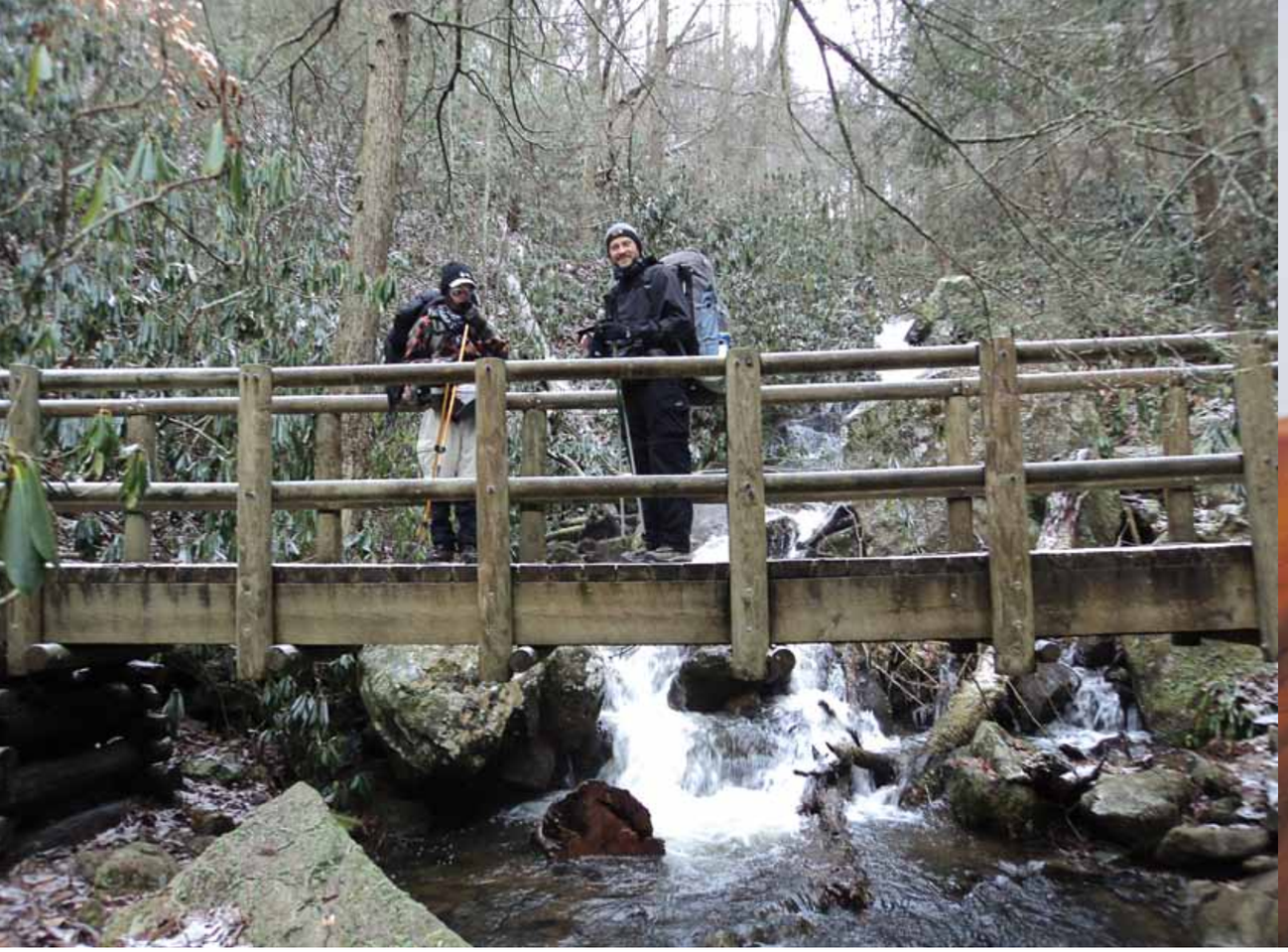
The newness eventually wore off and the grind of pounding out the miles set in. As we entered our third state (Virginia) I came down with Giardiasis from drinking some bad water. After spending two days in a shelter we hiked back to Damascus to get medical attention. The treatment for Giardia, though effective, removes both bad and good bacteria from your system. This can make it difficult to process and receive nutrients from meals. After two additional weeks of hiking I was down to 148 pounds and neither of us were having fun. It was an agonizing decision but I had to tell my son that I needed to go home to get better. I wanted him to go on. I wanted him to finish the Trail. This had been his idea and dream. We cried together and took one last photo before parting. Jonathan headed north with 1,600 miles to go and I slowly began the last five miles of my journey to a forest service road that would lead me home. As I reached that road I saw a young man with a long-lost smile on his face who said, "Dad, we started this together and we're going to finish it together." We both walked out of the woods on that gravel road.

I recovered quickly and life soon returned to "normal." Jonathan was working two jobs as he prepared for college. He left work early one Friday to run by the eye doctor so he could get a refill on his contact lens prescription. We received a call that we needed to take him to the hospital to investigate irregular movement and pressure behind his eyes. By that evening we were talking with the chief of neurosurgery and looking at CAT scans of a large tumor on Jon's brain stem. Stage four cancer. Inoperable. A 90 percent chance that this would kill my son. How can this be? He looked so healthy. We just hiked 45 days together on the A.T. We told the doctors to do all that they could do and we would do the only thing we could do. We prayed. And we asked all those we knew to pray. Within a week there were people literally around the world who knew about Jonathan.

He began the long, arduous process of cancer treatment. Surgeries, radiation, chemotherapy, and regular hospital visits. I watched my healthy, strong 18-year-old son become weak and emaciated. His body subjected to this necessary evil that was his



Opposite page from left: Mark and Jon begin their 2002 hike by signing the register at Springer Mountain; Father and son pose before departing the A.T. in Virginia. Clockwise from bottom left: Jon with Betsy in '02; Jon at Springer in 2002; Jon and Mark take in the view at McAfee Knob during their 2005 hike; An emaciated Jon during chemo treatment. Photos by Mark and Betsy Booth



WE WERE NOT THE SAME IDEALISTIC, NAIVE FATHER AND SON. WE WERE PARTNERS NOW, OLD SOULS WITH A RENEWED SPIRIT.

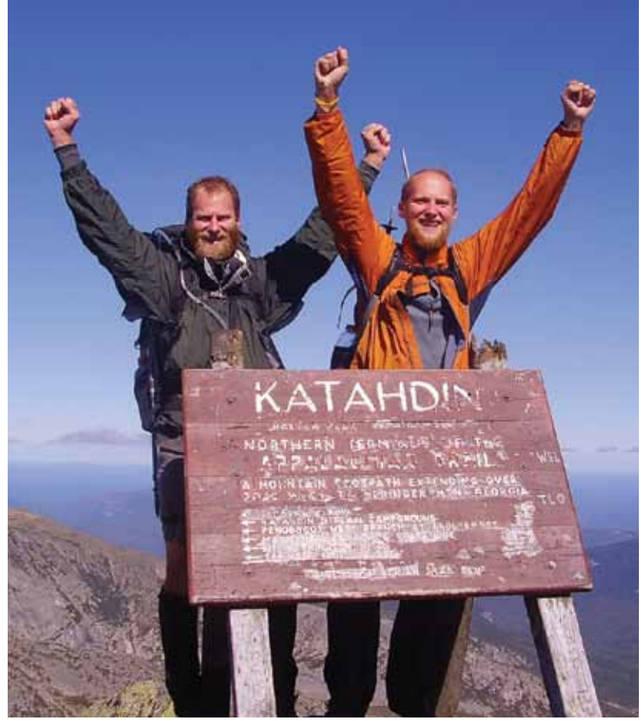
Clockwise from above: Jon and Mark during a winter 2012 hike; Self photo of the duo during their completion in 2005; Father and son take a break during their '05 return to the A.T. – photo by Jessica Dobson

best chance at survival; being fed nightly through the tubes that delivered chemo drugs into his bloodstream. He had a strong will to live. Not just to live, but live fully. After six weeks of radiation treatment he told us that he was not going to sit at home on the couch and die. Even with cancer he wanted to live life to its fullest. He went back to work with me doing construction work. He would work until he could hardly stand and then sit in a chair by the heater until he had the strength to work some more. He would vomit on the floor and I would clean it up with saw dust. I saw other workers with tears in their eyes as they watched him labor.

He and his girlfriend Betsy went on a New Year's road trip to Maine that involved snowboarding and high-speed snowmobiling. To the doctors amazement, the tumor slowly began to shrink. The other areas of cancer disappeared. We had hope. Hope is the one thing that gets you out of bed each morning. By the next spring he continued to improve and completed his course of treatment. He soon asked his girlfriend Betsy to marry him. As we stood in that church I remember thinking that I would be looking at a casket, not a bride and groom. Life slowly returned to "normal." (We now define normal a little differently.) At Thanksgiving a few years later a friend asked us if we ever thought of finishing the Trail. We both responded with a resounding, "yes!" He encouraged us and that small ember soon began to rage with passion for finishing what we started. We began to plan out our return to the Trail.

After finishing a big construction project, we set out on June 6, 2005. We returned to that same spot in southern Virginia at the forest road with a rustic old bridge over a small river. We were not the same idealistic, naive father and son. We were partners now, old souls with a renewed spirit. We were joined for the first 10 days by Jonathan's beautiful bride Betsy. Seeing loved ones on the Trail is always awesome but saying goodbye is difficult. So after a July family reunion in Virginia we decided that it would

IT WAS THE CULMINATION OF THOUSANDS OF MILES ON THE FEET AND MILLIONS OF MILES ON THE SOUL.



A picturesque scene of Grayson Highland ponies taken during a December 2012 father and son hiking trip; The triumphant duo at the completion of their '05 hike; The family joins the celebration – pictured from left: Jessica, Wendy, Mark, Jon, and Betsy.

be best to wait until the end to see everyone again. For 111 days and 1,602.6 miles through searing summer heat and the remnants of three hurricanes (including Katrina) we hiked. On September 24th we were joined by my wife Wendy, Betsy, and surprised by my daughter Jessica who joined us in hiking that final day to the top of Katahdin. It was the culmination of thousands of miles on the feet and millions of miles on the soul. It was a life-defining journey that reached beyond the dirt and rock of the Trail and explored the outer limits of the human spirit.

Jonathan and Betsy ("Aslan and Chocolat") now have five-year-old twins (a boy and girl) and live near Asheville, North Carolina. Mark and Wendy ("McGuyver 02/Godspeed 05" and "Mountain Momma") still live near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and assist hikers each spring as they pass through the area.

TEXT BY LESTER KENWAY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MAINE A.T. CLUB

One Stone Step at a Time

Thru-hikers climb 50 stone stairs in less than one minute as Maine's Katahdin beckons them toward completion. By contrast, it takes a Trail crew roughly 500 hours to plan, route, and install those same stairs. With no trace of how stones were brought to the Trail, it seems as if these stairways appear by magic. But magic doesn't move stones. Then who does?

THE VOLUNTEERS WITH THE MAINE Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) protect and maintain 267 miles of Appalachian Trail in Maine, a section known as the toughest, most scenic, and also the wildest.

Blazing Maine's route began in 1933 and ended on August 14, 1937, an aggressive timetable for such an epic undertaking. As the Trail was taking shape, MATC was formed in 1935 by Lubec native Myron Avery, a visionary credited with bringing the A.T. to Maine. In 2013, a major Trail rehabilitation effort focused on the remote Barren-Chairback Range along the route blazed 80 years ago by MATC's first president, Walter Greene.

A cadre of interns and volunteers known as the Maine Trail Crew, along with MATC members, fan out each season at designated work sites to create an optimal hiking pathway while protecting the surrounding environment and landscape. The Maine Trail Crew — comprising members from the United States and countries around the world — is assigned to rehabilitate and repair the worst sections along the A.T. in their area. "The Maine Trail Crew is a testament to teamwork, dedication to the environment, and personal growth," said Lester Kenway, president of MATC. "Members learn they can do much more than they thought they could."

Maine Trail Crew Leader Irene Hussey observed that people are drawn to this kind of work, either in a crew position or as a volunteer, out of a desire to give back to the Trail and Trail communities that they have benefited from in the past. During the summer of 2013, the Maine Trail Crew (MTC) headed to the southern and northern ends of Barren Mountain to address drainage issues and accelerated soil erosion. In only six weeks at Long Pond Stream, MTC constructed one large retaining wall, one ditch and drain, 108 stone steps, 79 stepping stones, eight waterbars, and two rip-rapped drains.

The worksite serves as the hub and crew members scout the surrounding landscape for material. Stones are plentiful in this area, making the job of finding building material easier. Crew members use rock bars to pry rock out of the ground to be placed as stone stairs. Moving stones to the worksite requires planning, a high level of teamwork, and engineering know-how. The griphoist highline system is a Maine-made solution developed in the late '80s by Lester Kenway and is now used by Trail crews throughout North America.

A highline is installed to move rocks through the air along the mountainside, thus reducing impact to the ground. It takes up to five people to position the stone in the center of the sling. Crews set the far end of the wire at a level that allows gravity to do the work. Once the wire is pulled tight, the traveling block rolls the rock to the worksite. The stone is removed, making way for another. Extracting, moving, and placing a stone step represents roughly 10 hours of labor.

Anna Daggett, Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern, credits clear communication, teamwork, and a solid sense of humor as the keys to her group's success. "The interesting thing about Trail work is that it is nearly impossible to reflect upon my experience solely as an individual. Each rock in a staircase takes at least three people to extract it from the ground, move it, and place it in the staircase," remarked Daggett. "From a Trail work perspective, I learned about stone staircase construction, how to build waterbars, and how to use the griphoist highline system," said Seth Young, SCA intern. "Serving as an intern with MATC in that setting made me mentally tougher and more capable of living and working in a backcountry setting."

While suspending a 600-pound boulder in mid-air might look like magic, it's clearly not. But the Maine Appalachian Trail Club and Maine Trail Crew volunteers are magicians in a sense, making Trail maintenance and Trail enhancements seemingly disappear into the natural setting — a true testament to their Herculean efforts.

From far left: Crew members pry stone from the ground using rock bars; MATC member and SCA intern Anna Daggett attaches a stone to the sling; Anna Daggett and Seth Young suspending rock; MATC/MTC 2013 crew members Seth Young, Anna Daggett, Craig Rightmire, and MTC crew leader Irene Hussey at work in the Maine woods.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club is an all-volunteer, donor supported nonprofit. Support from individuals, foundations, and organizations such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is essential to help the club fulfill its mission of maintaining and managing 267 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Maine. For more information visit: **www.matc.org** and **www.facebook.com/MaineATC**

In 2013, the ATC funded five projects:

Horns Pond Trail
Barren Mountain to Fourth Mountain
Long Pond Stream to Barren Slide
Gulf Hagas Rim Trail
Hunt Trail

During the 2013 Trail work season, Maine Trail Crew members built:

292 stone steps
41 stone water bars
284 step stones
3 drainage ditches

Volunteers make a difference. Thanks to an increase in volunteers, the Maine Trail Crew installed almost double the number of stone steps this season.

To find a Trail crew near you visit: **appalachiantrail.org/crews**

BY NOW MOST OF YOU SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED YOUR YEAR-END update from Ron Tipton along with your personal web page to view our progress toward reaching our fundraising goal this year. Thank you to those who are already making this effort a success. I'm sure, with everyone's generosity, we will exceed the goal and put the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in a great starting place for 2014.

I want to highlight three giving options this season:

If you are age 70 ½ or older and have an IRA where you have to take a "minimum required distribution," you can direct your broker to send up to $100,000 directly to a qualified 501(c)3 charity, like the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. While the amount sent to charity does not count as a charitable deduction, it does reduce your gross income by the amount sent.

Another option is through the gift of appreciated stock to the ATC. The market has increased almost 15 percent since the end of 2012. By giving your appreciated stock instead of cash you avoid the capital gains tax and can take the full value of the stock on the day given as a deduction.

The last option is an often overlooked benefit through your employer (even if you are retired). Many companies match their employee giving, some by as much as four to one. Imagine, your $50 gift could be a $250 gift to the ATC. To find out if your company matches gifts you can look them up on our website at: appalachaintrail.org/matching or call your human resources office for more information.

A.T., near Stover Creek Shelter By Barbara Kraus

However you decide to support the ATC this year, know that your charitable gifts will be used to fulfill our mission of preserving and managing the Appalachian Trail. If you would like more information about the above giving options or for more ways to give, please call me at: 304.535.6331 x122. You can also find information at: appalachiantrail.org/donate.

Thanks in advance for helping the ATC achieve our fundraising goals this year and for all your support throughout the year.

Happy Thanksgiving,
Royce W. Gibson | *Director of Membership & Development*

JULY – AUGUST 2013

SPRINGER SHELTER TRAIL INTERSECTION BY BARBARA KRAUS

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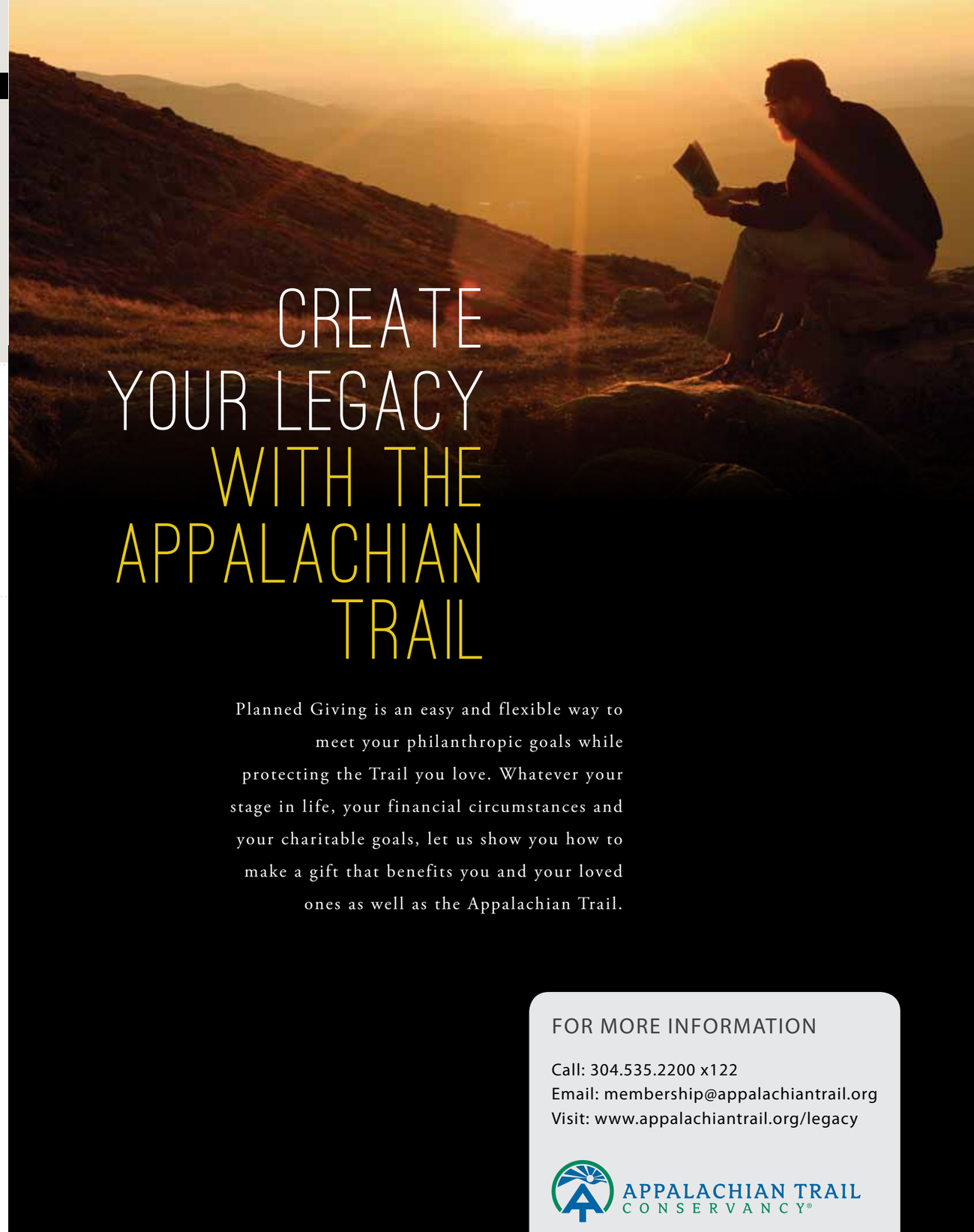
VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS BY EDWARD NEUWIRTH



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APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY®

Hiking Partners

72-year-old from Maryland, **looking for other seniors to slack pack and backpack** A.T. sections from Georgia to Maine in 2014. In 2013, I was able to hike with 10, (mostly seniors) in Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maine. Contact: harveylefty@yahoo.com to begin to plan for 2014.

For Sale

Books: Hiking The Appalachian Trail (2 volume set), Rodale Press, 1975, First Edition, new. $125.00. The Trail of My Life, The Gene Espy Story. New. Hardcover, $30.95; Softcover, $24.95. **All books signed by Gene Espy** and include U.S. shipping. Mail check/money order to: Gene Espy, 1383 Briarcliff Rd., Macon, GA 31211 or visit: www.geneespyhiker.com. Women's **Vasque Breeze GTX XCR Hiking Boots** size 6.5 Medium. Excellent condition, worn only once for a three-mile Trail hike. Asking: $75.00. Contact: sfielder2@comcast.net.

For Your Information

Hunting Season Safety on the Trail. Hunting regulations vary widely along the Appalachian Trail. Although the A.T. is a unit of the National Park system, it traverses many different types of public lands. Hunting is permitted along approximately 1,250 miles of the A.T. Both hikers and hunters are advised to "know before you go."Research local hunting seasons; wear fluorescent orange (hat or clothing). During hunting seasons, you may want to hike in these national parks where hunting is prohibited: C&O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland; Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia; Shenandoah National Park, Virginia; Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina/Tennessee. For more information and to see the ATC's "2013-2014 Hunting Season Guide by State" visit: appalachiantrail.org/hunting.

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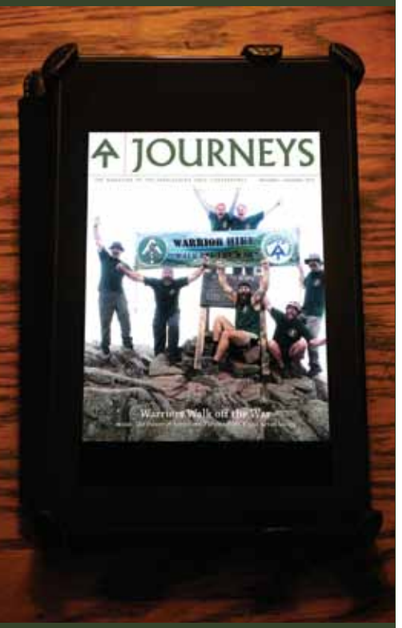

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View from Roller Coaster at Bears Den Rock – by Steve Swartz

GIVING MYSELF PERMISSION TO HIKE AS SLOWLY AS WAS NEEDED; I LISTENED TO MY BREATHING TO SET MY PACE.

THE BEAST, THE RAPTOR, STEEL PHANTOM, CYCLONE, TEXAS GIANT: ROLLERCOASTERS known far and wide. I thought I had heard of all of them. Then I learned that there was one more roller-coaster just north of Shenandoah National Park, right on the A.T. Its reputation preceded it in anxious whispers, premature complaints, and loads of references in the log books at the shelters. Most of what I heard and read confused me. Was this going to be the absolute worst part of this section of Trail, or was it over-rated, the victim of bad publicity and needless anxiety? It really didn't matter; I was leaving Rod Hollow Shelter in the morning and climbing aboard "Roller Coaster." I had been on the Trail northbound for four weeks finishing a section hike that would complete Virginia, and I was as ready as I could get, but I wasn't satisfied with the way I was anticipating the "Roller Coaster."

When I arrived at Rod Hollow Shelter I got out my notebook and broke down the Trail information: ups, downs, and transitions, noting the elevation gain, the distances, and the relative steepness of the Trail. I counted the climbs between Rod Hollow and my next stop, Bears Den Hostel, and I committed this to memory. The next step proved to be most beneficial; I buried these notes in my pack where I would not be tempted to look at them again, and I came up with my mantra for the Roller Coaster, "one good day's hike — half of it downhill."

Clinging to the suggestion that the Roller Coaster was a section of Trail whose reputation for pain was over-stated, I decided to walk mindfully instead of fretfully, knowing that the hostel would be waiting at the end of journey. It ended up being one of my favorite days hiking. Giving myself permission to hike as slowly as was needed; I listened to my breathing to set my pace. I had already learned that, for me, two predictably disappointing hiking habits were looking up for the top of any climb and glancing at my watch to see how long I had been hiking, neither ever helped and I wouldn't let my mind consider them. Instead, I got mentally lost in each step, looking closer to my footfalls every time the way got steeper. In return, the Trail showed me its treasures: rocks striped with quartz, broken-off bits, some yellow some rose; insects and plants — including a jumping spider that climbed the Trail at the same pace as me. Downhill, I would let my gaze reach out to find rock tops to float over, treating the Trail surface like water and wanting to keep my feet dry. All the time I listened to my breath, "Trail in — Trail out — one good day's hike — half of it downhill." I quit caring about reaching the tops of the climbs, I lived in the ups and embraced their treasures, I told myself they could go on forever. I listened for the sound of the rollercoaster lift chain that carries the cars to the top of the first peak, just before the big rush of the first downhill.

When I got to Bear's Den Hostel I realized that I had finished one of my best days on the Trail. Tired, but not exhausted or defeated, I thanked the A.T. for another great day of hiking and I breathed in and out, knowing that it is enough to be present right where you are.

J. F. "Just Feet" Lacaria
LIVES IN CROSS LANES, WEST VIRGINIA.

"As I See It" is a monthly column from guest contributors representing the full range of ATC partners, members, and volunteers. To submit a column (700 words or under) for consideration, please email **journeys@appalachiantrail.org** or write to Editor/As I See It, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.

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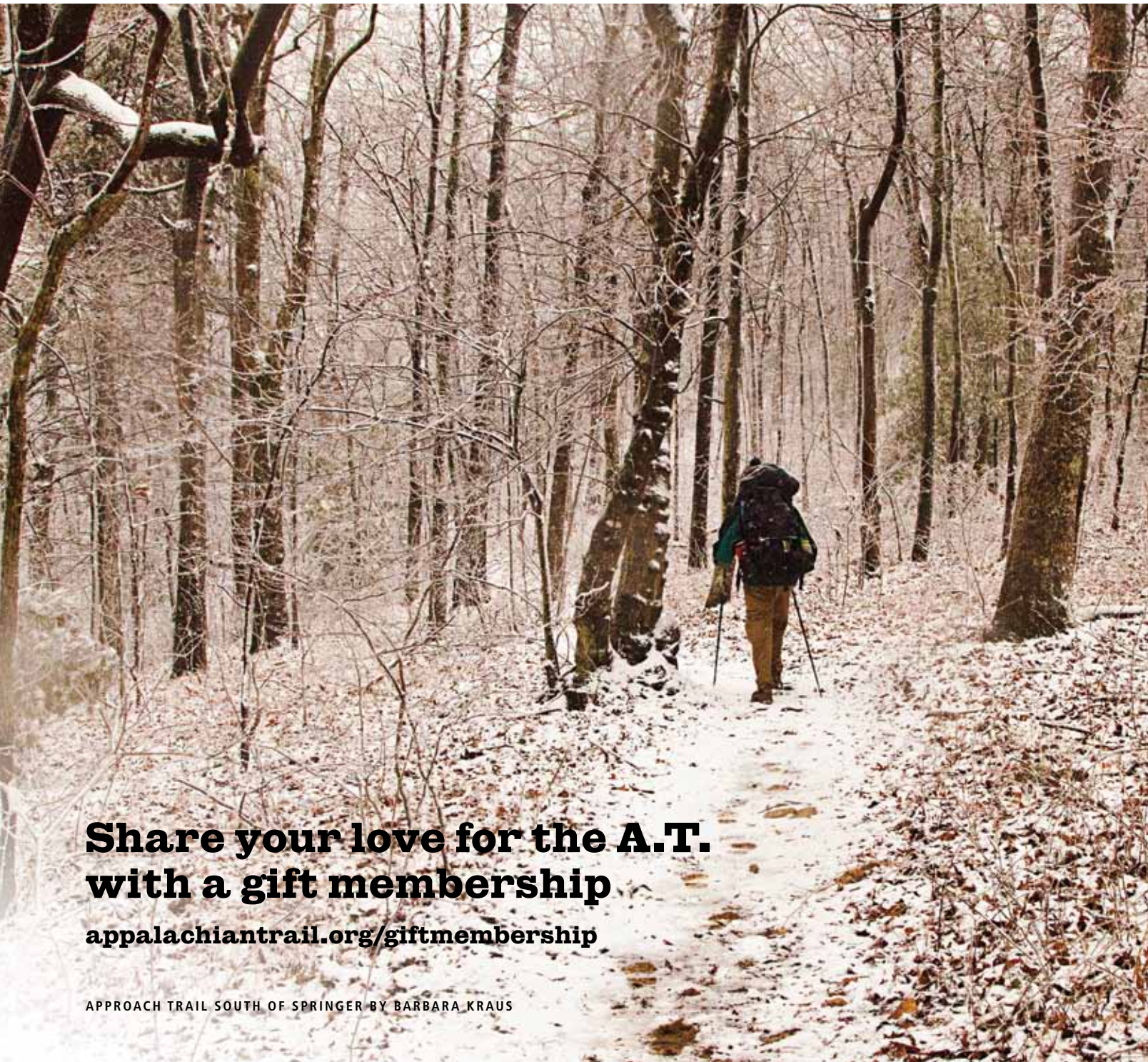

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APPROACH TRAIL SOUTH OF SPRINGER BY BARBARA KRAUS