

A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

January – February 2014



INSIDE: Partnership to the Max | Defeating Graffiti | A Tale of Two Towns



A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Volume 10, Number 1
January – February 2014

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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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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR |

Our Trail is the World's Trail

THERE IS VERY LITTLE DEBATE ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE APPALACHIAN Trail is the most famous long-distance hiking trail in the world. Why is that the case? Consider the following:

- The original A.T. was completed in 1937 and was the first modern foot trail of any great length to be built in North America.
- The National Trails System Act of 1968 established the A.T. and the Pacific Crest Trail as the first of what is now a system of 11 National Scenic and 19 National Historic Trails in this country.
- In 1978 Congress amended this Act to give the National Park Service the clear and explicit responsibility to acquire the lands necessary to permanently protect a Trail corridor of 1,000 feet or more in width.
- It is one of the most popular and heavily used trails in the world, with an estimated two million or more visitors each year of which more than 500 complete the entire Trail.
- The A.T. has in the past 40 years popularized long-distance hiking in the U.S. because of its scenic beauty, historic and cultural resources, accessibility, the high standards of Trail maintenance by our 31 Trail maintaining clubs, and the quality of the Trail experience.

All of these amazing attributes of the Appalachian Trail have resulted in expanding its reach well beyond this country. In signing the letters of congratulations and the certificates the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) will send to those hikers who have completed the A.T. in 2013, I noticed hikers from Japan, Germany, England, Austria, New Zealand, and other countries were on the list — and we have also registered the first-ever thru-hiker from Guatemala. For many other foreign visitors our Trail is a vacation destination of choice.

Perhaps more important is the reality that the A.T. is a model for an increasing number of long-distance trails around the globe. A dedicated group of Americans, Canadians, and Europeans have formed an organization dedicated to extending the A.T. through Quebec and into Scotland, Ireland, England, and ultimately to Africa.

I had the good fortune to meet an A.T. enthusiast named Mim Hamal, who is from Nepal, this past summer at the recent ATC Biennial conference. Mim's inspiring account (which you will read later this year in *A.T. Journeys*) about the development of the Great Himalayan Trail across Nepal and around and through the world's highest mountains is itself a tribute to the influence of the A.T. experience.

Our Trail *IS* the world's trail. 🏔️

Ronald J. Tipton | *Executive Director/CEO*



PHOTO BY COLLEEN CONTRISCIANE

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On the Cover:

Deep February snow drifts cover the Appalachian Trail heading up toward Round Bald on Roan Mountain in North Carolina ("Being There" page 26). Photo by Daniel Burleson

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The defacement of anything along the A.T. — no matter how large or small — is illegal and disrespectful to the Trail and all it stands for.

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A hiker enjoys Max Patch — photo by John Odell



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I LETTERS

I REALLY ENJOYED "THE LONG Way Home" (Trail Stories; November/December). While hiking last April, I was lucky enough to be a recipient of "Trail magic" provided by [the story's author] Mark Booth and his wife Wendy at New Found Gap in the Great Smoky Mountains. Besides the great sandwiches, fruit, and cookies, I was inspired by their testimonial as described in their recent article. You could feel from their enthusiasm and joy how much they loved the Trail. They are a shining example of what makes hiking the A.T. such a rewarding experience.

John "Burnin' Daylight" Myers
MARION, IOWA

I THOUGHT THE NOVEMBER-December issue was the most interesting that I have read in some time. I was especially interested in Karen Lutz's detailed presentation of management issues in Pennsylvania, "Wins, Losses, and Draws." It was a very informative discussion about the problems dealing with a welter of local jurisdictions and entrenched interests. Clearly, what you think that the legislation provides is not always how it is interpreted by local courts. The other articles were excellent and the photos were amazing. The columns by the new management team of Sandi Marra and Ron Tipton were also very informative.

Tom Johnson
FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA

AS A MEMBER OF THE ATC AND ONE who hikes the A.T. in the New York area, your article on the veterans hiking the A.T. was terrific. People often ask me what I get out of "just walking in the woods." Your article ("Warriors Walking off the War" *A.T. Journeys* November/December) answers that question perfectly when you write that hiking the Trail is so peaceful and calming ... and the veterans slept like newborn babies while on the Trail. The Warrior Hikers are now a part of the hiker population who know the benefits of "just walking in the woods" — to find peace and to leave behind, even for a few hours, whatever issues are troubling you.

Carolyn Harting
BEDFORD, NEW YORK

THANK YOU FOR THE IMMENSE role you play in each thru-hiker's experience. I can't imagine what the A.T. would be like without the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and all of the clubs, maintainers, and fundraisers that help enrich the Trail. Thank you so much!

Cheri "River Song" Brunault
HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

Thanks (to all the volunteers) for making my 2014 thru-hike possible! You are all amazing!!!

Sarah Thayer

Thank you volunteers! There would be no Trail without you.

Anne Morain

Volunteers ROCK! ... and dig and shovel and haul and cut and, just about everything!!

Bob Hazelton

Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail was gifted to us by a "Trail angel" when we completed our thru-hike last year. It is outstanding! With each picture, we play the game, "Where's this?" or "I remember that!" Memories come flooding back. With sincere love, it graces our coffee table.

Cynthia Harrell

All I can say is that if it weren't for the (ATC) and all of the volunteers, there wouldn't be another place to hike, day walk, or picnic of this magnitude ... THANK YOU ATC for all you have done to make this possible. 🌲

Robert Caron

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
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A.T. — Great Smoky Mountains National Park — by Danielle Klebes



APPALACHIAN TRAIL
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YOU MIGHT REMEMBER I PROMISED IN MY FIRST COLUMN TO introduce the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) board and share with you what brought them to the A.T. I think a good way to start the New Year is to talk about their A.T. hike stories. We have thru-hikers and section hikers who have finished the Trail. We also have those, like me, who are slowly ticking off the miles working towards the goal of completion. And we have those who are just starting out and ones who, while they may have hiked only a few miles of the Trail, have succumbed to its magic.

Take Lenny Bernstein who completed the A.T. in 24 years (1974 to 1998). Lenny writes, “my interesting tidbit is that my first real hike in 1969 was on the A.T. from Delaware Water Gap to Sunfish Pond, though I didn’t know at the time what the A.T. was or that I was on it.” How many of us have had that same experience? As the ATC looks to bring a new generation to the Trail, we need to keep in mind that these folks may very well already be out there and simply need to hear the story of the A.T. Lenny adds that, being a purist, he went back to hike that piece as part of his A.T. section hike since he didn’t have an accurate record of his first hike there.

Lenny isn’t our only section thru- hiker. We have Marcia Fairweather, who took 15 years to hike the A.T. and finished in 2008. She organized more than 95 hikes — for the majority of which she invited others to join her. Marcia says that 625 different people hiked with her during those 15 years. She still brings groups out to introduce them to the Trail. When was the last time you invited a friend to join you on a hike?

One of our new board members, Nat “Bumpo” Stoddard, completed the Trail in nine years. Nat says that, “my goal was to hike 100 yards on the A.T. and then only as far beyond that as continued to make sense to me.” Nat’s story speaks to one of the Trail’s most valuable lessons — great things can be accomplished by taking that first step.

We have thru-hikers like Rich Daileader whose 2009 hike was completed in 142 hiking days with an average of a little

over 15 miles per day. And then there are those still working on it. Beth Critton, new board member and chair of the Stewardship Council, learned about the Trail when her son thru-hiked in 1997. She has only 315 miles to go before she completes the Trail. Mary “Fussymary” Higley first learned about the Trail as a teenager when she read Rodale Press’s, *Hiking the Appalachian Trail*. She set out to thru-hike in 2008 but left the Trail at Deep Gap, North Carolina. Since then she enjoys day hikes and has, to date, completed 632.1 miles (we hikers are exact that way). Mary shares that she enjoys spending time in the Trailside communities as much as she does her time on the Trail itself, chatting with the shuttle drivers and the “Trail angels” who offer her rides. Many other board members are working on a Trail completion or are very close to completing their hike of the A.T.

These experiences of the board help to educate and inform them about the resource they are so committed to protecting. It gives them, as I am sure it does you, a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. Whether we are hiking for an hour or months at a time, we all benefit from the majesty that is the Appalachian Trail. 🌲

Sandra Marra | Chair



The current ATC Board of Directors at the recent Biennial Conference:

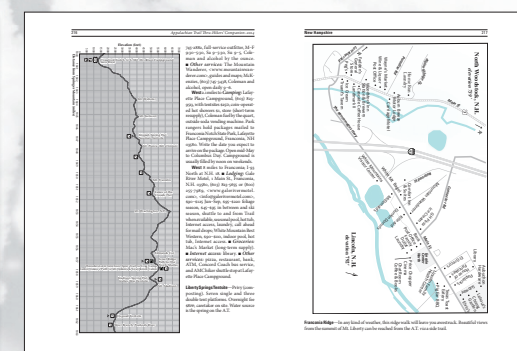
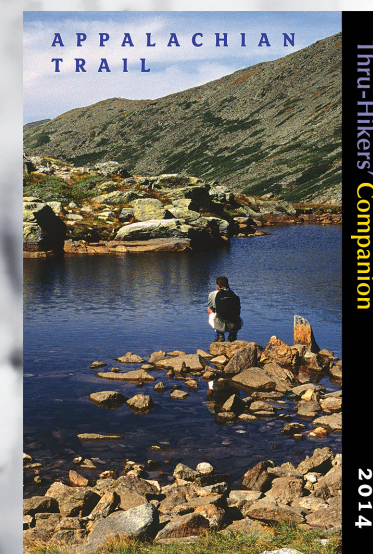
From top row left: Arthur Foley, Greg Winchester, Lenny Bernstein, Nathaniel Stoddard, (middle row): Betsy Pierce Thompson, Mary Higley, the ATC’s executive director/CEO, Ron Tipton, Samuel Sarofeen, Ed Guyot, Clark Wright Jr., (bottom row): Rich Daileader, Sandi Marra, Beth Critton, Carrie Rodriguez-Tweeten, (not Pictured): Terry Lierman and Marcia Fairweather.

— photo by Stacey Marshall

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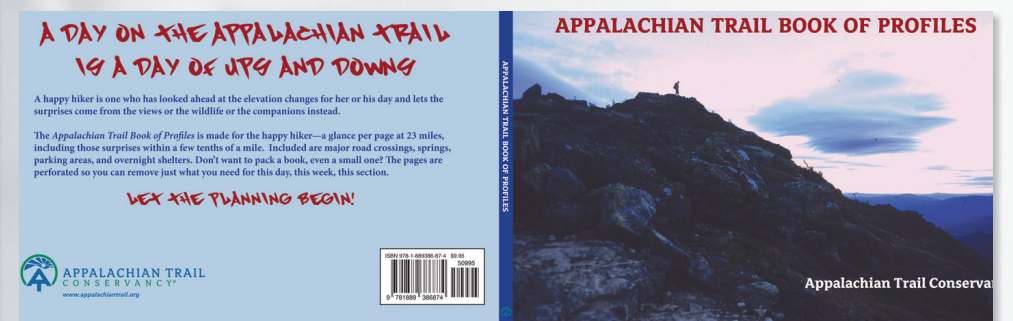
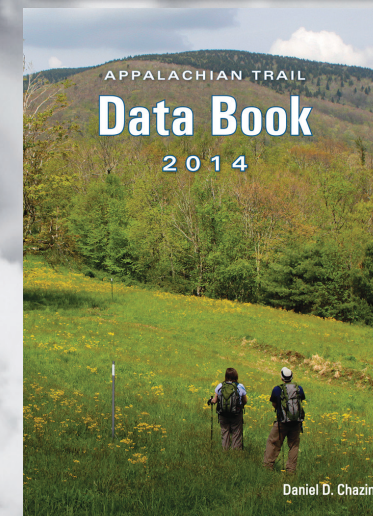
The *Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion** has a whole new look



The *Companion* this year is now a standard size (6" x 9") and includes professionally drafted elevation profiles for the entire footpath in 23-mile segments. This invaluable A.T. guide book, authored by the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA), also contains many more revised and current maps. And, of course, the almost 40 volunteers who put it together went out to check all the details for accuracy again. Volunteers are behind this *official Appalachian Trail guide*, and all proceeds go back into the Trail.

The tables for the *Companion* come from the 2014 *Appalachian Trail Data Book*, documenting the new official mileage of 2,185.3 miles from Katahdin to Springer.

Joining these two stalwarts on the careful hiker's shelf is the *Appalachian Trail Book of Profiles*, 108 pages — perforated so that they can be easily taken “on the A.T.”



Visit: atctrailstore.org or call toll-free 888-287-8673 Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST

*Customers who buy the *Companion* directly from the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store are also eligible to receive a free PDF of its profiles. (not available anywhere else!)



UNDESIRABLE AND ILLEGAL

Graffiti defaces the A.T. at Humpback Rocks along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia —photo by Jerry Greer

Jim Reel was shocked when he arrived at the top of North Carolina's Bluff Mountain in the summer of 2012. "I couldn't believe my eyes," he said, "Someone with a black sharpie had written their Trail name and '2012 GA to ME' on the sign. I felt sick to my stomach." Upon further inspection he found three more of the same hiker's autographs along the Trail between the summit and Garenflo Gap. As a Carolina Mountain Club member and the maintainer for that particular section of the A.T., Jim was particularly distressed. Since 1998 he had hiked many miles on the A.T. but had observed graffiti only near trailheads, not at remote locations like Bluff Mountain. He had assumed the perpetrators were non-hikers who didn't appreciate the beauty and pristine nature of the Trail but this was done by a thru-hiker. "What kind of thru-hiker would leave graffiti on an A.T. sign?" asked Jim's hiking partner that day.

Jim took action and asked the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Southern Regional Office if anything could be done. Staffers

BY BECKY SMUCKER



communicated with other Trail maintaining clubs, gathered pictures of the hiker's widespread defacement of public property, and notified Appalachian National Scenic Trail Chief Ranger Todd Remaley. The vandal was identified and the Appalachian District of Pisgah National Forest filed charges against him. Eventually the perpetrator was convicted and fined.

It seems unlikely that the “graffiti artists” have any malicious intent. They may even think they are doing their fellow hikers a favor by sharing creative tag. In their minds, maybe it is a way of saying “I love this place.” What may seem to proud hikers to be an innocent badge of accomplishment, however, is offensive to other hikers and to people who spend long hours planning, building, and maintaining signs, structures, and the Trail itself. Most thru-hikers have planned their hike for years and feel a real sense of ownership of the Trail yet, thankfully, few of them feel the urge to mark their passage so others can see that they were there. To the agency partners who have to spend their time and shrinking funds tracking down graffiti and cleaning it up, the defacement is seen as a sign of total lack of respect for the Appalachian Trail and all it stands for. Repair and replacement of the vandalized structures, moreover, can be costly and require many hours of work; and some damage is not repairable, such as when trees or rocks are defaced.

Graffiti on the Trail is nothing new. The ATC’s southern regional director, Morgan Sommerville, thinks that graffiti has long been a significant problem in shelters, but hasn’t before been so extensive elsewhere. Ranger Remaley says, “Incidents of graffiti have always occurred along the Trail. In the past, incidents could be attributed to local youth but

increasingly we are seeing occurrences where thru-hikers repeatedly leave their mark.”

One such incident of graffiti from local youth was observed by a group of visiting fifth grade students involved in the ATC and National Park Service’s Trail to Every Classroom program from Emmaus, Pennsylvania. On their hike over one of the most scenic sections of the A.T. in the state they found graffiti that spoiled their view. “Bake Oven Knob — a beautiful boulder outcropping with amazing views of the Lehigh Valley — is virtually covered with spray-painted messages, dates, drawings, and names,” explains the students’ teacher Alison Saeger Panik who turned the negative discovery into a thoughtful lesson. “My students spent about an hour there, discussing who might be vandalizing the rocks and why,” she says. “They journaled their thoughts and feelings about the content of the graffiti and how it impacted their hiking experience and the view.”

“Graffiti detracts from visitor experience,” says Ranger Remaley. He also explains that it is a serious illegal act. “Graffiti is investigated as a criminal offense by the land management agencies,” says Remaley. “Successful prosecution can result in fines, jail time, large restitution payments and being banned from Federal Lands.” He explains that it has to then be cleaned-up by the Trail maintainers, volunteers, and others in the A.T. workforce; therefore taxing scarce resources. Successful prosecution for graffiti on public trails is difficult and rare, however. Bringing

Trail vandals to justice requires photographic documentation and data (usually gathered by hikers), reporting the incident, following through, and a lot of luck in locating the vandal. Anyone who sees graffiti along the A.T. is encouraged to report it directly to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Human beings’ marking territory is not new. We’ve marked our journeys and planted our flags around the world, and even on the moon. What’s new in more recent times is that so much “marking”

has appeared in so many places that we’ve collectively had to make and enforce rules against defacing public places, including (sadly) in our wilderness and remote areas. Recent articles in the *New York Times* and on NBC report that graffiti is becoming an increasing problem in National Parks across the country. The articles suggest that the rise of social media has contributed to the acceleration by making it possible for vandals to have their “work” in remote areas shared widely and immediately admired via the internet, rewards that used to be forthcoming only in

Clockwise from top left: Graffiti literally covers the rocks and detracts from the view at Bake Oven Knob in Pennsylvania — photo by Cindy Ross; The heavily-defiled old roof of Cable Gap shelter in North Carolina, which was later replaced; Defacement of Keys Gap A.T. sign, Virginia/West Virginia — photo by Laurie Potteiger

urban areas. This immediate notoriety attracts copycats and the problem escalates.

Social media can, however, also be used as a tool to prevent and suppress graffiti. Another thru-hiker in the southern region this past year was called to task by online commenters in his Trail journal for boasting about his graffiti. Folks who responded were blunt in their disapproval of his behavior. He soon replied saying, “PLEASE accept my public apology. I assumed that leaving your Trail name and year was an acceptable practice based off what I saw all around me. My assumption was incorrect. Please know that it won’t happen again, and please accept my humble apologies for my poor Trail etiquette.” While it’s possible that this apology was partly framed to help avert punishment, it also reflected the hiker’s chagrin in the face of personal criticism from his peers on the Trail and regret for his offense. It shows that peer pressure can help restrain some vandals and social media communication can be a positive tool in helping to control the illegal and undesirable behavior.

Although it was never considered necessary to mention in the past because graffiti was so obviously inappropriate along the Trail, specific prevention of graffiti is a sad reality now. As Jim Reel put it, “although it feels good to know the perpetrator was caught, it would feel a lot better to know that graffiti along the Trail had disappeared and was gone forever.” While law enforcement will respond to complaints and prosecute where possible, preventing defacement before it starts is key. Leave No Trace principles need to specifically mention graffiti. The hiking community needs to be clear that writing graffiti is unacceptable. Hikers and maintainers should aggressively report, document, and then help clean-up occurrences. The ATC’s regional offices and the land management agencies are aware of best practices to remove and restore graffiti sites. Most importantly, Trail users should use all means of communication available — from Facebook pages for thru-hiker classes to shelter logbooks — to discourage graffiti and make this behavior “uncool.”

“Every year, thousands of volunteers work to maintain the Appalachian Trail, with no thought of having anyone know their name,” says the ATC’s information services manager Laurie Potteiger. “You will not even find the names of those who devoted much of their lives to the maintenance, management, and protection of the Trail.” She goes on to explain that legendary volunteers who have shaped and protected the Trail, such as Dave Field, Margaret Drummond, Lester Kenway, or even the Trail’s founder, Benton MacKaye, do not have shelters named after them and they did not leave their mark behind other than to help ensure the wild corridor of land could be traversed by their fellow citizens.

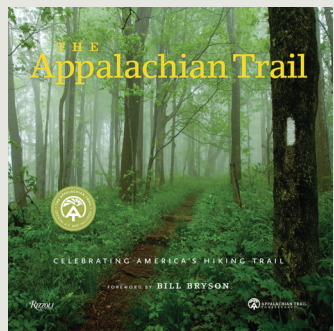
Myron Avery said that the Appalachian Trail might as well



be called the “Anonymous Trail,” because so many people labored selflessly to build and maintain it, “asking for no return nor recognition nor reward.” No one person has a right to put their name on it and claim a piece of it as their own. “Many consider the Appalachian Trail a sacred place, a fragile thread of land where some of our wildest, most beautiful natural places of this nation have been strung together to be enjoyed by Americans today and for future generations,” says Potteiger. “As more and more land across the East Coast and throughout the world is developed, the A.T. remains a treasured and rare place where we still have the ability to spend days or, if we choose, months on end immersed in the natural world — a place where we are offered a retreat.” On the A.T., the commercialism, celebrity culture, and many of the signature and often bemoaned elements of modern society are famously absent. This is no place for graffiti. ▲

To report graffiti on the A.T. visit: appalachiantrail.org/incident.

Becky Smucker is a former president of the Carolina Mountain Club and also worked as the office administrator in the ATC’s Asheville, North Carolina regional office.



The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail wins National Outdoor Book Award

This past November, *The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail* — written by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) publisher Brian B. King and published in combination with Rizzoli International Publications and the ATC — won the Design & Artistic Merit category of the 2013 National Outdoor Book Awards (NOBA). The NOBA is the outdoor world's largest and most prestigious book award program. The purpose of the awards is to recognize and encourage outstanding writing and publishing. Each fall, the NOBA Foundation announces the winners of ten categories, including History, Literature, Children, Nature, Natural History, Instructional, Adventure Guidebook, Nature Guidebook, Design, and Outdoor Classic.

The winners are chosen by a panel of judges consisting of educators, academics, book reviewers, authors, editors, and outdoor columnists from throughout the country. "In the Design category, the judges, of course, focus on the book's artistic content, but a key element which brought [Mr. King's] book to the top was the fine writing," explained a representative from NOBA. NOBA is a non-profit, educational program, sponsored by the National Outdoor Book Awards Foundation, Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education, and Idaho State University.

For more information visit: noba-web.org. To purchase a copy of the award-winning book visit: atctrailstore.org



2013 Fall Membership Drive Success

THIS PAST FALL THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) showcased the film *Appalachian Impressions* in 16 cities nationwide, as part of our 2013 membership drive, called "A Journey of 2,000 Miles: the Appalachian Trail." We set an aggressive goal to gain the support of 2,180 new members, one new member for each mile of the Appalachian Trail. In the end, we shattered our goal and brought in close to 3,000 new members to the organization. Together we raised more than \$88,000 for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and for the Appalachian Trail. These much needed funds will directly help to preserve and manage the A.T. — ensuring

**WE BROUGHT IN CLOSE TO 3,000 NEW MEMBERS AND
RAISED MORE THAN \$88,000 TO DIRECTLY HELP TO
PRESERVE AND MANAGE THE A.T.**

that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

The film *Appalachian Impressions* is an epic story about hiking the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. The program takes viewers on a six-month, 2,000-plus-mile journey along the famous long-distance hiking Trail and covers all fourteen states, the changing of the seasons, footwear, food, shelters, volunteer Trail crews, and Leave No Trace Ethics. It captures the true essence of this historic pathway, its interesting characters, beautiful scenery, and the generous spirit found in small town America.

Each city featured several guest speakers including authors, volunteers, key members of the A.T. community, and 2,000-milers (those who have hiked the entire A.T.) who have embarked on this trek and experience the thrills and challenges of daily life on the Trail. Some guest speakers included Richard Judy, thru-hiker and author of *THRU – A Love Story*; Susan Letcher, 2,000-miler and author of *The Barefoot Sisters: Southbound*; Captain Sean Gobin, co-founder of Warrior Hike and the Walk off the War Program; Michelle Pugh, thru-hiker and author of *Love at First Hike: A Memoir about Love & Triumph on the Appalachian Trail*; and Ron Tipton executive director/CEO of the ATC.

Thanks to all of our volunteers and supporters of this drive, including our sponsors Alliance Hospitality Management, Aloft Aviation Consulting, Denali, Eagles Nest Outfitters (ENO), Flagler Films, the town of Franklin North Carolina, the Great Outdoor Provision Company, Gregory Mountain Products, Len Foote Hike Inn, Nantahala Hiking Club, and Tampa Bay Outfitters. And, of course, special thanks to all the participants at this year's event.

Weather Planning for Thru-Hikers

WEATHER IS ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL FACTORS IN DETERMINING when to start a thru-hike. Virtually every part of the Appalachian Trail has the potential to receive snowfall through early April. Mountains in the South, especially those above 5,000 feet, can receive snowfall that may result in deep drifts. The highest peaks in Tennessee, North Carolina, and southwest Virginia receive an average of close to 100 inches of snowfall each year. That's more than the lower elevations of New England. In Maine and New Hampshire, snow can linger until June. The locations that receive the most snow are often the most remote; being prepared is essential.

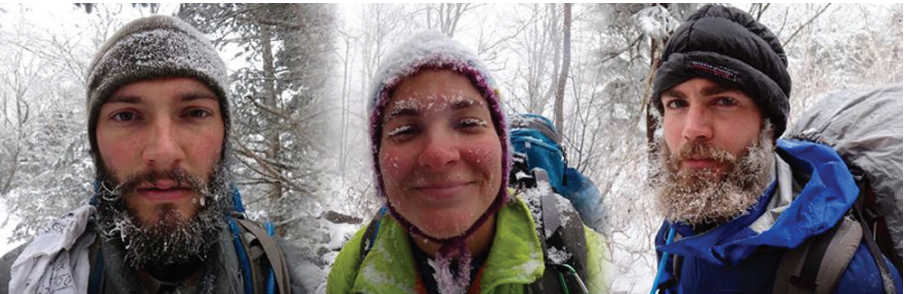
Most thru-hikers start their trips in March or April at Springer Mountain in Georgia and finish at the Trail's northern terminus, Katahdin, in September. Starting at Springer in March guarantees hiking in winter conditions for much of the first several weeks and also guarantees a crowd of fellow northbounders — approximately 2,500 start out each year, most between March 1 and April 15. To avoid crowds and snow, the optimal time to start a northbound thru-hike is after April 15; however, since the average thru-hiker takes just under six months to finish, starting then can mean cutting it close. Baxter State Park (where Katahdin is located) is closed to overnight use starting October 15. Northbound thru-hikers reaching Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, after July 15 who have taken more than 10 weeks to reach that point might consider planning a "leapfrog" or a "flip-flop." From Harpers Ferry, there are still almost 1,200 miles to cover, with the Trail's most difficult terrain left to cover in New Hampshire and Maine as daylight hours dwindle. Alternative itineraries can extend the amount of time you have to complete the Trail in milder conditions.

For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/hiking

"I AM THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL" Summer Video Contest Winners

The Appalachian Trail is, in every way, the people's Trail. Created by a group of dreamers and doers and maintained by each new generation — every person who volunteers, supports, loves, and hikes the A.T. is a vital part of its history and success. Without each of these individuals, the Trail would not exist.

That's why this past summer the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) posed the question, "how are you a part of the Appalachian Trail" during our 2013 summer video contest. Entries came in from all over the United States. Each showcasing their own personal thoughts and feeling as to how they are a part of the A.T. The submission with the most votes was Jeremy Scroggins from Buda, Texas. His video showcased his journey across the 2,180-mile Trail during his 2013 thru-hike. Kit McCann from Kennebunkport, Maine received the second highest amount of votes, and Bette Lou Higgins from Elyria, Ohio received the third highest. Congratulations to all the entries!



Scenes from Jeremy Scroggins' winning video — taken during his 2013 thru-hike. To view the winning video and our other top contenders visit: facebook.com/ATHIKE



Bear Canisters Required on a Portion of the A.T. in Georgia

A new U.S. Forest Service rule requires approved bear-resistant storage containers for overnight camping on a five-mile stretch of the A.T. in the Chattahoochee National Forest between Jarrard Gap and Neel Gap, between March 1 and June 1 each year. This stretch is located between points 26.7 and 31.7 miles north of the southern terminus of the A.T. at Springer Mountain, Georgia, and includes Woods Hole Shelter, Slaughter Creek Campsite, and Blood Mountain Shelter. "Bear canisters" should be used to store food, food containers, garbage, and toiletries.

For more information and other Trail Updates visit: appalachiantrail.org/hiking/trail-updates or call the Chattahoochee — Oconee National Forest at: (770) 297-3000.

2014 Appalachian Trail License Plate Grant Program

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is pleased to announce that applications for the 2014 A.T. License Plate Grant Program are being accepted until Friday, January 31, 2014. The ATC will be awarding a total of \$10,000 for a broad range of A.T.-related projects in Tennessee. These funds are generated from the sales and renewals of Tennessee A.T. specialty license plates. 🐾

To view the grant guidelines or to obtain an application form visit: appalachiantrail.org/plates. For more information about the A.T. License Plate Grant Program contact: soo@appalachiantrail.org.

PARTNERSHIP TO THE MAX

It takes teamwork on a large scale to maintain and preserve the balanced beauty of Max Patch. Last year, vandalism to this cherished part of the A.T. summoned that teamwork for months of repair, restoration, and better protection.

By John Odell

HIKERS FAMILIAR WITH THE “GREEN TUNNEL”

of the Appalachian Trail know the exhilarating feeling of stepping into an open area, where forest canopy gives way to limitless sky and breathtaking vistas. Few areas offer this experience quite like Max Patch, a 4,629-foot summit in the Bald Mountains of North Carolina. The grassy slopes and 360-degree views of surrounding mountains make Max Patch one of the most visited locations on the entire A.T. Despite the number of people who rank this “Crown Jewel of the Appalachian Trail” among their favorite destinations, many may not understand the role of partnerships in protecting Max Patch, maintaining trails, and preserving the open area for all to enjoy.

Since the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) acquired the property in 1982, Max Patch has been a shining example of how partnership and volunteerism contribute to the appeal of the A.T. and its iconic landmarks. In the early 1980s, USFS, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) worked swiftly to move the Trail off of its former route along a road to its present location over the summit of Max Patch and through rich hardwood forest. CMC volunteers worked countless hours to build new trail, and continue to maintain the heavily travelled A.T. and associated loop trails.

When the A.T. was first moved onto Max Patch, the ATC, USFS, CMC, and local equestrian groups met to discuss the high demand for recreation on the summit. The partnership developed new horse trails and hitching posts in the Max Patch area, providing ample opportunities for equestrian use, while reserving the A.T. and the summit of Max Patch for foot traffic only. These principal partners and the general public are still working collaboratively to maintain the Trail and

expansive open area, which provide an outstanding recreational experience for thousands of visitors.

In November 2012, the partnership was once again called to action when Dwayne Stutzman and David Kendall, CMC Trail maintainers, reported that vandals removed wire fencing at the Max Patch parking area, tore down a stile, and drove trucks up the face of the mountain. The vehicles left deep tire tracks on the mountain, destroying vegetation and creating unsightly scars on the western slope. CMC maintainers and the USFS Appalachian Ranger District made temporary repairs to the fencing and installed signs indicating that the mountain is closed to vehicle traffic. When the area received more snowfall in January, vandals compounded earlier damage by cutting the fence and driving vehicles up the mountain a second time.

With no hesitation, the ATC, CMC, and USFS began formulating a plan to fix the damage and prevent future trespass. David Kendall, a retired landscape architect, spent several days drawing up a detailed plan for a redesigned trailhead, lined with boulders to prevent vehicles from driving on to the mountain. Dwayne Stutzman, who has maintained that section of A.T. since the mid-1990s, joined the ATC staff and USFS engineers to finalize plans and develop a strategy to fund the repair project. Simultaneously, Forest Service Law Enforcement officers were undertaking an extensive investigation to apprehend the vandals.

From top: View of the Great Smoky Mountains from Max Patch – photo by John Odell; Volunteers from CMC and Appalachian 4x4 repair the Max Patch loop trail – photo by Dwayne Stutzman





HAD THE VANDALS KNOWN THE TRUE COST OF MANAGING AREAS LIKE MAX PATCH, PERHAPS THEY WOULD HAVE MADE DIFFERENT DECISIONS ON THAT SNOWY JANUARY NIGHT.

The vehicle trespass got a lot of press and generated an immediate public outcry. Many people offered their support to help repair damage and the public was instrumental in apprehending those responsible for the trespass. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers spent more than 240 hours on the case, but may not have identified all of the suspects without written statements from concerned citizens, and one disapproving mother. In the end, 13 individuals were charged with federal misdemeanor violations and each ordered to pay \$407.69 in restitution to help cover repair costs. The individual who destroyed the fencing and encouraged others to “go raise some hell” paid the restitution and was sentenced to 90 days in jail.

On Earth Day, 2013, the snow had melted and partners began the initial repair work. The ATC spent \$4,000 on boulders to line the parking area and other spots where vehicles could potentially access the open area. The Forest Service hired a contractor to remove old barbed-wire fence and wooden posts, install the boulders, and move a kiosk from the side of the parking lot to a more prominent location at the trailhead. With heavy equipment on site, the opportunity was taken to address erosion problems by installing drainage dips and re-grading part of the loop trail, which connects to the A.T. before reaching the Max Patch summit. The Forest Service refurbished the signs and kiosk at the trailhead, and is developing a new map for the 2014 season, which will encourage visitors to utilize the loop trail, and allow damaged areas to re-grow. CMC volunteers are constructing wooden signs to mark the loop trails and keep the A.T. well-defined.

A few weeks later, on a windy, sleety day, 20 volunteers contributed more than 150 hours raking out tire ruts, spreading straw, and replacing sod to repair vehicle damage. CMC volunteers were joined by the Appalachian 4x4 Club, representing the majority of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts who respect

public lands and designated use areas. In order to mask the boulders and discourage foot-traffic in recovering areas, CMC purchased dozens of rhododendron shrubs, which the group planted around the trailhead and kiosk. Part of the day was spent re-aligning the loop trail and filling tire ruts with sod removed during trail construction. Later in the season, a Student Conservation Association crew continued the effort by planting additional rhododendron, purchased by the ATC. In total, partners spent nearly \$15,000 in repairs, and contributed several hundred hours toward the effort.

For many, the vandalism brought to mind recent vehicle damage at Beauty Spot, another A.T. open area in the Cherokee National Forest, which had seen repeated vehicle trespass. The vehicles at Beauty Spot not only damaged the resource, but directly threatened the safety of A.T. hikers camping under the stars. A.T. partners have spent years addressing the issue of vehicle trespass at Beauty Spot and were forced to take actions similar to Max Patch, blocking vehicle access to protect hikers and the hiking experience.

These infractions are not only a costly nuisance, but they detract heavily from the larger task of maintaining open areas for their aesthetic, ecological, and cultural value. Open areas are typically covered by low-growing grasses, wildflowers, and other plants characteristic of early forest succession. The A.T. corridor holds some of the last remnants of this high-elevation, early successional habitat, which benefits migratory birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. Recognizing these benefits and the value to outdoor enthusiasts, the ATC works closely with Trail maintaining clubs and land managing agencies to preserve open areas along the Trail. The partners work together to determine priority areas for management and site-specific considerations like frequency, timing, and methods of management.

Many open areas, like Max Patch, were cleared by European

Clockwise from far left: Vehicle damage at Max Patch; U.S. Forest Service contractors repair damage and install boulders to prevent vehicle access; The redesigned trailhead with refurbished sign, boulders, and rhododendron plantings; The renovated trailhead; Warren Wilson College sawyers clear trees encroaching the open area; Volunteers from CMC and Appalachian 4x4 pose after a hard but rewarding day. Photos by Dwayne Stutzman and John Odell

settlers to graze cattle or sheep; and this type of grazing only ended fairly recently. Others have natural origins, and frequently support a host of rare, threatened or endangered species, and unique plant communities. These areas were historically maintained by large herbivores such as elk and deer, and later by cattle and sheep. Most have lost acreage to woody encroachment, and some are no longer open at all due to a lack of grazing animals in the landscape. While grazing is often the preferred means of managing open areas, it requires major improvements to infrastructure, water sources, and road access to be cost effective.

When the Forest Service acquired Max Patch in the 1980s, the agency issued hay permits for several years to maintain the clearing and benefit the local economy. Steeper areas have been mowed with Forest Service equipment, often with financial support from the National Park Service’s A.T. Park Office (ATPO). In recent years, hay permits have not been filled, and project funding for alternative management has not always been available. In 2013, the ATC and ATPO were able to fund the contract mowing of 105 acres at Max Patch, but future funding for this work is uncertain. Trail-maintaining clubs cut

vegetation along the A.T. and other volunteers help remove encroaching trees at Max Patch and other open areas. However, the task of maintaining and restoring hundreds of open areas and several-thousand acres Trail-wide, is often beyond the capacity of volunteers.

The restitution paid by offenders in 2013 offered a brief sense of justice, but it didn’t compensate for all the hours given by many to fix the mistakes of a few. More importantly, it took time and money away from other management priorities. Had the vandals known the true cost of managing areas like Max Patch, perhaps they would have made different decisions on that snowy January night. My hope is that they’ll read this article and realize the benefits of open areas and the virtues of partnership in preserving the A.T. experience. Maybe then, they’ll pick up a pulaski, a brushcutter, or a checkbook to offer their support for landscape protection. 📌



John Odell is the ATC’s resource management coordinator. If you’d like to learn more about supporting open areas management along the Appalachian Trail, please contact John at: jodell@appalachiantrail.org



QUEST

FOR A WORLD CLASS TRAIL

BY BOB PROUDMAN

In 2013, Chinese official Ma Qi invited Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) director of conservation operations Bob Proudman to give a keynote address in Beijing on the development of the National Trails System in the United States, and particularly, the Appalachian Trail. Proudman was recommended by Dr. Yuri Quo, a professor at China Cultural University who had visited the ATC in 2009 with staff from the Taiwan Forestry Bureau.

Due to the honored history and reputation of the Appalachian Trail, the ATC regularly receives requests for inspiration and guidance from nations and peoples around the globe. In just the past decade, the ATC has advised governments and interacted with trail developers and park officials in Mongolia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Taiwan, Korea, Lebanon, New Zealand, Russia, Nepal, and now China. This is Bob’s story of his whirlwind, six-day trip around the world to visit our new Trail partners in Beijing where he gave an hour-long keynote address about the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

“IN CHINA, BUSINESS IS FORMAL. BUY A new suit.” Based on that advice from Chinese graduate student Tian Guo, a North Carolina State University doctoral candidate working for Dr. Roger Moore, a member of the ATC’s Stewardship Council, I bought a new suit for the trip to the Beijing Tourism Mountain Festival, where plans to develop a national trails system for China were unveiled.

You are usually likely to find me dressed casually or in clothes suitable for hiking, biking, or canoeing. I’ve always loved Henry David Thoreau’s admonition, “Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes.” But I was glad I bought a new suit. Ensnared in the Dragon Springs Hotel, ferried to meetings via Mercedes Benz, and accompanied by personal assistants and a personal translator, the day I met my hosts, I was led into a private room to meet

officials of the Mentougou district, all dressed in fine, dark suits. Servers dressed in gowns served us tea as we exchanged business cards and translated pleasantries about parks, tourism, and our common interests in the outdoors.

I was invited to attend and speak at the fifth annual Beijing Tourism Mountain Festival, where officials unveiled Mentougou District’s new outdoor logo (a standing backpacker in front of a series of mountain ridges), announced plans to build China’s first National Trails System, and hosted a hike on the Jingxi Path, an 800-year old trade route where the rocks are worn smooth from centuries of donkeys, horses, and camels carrying coal and other goods to ancient Beijing.

About 250 officials crowded the ballroom. Dancers with drums, loud horns and whistles ushered the

From left: Chinese tourism is very popular at the Great Wall, with hundreds of Beijing-city residents riding a gondola to the Wall and climbing its steep staircases; Bob tells the story of the A.T., ATC, and the benefits of a trail system in Mentougou, Beijing, China



Enthusiastic Chinese hikers join Bob and a bronze horse on the 800-plus-year-old Jinxi Path

assembly to order, part of western Beijing’s “Peace Drum,” considered a national intangible cultural heritage symbol — to quote one website. All seats were equipped with earphones for concurrent translations from English to Mandarin and vice versa. The event was bankrolled by AECOM, an international energy firm.

Following a ribbon cutting for the new Mentougou National Trails Network logo, I was given an hour to tell the story of the Appalachian Trail. With the help of Power Point slides, I touched on America’s Industrial Revolution, Benton MacKaye’s 1921 article lighting the spark of the idea of an Appalachian Trail, the enthusiastic founding of the Appalachian Trail Conference in 1925, the initial completion of the A.T. in 1937, followed by its neglect during World War II and the Korean War. I spoke about Myron Avery, the first thru-hike by Earl Shaffer, and the boom in outdoor interests during the 1960s and 70s that led to passage of a host of environmental laws, including the National Trails System Act. I touched on the broad economic and health benefits of hiking and of national parks, and outdoor activity in general. Using data from the U.S. Outdoor Industry Association, I

described the billions of dollars to be made by the outdoor industry and international tourism. When I asked for questions from our Chinese partners, from a culture so fundamentally foreign to the United States, there were none. It was a fascinating moment in that large, silent hall.

The irony of those cultural differences is that China, in its arc of advancement as a society, is similar to the U.S. in the 19th and early 20th centuries: it is struggling with air and water pollution, with rural-to-urban transitions, and now, with demand from an urban populace to find peace and health in forested park environments, and a desire to attract tourists, not only from the West, but from throughout Asia. In short, and as in so many other locations around the world, China seeks to benefit from the experience of Western nations, to emulate and repeat our successes.

Other speakers at the Tourism Mountain Festival included Lin Haozhen, head of the Taiwan Forestry Bureau’s Luotung Forest District and Dr. Quo who, in addition to his professorship, is the principal author of the Beijing Mentougou National Trail System Master Plan — a 74-page document filled with GIS maps and plans. Following my

presentation, it was presented to district officials in Mentougou.

After a catered lunch with many toasts, the assembly embarked for the 684-kilometer-long Jingxi Ancient Path, said to run across spectacularly beautiful mountainous areas and historical places. While work had been done to create a historic atmosphere, it was somewhat artificial. There was a series of concrete statuettes of apparently historical figures. A new Buddhist temple had been built on a ridgecrest, but there were no signs of it being used. At the final news conference of the event, I spoke about my inability to find information about Mentougou before my trip and the need for effective marketing. Indeed, according to the China Daily News they are promoting scenic tours to foreign tourists, such as the 4th Beijing International Walking Festival, which was held in September 14 in Mentougou.

To stimulate the kind of tourism China hopes someday to achieve, it is apparent that air and water pollution need to be tackled, particularly in Beijing and its environs. Polluted conditions were made obvious to the world during the 2008 Summer Olympics, and recent photos of air pollution in the city and emergency measures announced by officials indicate the severity of the problem. During subsequent field excursions, we witnessed how upstream dams have dried up rivers so local people fish in impoundments. Much of the ground in the area is torn up, as if it had been prepared for construction but was later abandoned, over and over again. Soil loss appears extensive everywhere.

While Western tourism is increasing in China, I did not see any tourists other than Chinese during the Mentougou event, or in subsequent visits to the mountainside village of Cuan Di Xia, Tanzhe Temple, and the iconic Tiananmen Square. Chinese tourism was very popular at the Great Wall, with hundreds of Beijing-city residents riding a gondola to the Wall and climbing its steep staircases there. But it appears that Beijing’s hope for Trail development and improving tourism will require significant mitigation of the damage accompanying industrial development and the attention of central planners to eventually succeed as a world-class destination for hikers, mountain lovers, and backpackers.

Another difficulty may be lack of a tradition of volunteerism, so crucial to the success of the

THE ATC HAS ADVISED GOVERNMENTS AND INTERACTED WITH TRAIL DEVELOPERS AND PARK OFFICIALS IN MONGOLIA, SOUTH AFRICA, TAJIKISTAN, TAIWAN, KOREA, LEBANON, NEW ZEALAND, RUSSIA, NEPAL, AND NOW CHINA.



From top: Bob and Dr. Yuri Quo (in white cap) — a professor at China Cultural University — with Lee Sheaffer, former president of PATC, and staff from the Taiwan Forestry Bureau in 2009 in front of the ATC’s headquarters; While work had been done to create a historic atmosphere on the Jingxi Ancient Path, it was somewhat artificial — a newly built Buddhist temple along the path showed no signs of use.

Appalachian Trail and our other national scenic trails. Americans seem to have a strong desire to “jump in and just do it.” Is there a Chinese equivalent to our wonderful society of A.T. volunteers? No, not yet anyway.

But my hosts were warm and welcoming, and I enjoyed wonderful meals and fellowship with them, every meal a new discovery with a rotating “lazy Susan” of new foods. Have you ever had ox’s stomach? I did. Quite chewy. 🍖

Bob Proudman is the author of the ATC’s *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance*, and has also helped found the ATC’s corridor monitoring program, Trail crew programs, ridgerunner and caretaker programs, as well as major government-funded procurement programs for removing structures and dams along the Trail, maintaining the exterior corridor boundary, and other federal and state-funded initiatives.

mom's movin' on

This past August, Jean Cashin, a remarkable former Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) employee passed away; but her legacy is carried on in the employees and volunteers of the ATC's Visitor Center.

Text excerpted and reprinted from the ATC's Appalachian Trailway News, March/April 1996 – by Judy Jenner

IN 1996, AFTER 24 YEARS AT THE APPALACHIAN Trail Conservancy, during which time she helped shape and personalize the organization's hiker services, Jean Cashin retired. Her presence behind the information desk at the Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia may have been consistent since 1972, but it didn't keep her from earning a well-deserved Trail-wide reputation as the universal "Trail Mom."

From Maine to Georgia, in registers along the Trail, in campsite conversations, in correspondence to and from the ATC, the gray-haired woman, who literally had all the answers or knew where to find them, had already been dubbed just "mom," the Trail's mom, the surrogate mom for A.T. hikers.

Jean credited her 24-year job at the ATC for much personal growth in her life and says, quite simply, "You have to be able to do that in a job, and I've been fortunate." Outwardly, there appeared to be little change. Her prematurely gray hair is now snow white, but the ear-to-ear smile, the dancing brown eyes, and the lilting voice were the same. Moreover, so was her ability to be the ATC's seasonal "hostess-with-the mostest" as hikers passing through Harpers Ferry crowded the visitors center around her desk.

When planning to retire from her position at the ATC, Jean had mixed feelings about leaving a job in which she spent more than a third of her life. In a regular column she wrote for the *Appalachian Trailway News*, she wrote, "As a good friend recently told me, to retire means you simply put the car in the garage, put on four new tires, and move forward."

During the years that Jean had staffed the information desk, the organization grew from about 5,000 to 23,500 members. Acquisition of public land to protect the Trail went from non-existent to hugely successful. The number of yearly visitors to the Trail grew from thousands to millions. The resulting paperwork, aimed at Trail protection, management, and information, grew by staggering proportions. And the staff grew from two to 32 employees. Jean was the second full-time employee, coming to the ATC in a round-about but serendipitous

route. As a child in Allentown, Pennsylvania, she often hiked sections of the A.T. In high school, she was attracted to conservation issues, she wrote a paper about Heaton Underhill, who, among his other works with the Department of the Interior, helped formulate the National Trails System Act. The 1968 legislation designated the A.T. as a national scenic trail and paved the way for its public ownership.

When the Cashins moved to an area near Frederick, Maryland in the late 1960s they rented a house from Les Holmes, the ATC's first executive director. Jean, who had been working nearby with handicapped young people, accepted Mr. Holmes' offer to be the organization's first office manager. It was 1972, and the ATC, housed in tiny quarters on the fourth floor of the old Potomac A.T. Club's building in Washington, D.C. was in the process of moving to Harpers Ferry. She moved with the ATC into one of the historic National Park Service buildings that was formerly occupied by Storer College. "I was so excited when I learned we would be near the Trail and able to meet hikers. The move really opened up a whole new avenue of activity for the ATC," she recalled.

Soon, a full time bookkeeper was hired, a membership secretary joined the staff, and Jean's daughter, Judy, started as a full-time shipper. Less than two years later, Judy took off to hike the Trail, and this adventure provided Jean with her first experience as a true "Trail Mom." "For the first time, I knew what it felt like to be on the other end," Jean recalled. "It helped me to better advise other parents who called the ATC, concerned about a son or daughter who was hiking the Trail."

At the start, Les Holmes had given Jean copies of the Trail guide books and told her to read them. "That was it," she said. "When I couldn't find the answers in them, I'd call the volunteers out in the field ... I was scared to death, because I felt the person on the other end knew more about the Trail than me. But, Les had so much confidence in me, and I learned it." When the ATC purchased its own building in Harpers Ferry in the mid-1970s Jean's desk was moved just inside the front door, so she would

be the first person visitors met. The actual desk is the same today, and although the space around it has changed, that desk remains "up front" where it has always been. When she began writing her regular column in the *Appalachian Trailway News* in 1980, it was fitting that it be called "Up Front."

From that desk, Jean did not only personally touch thousands of hikers — in person, in letters, and on the telephone — but watched a number of neighborhood residents grow from babes-in-arms to adults who returned occasionally to visit their home town. Among her earliest acquaintances in Harpers Ferry was Pamela Underhill, the daughter of the subject of her old high-school paper, Heaton Underhill. Ms. Underhill, then a young gift-shop owner, later went on to work with the Park Service and eventually became the head of the agency's A.T. Park Office (as A.T. Park Manager) — retiring in 2012 after 20 successful years in that position.

Others — residents of Harpers Ferry and hikers from around the world — similarly became Jean's lifelong friends. She could rattle off the names and circumstances as if it were yesterday — the first hiker she observed using Velcro to attach pants legs to shorts, a young woman hiker who pursued a retired hiker and ended up marrying him, a 10-year-old girl who thru-hiked with her parents and is now a chef who has worked all over the world. "As a kid, she had so much self-confidence," Jean recalled. "I know it came from her experience on the Trail." And, Jean remembered many hundreds of other hikers in some way, if only for an unusual nickname, a funny hat, a photograph from Katahdin. She was sure that she had met people of nearly every lifestyle, background, and handicap.

Jean kept hiker registers from the start. Since 1979, every Trail hiker who visited the ATC during her tenure was photographed. There were 40 section-hikers and 129 thru-hikers that first year, compared to more than 540 who visited in 1995. Over the years, with the increased workload of her job, Jean successfully recruited a number of regular volunteers, some of whom commuted more than an hour each way to work one day a week at the ATC. Hikers often lent a hand, for an hour or two, and there also were couples and families who planned their vacations around a stopover in Harpers Ferry to volunteer for a day or a week.

There were other changes in 24 years. "The footpath route is stable," she noted at the time of her retirement, "and it is so well maintained and blazed, even a blind man can do it!" Trail volunteers, she contended, "should have 25,000 stars in their crowns." As for hikers, she noted that lighter equipment had made long-distance hiking possible for so many more people than it was in the early '70s. "There are a lot more women on

Jean hard at work at her now legendary desk at the ATC Visitors Center in 1982

the Trail now than ever before, and teen-agers, handicapped people, and a lot of older, retired folks." She was confident of the Trail's protection and on that subject said: "Here is a unique, skinny national park that makes a lot of people happy...It's going to happen. There are too many good people involved in it for it not to happen."

When Jean retired, the ATC also lost the services of an extraordinary "Trail husband" and volunteer — George Cashin. At biennial meetings during the more than two decades of Jean's employment, he helped set up the ATC booth and worked at it



JEAN'S ORIGINAL CLERICAL JOB EVOLVED INTO ONE THAT HAD ALTERNATELY NECESSITATED SKILLS AS A MOTHER, A PREACHER, A PSYCHOLOGIST, AND A JUGGLER.

George became chief cook and bottle washer at the couple's home, while Jean continued to be the answer lady at the ATC. Together, they climbed Katahdin and Springer Mountain and went on many other hikes along the Trail.

In the end, Jean's original clerical job evolved into one that had alternately necessitated skills as a mother, a preacher, a psychologist, and a juggler. She buoyed hikers who were homesick and/or considering leaving the Trail. Oftentimes, she heard back, "If it hadn't been for you, I never would have made it." All along, Jean said the gray, and then white, color of her hair had given her a slight edge as an authority figure among hikers. It may just have been so, Mom, but, then again ... ♡

Jean Cashin was a founding member of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association and a recipient of the Appalachian Trail Museum's Lifetime Achievement Award for her service to the Trail community. Her desk is still put to good use daily — and is still positioned "up front" and center — at the ATC's Visitor Center.



being there

Daniel Burleson loves shooting landscapes. “Growing up in the mountains of western North Carolina instilled a love for the outdoors in me so finding a subject to photograph wasn’t hard, just finding it in the right light,” he explains. Daniel and his wife and energetic six-year-old son live in those same mountains where he often camps, and hikes with his camera as companion. He says that the most rewarding images are those that he feels he had to really work for — “making the hike in the dark with a flashlight to get to that special spot before sunrise, or going out in the bitter cold to capture that beautiful winter scene.” He often visits locations several times before he feels he has gotten all the elements just right. “That’s one of the many challenges of landscape photography and I embrace it,” he says. “I hope that my images will invite the viewer into them and provide a feeling of ‘being there.’”

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Winter View
Round Bald on Roan Mountain



Starry Night
Round Bald, Roan Highlands looking toward Roan High Knob



Cold and Lonely
A hawthorn tree sits atop Big Yellow Mountain, Roan Highlands

A TALE OF TWO TOWNS

The A.T. binds and bands two New York communities together as one.

HARLEM VALLEY, NEW YORK



T

he only train station literally *on* the Appalachian Trail is in Pawling, New York. Just as the Metro-North Railroad Harlem Line connects eight million New York City residents to the Trail, the A.T. serves as a connector between two communities working in partnership on its behalf.

According to Howard Permut, president of the Metro-North Railroad, “the railroad has long supported the hiking community, and in 1990 built a station on the Harlem Line where the tracks transect the A.T. in Dutchess County, New York ... these hiking stops make it possible for someone who lives in New York City to be in the wilderness, on the Appalachian Trail, in less than two hours.”

The Harlem Valley Appalachian Trail Community (HVATC) was born of a unique partnership between the towns of Dover and Pawling, New York. This is one of the first cases of two towns applying jointly for a designation as an A.T. Community and it has been a huge success for all involved, yielding benefits to hikers, the community, and to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Community leaders from both towns joined efforts on the application as a single committee, reinforcing their shared commitment to protect and promote the Trail and to offer hospitality to visitors. During the application process, the committee engaged a cross-section of interested parties in the Harlem Valley, and celebrated a successful designation in June of 2013.

“The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a jewel in America’s National Park System,” Jim Haggett, chair of the Dutchess/Putnam Appalachian Trail Management Committee observed. “It is wonderful to have the Harlem Valley designated as one of more than 30 communities, which helps define the Trail experience and draw so many people to the A.T.” Haggett also explained that the local Trail volunteers greatly appreciate all the support HVATC contributes to “efforts to maintain this recreational resource.”

The Trail enters Pawling from the south at the Beekman-Pawling town line, close to the intersection of Old Route 55 and Route 292. It offers a breathtaking view across the valley from Cat Rocks and crosses the Great Swamp on the boardwalk. The Trail runs through the Pawling Nature Reserve and arrives in Duell Hollow, where the Wiley Shelter is located. Possibly the best known section locally is the Great Swamp A.T. boardwalk that connects to the Metro North Railroad train stop in Pawling, which was completed in 2012 after an extensive effort by the ATC, the New York-New



Jersey Trail Conference, the Dutchess-Putnam A.T. Management Committee and more than 45 volunteers from the community who put in some 3,000 hours to help complete the work.

The highly visible boardwalk is a testament to the efforts of the many area volunteers who had a positive impact and now experience the pride of ownership. The multi-year project to rebuild the boardwalk over the Swamp River has attracted many new visitors to the Harlem Valley.

Early inhabitants of the Harlem Valley (also known as the Oblong) were members of the Schaghticoke and Pequot Tribes. They were blessed with hills and valleys containing areas of open forests, thick swamps and sparkling waters (and trails, no doubt). Settlement under the first land patent in eastern Dutchess County was established in 1704. After the Revolutionary War, municipal divisions were established and the Pawling Township encompassed modern day Dover. In 1807, the New York Legislature separated 26,000 acres from Pawling to create the town of Dover. Municipal boundaries aside, members of the communities continued to work together on economic, cultural, and ecological fronts. Chief among the area’s shared natural resources is the A.T., and protection of the



From top: Attendees for a hike with HVATC and “HIKE for Mental Health” gather at the A.T. Pawling railroad stop – by Donna Chapman; A snowy A.T. Boardwalk in Pawling – by Pete Sander

Trail has always been a priority of both towns.

After the region’s loss of a major employer, Dover and Pawling residents founded the Harlem Valley Partnership in 1993 to create an economy focused on the area’s natural beauty, cultural history, and agriculture and recreational opportunities, allowing the area to become a proverbial “backyard” for neighbors to the south.

Energized by the experience of the successful A.T. Community designation ceremony, various groups have begun projects and programs centered



From top: HVATC co-chairs Constance DuHamel and Pete Muroski celebrate at the official designation ceremony – photo by Peter Cris; The Pawling and Dover Scouts participated in HVATC’s reception of 2013 A.T. thru-hikers, who are recent war veterans with the Warrior Hike program, this past summer – photo by Constance DuHamel

around the Trail and outdoor recreation. The libraries offer resources to hikers and encourage local residents to explore the A.T. HVATC will provide 10 backpacks to the libraries, available for anyone to check out, stuffed full of supplies like guidebooks, binoculars, Trail maps for hiking the nearby section of the A.T., and Leave No Trace information. In addition, Little Free Libraries — mini boxes of books available for hikers placed in a few key locations near the Trail — will be available where passersby can share books and stories with others.

The Pawling and Dover Scouts participated together in HVATC’s Warrior Hike Reception this past summer, and are working on other projects that will incorporate the Trail. The community outreach of

one Trail to Every Classroom program alumni teacher includes efforts to share her conservation knowledge with all the local schools. The HVATC works with local and regional partners to offer hikes showcasing different features of the Trail, including Cat Rocks, a scenic overlook with views of Harlem Valley. These partner hikes bring new audiences to experience the Trail, some coming from as far away as Pennsylvania. HVATC has also reached out to sister A.T. Communities for advice and guidance. The group leverages the resources of a community with a history of collaboration to serve the Trail and all it offers.

These initiatives were the result of an energetic, infectious, and successful collaboration between Constance DuHamel and Pete Muroski, co-chairs of the HVATC. “We reached out early on with ideas to promote the A.T. and to contribute resources to hikers and members of our community,” says DuHamel. “With initiative and cooperation, more than 35 different organizations and local leaders provided letters of support and participated in the application and designation process.”

HVATC created a model by which other towns can work together to leverage their resources. “We are happy to share our experience with other communities interested in joining the A.T. Community network,” DuHamel explains. She hopes, for example, that the Little Free Library and the “fully-loaded backpacks,” will catch on with other A.T. Communities. It is apparent from DuHamel’s fierce dedication that the partnership will continue to grow and support the A.T., its hikers, and the communities’ initiatives.

The residents of the towns of Pawling and Dover appreciate the Trail’s beauty and cultural heritage. HVATC is committed to help maintain it, and encourage others to enjoy it for years to come. HVATC’s home base is Native Landscapes, at the crossroads of the A.T. Boardwalk, Route 22 and the Metro-North Railroad. Native Landscapes’ Proprietor and co-chair of HVATC, Muroski, offers rest and rejuvenation to thru-hikers at his business just a few steps to the north of the railroad crossing. On most days, you can find the A.T. Community Ambassador, Cassie Kessman, there too. 🌲

HVATC welcomes input from the hiking community to better meet the needs of all hikers. Find them on Facebook at: [facebook.com/HarlemValleyAppalachianTrailCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/HarlemValleyAppalachianTrailCommunity). For more information about A.T. Communities visit: [appalachiantrail.org/atcommunities](https://www.appalachiantrail.org/atcommunities)

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A.T. Journeys is the official magazine of the A.T. and the membership magazine of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy — a national not-for-profit corporation with more than 43,000 members from all 50 U.S. states and more than 15 other countries. Our readers are adventurous, eco-friendly outdoor enthusiasts who understand the value in the protection and maintenance of the Trail and its surrounding communities.

Advertising revenues directly support the publication and production of the magazine and help meet the ATC’s objectives. Great Smoky Mountains National Park — by Von Manning

refuge REALIZED

IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES. IT WAS THE worst of times. I began my journey on March 31, 2013, full of hopes and fears, excitement and trepidation. I had dreamed of a thru-hike along the A.T. for as long as I could remember. I had section hiked most of the Trail during summer breaks. I longed to start at that first blaze in Georgia and finish on Katahdin. And I did. But I did not complete the Trail in the manner I had expected.

I began on Easter Sunday by climbing up the Approach Trail in a drizzling rain with several of the guys I had met at the Hiker Hostel in Dählonega. "Subaru," a 30-ish looking guy, carried an immense pack, and we leapfrogged each other on the climb up. We reached the summit together and took pictures of each other before heading to that first shelter. The shelter was packed that evening with Trail hopefuls, all experiencing their first night on the A.T. We laughed at the mistakes we made, and we shared in the novelty of that first chilly night. I lent a stake to "Danger Dave" so his tent would stay up. "Codewalker" helped me figure out my gravity feed filter. Subaru re-evaluated the contents of his pack to reduce the weight. Amazingly, most of the friends I met that night beat the odds and finished at Katahdin.

Trail visionary Benton MacKaye once said: "The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life ... Cooperation replaces antagonism, trust replaces suspicion, emulation replaces competition." I first



viewed that quote while visiting Rita Hennessy, National Park Service assistant park manager for the A.T. Park Office, at her office in Harpers Ferry. I had met Rita while participating in the Trail to Every Classroom program. She is the dynamite coordinator of the program and so I was honored when she invited me to visit her while on my thru-hike. I was struck by the foresight of MacKaye, because the quote aptly describes what I was experiencing on the Trail. The relationships that developed out of the Trail community are some that will remain with me forever. In fact, the thru-hiking experience is what provides the opportunity to really understand what MacKaye had intended when he conceived of a long-distance trail. It is the community. The people who I met as hikers, "Trail angels," shuttlers, hostel owners, and even blog followers were the kindest, most genuine people

that I have ever encountered. It is that sense of a trusting community when trekking as a long-distance backpacker along the A.T. that makes thru-hiking so special.

My intent when I began my thru-hike was to never, ever give up. But, alas, I was struck down by circumstances beyond my control. After hiking 1,300 miles without injury, I was felled by a lowly spider. The small bite became infected with MRSA (a bacterial infection that is resistant to most antibiotics), and within 24 hours, I was hospitalized with the threat of surgery. I spent a week in the Palmerton, Pennsylvania hospital, fighting that infection. When it looked like surgery was needed, I went home to northern Vermont to obtain the opinion of my private physician. Again, I was hospitalized with a port inserted into my chest for the harsh antibiotics that were administered to fight off the infection. Fortunately, I healed. But I had lost valuable time. I made the decision to hike through Maine (the only state that I had not entirely covered) and then to trek south to complete my thru-hike, even though I had already completed the remaining section in past summer section hikes.

Maine is rugged under normal circumstances, and I began two days after the removal of the port in my chest. My eagerness to resume too early was my downfall. I struggled through the entire length of Maine and never regained the strength to hike long miles. When I finally reached Katahdin, I was spent. If my husband had not been with me for that final climb, I might have given up. I clawed my way up Katahdin and slid my way back down on a rainy, dreary day. However, at the summit, I was surprised to see my friend, Subaru. We had begun on a rainy day at Springer and now we were finishing at Katahdin in the same conditions. In spite of the pain, there is always some sort of magic that occurs on the Trail, just when things seem the worst. Seeing Subaru and finishing with him was magic. And that is what MacKaye meant when he envisioned the Trail as a "refuge from the scramble of everyday life." For a moment, I forgot the pain and exhaustion when I saw my old Trail friend.

After summiting Katahdin, I attempted to continue my thru-hike but found that I could not walk for long. When I finally visited a doctor, I

discovered that I had Giardia and needed more time to recover. By the time I was strong enough to hike again it was no longer feasible to climb through the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The huts were closed. The Mount Washington Auto Road was

TRAIL VISIONARY BENTON MACKAYE ONCE SAID: "THE CAMP COMMUNITY IS A SANCTUARY AND A REFUGE FROM THE SCRAMBLE OF EVERY-DAY WORLDLY COMMERCIAL LIFE ... COOPERATION REPLACES ANTAGONISM, TRUST REPLACES SUSPICION, EMULATION REPLACES COMPETITION."

closed. Ice and snow covered the high peaks. I would be alone in dangerous conditions. This time, I let good sense be my guide. I ended my thru-hike.

In the five-and-a-half months and 1,500 miles that I spent hiking the Trail in 2013, I learned much. I carried Benton MacKaye's quote with me from Harpers Ferry as I gained a trust in humanity and a trust in myself. I have a deep appreciation for the people who work hard to emulate MacKaye's vision of a Trail supported by work from volunteers. If it weren't for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Trail maintaining clubs and organizations, people like Rita Hennessy (who is helping a new generation of Trail supporters) and Laurie Potteiger (the ATC's information services manager) and Josh and Leigh Saint (the very first hostel owners a hiker may meet in Dählonega) and Miss Janet (the iconic Trail angel who often "magically" appears to help hikers) and many more, there would be no Appalachian Trail. There would be no place for dreamers like me to seek that connection with the wilderness, with good people, and with myself.

I may not have completed a true thru-hike, but I feel I had the thru-hiker experience. I have walked the entire length of the Appalachian Trail, even if some of it was during summer section hikes. I have experienced all that Benton MacKaye envisioned when he proposed the Trail. The summit of Katahdin represented the completion of the A.T. for me, and I am proud to say that I am a 2,000-miler. [⬆](#)

Janet takes time to appreciate the sunrise from her tent during her A.T. hike

Janet "Slow n' Steady" Steinert is a retired school administrator who has participated in the Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) program by providing A.T. experiences for the students at Whitefield School in northern New Hampshire. For more information about TTEC visit: appalachiantrail.org/ttec



an even BETTER WORLD

A successful community outreach program allows young people to experience nature and appreciate the value of preserving it for future generations.

NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO THE

Len Foote Hike Inn's mission than tossing kids into the deep end of the outdoor education learning experience. Over the years, thousands of children of all ages have visited the Hike Inn — a sustainably designed Georgia State Park facility nestled in the Chattahoochee National Forest, just a few hours north of Atlanta, and managed by a non-profit organization dedicated to providing education and outdoor recreation opportunities. I think it is safe to say that virtually all of these young people had an unforgettable experience, the kind that challenges their thinking about the world and how they want to commit themselves to the future. Unchaining developing minds from video games, mindless television, and exercise-deficient lifestyles can be nothing but positive; and 2013 was our best year ever for linking young people to environmental learning.

This year, the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) led a record 119 students on wilderness trips to the Hike Inn. This success came chiefly from a long-established joint venture with the GATC on their Community Outreach program to educate young people from inner-city Atlanta and from north Georgia mountain communities. Accompanied by teachers, school administrators, and experienced GATC members, these students had a true outdoor experience during their visit to the Hike Inn. It is no stretch to say that the trip was the most intense exposure to true wilderness that most of them had ever seen. Many of them spoke of how they were inspired to learn more about natural history and perhaps to apply the resulting knowledge to their future education and careers. Some even wanted to hike the entire A.T.

"The mission of the GATC includes promoting appreciation of the Appalachian Trail and of the natural world in general," says GATC's Community Outreach director Tom Ottinger. To encourage that appreciation, GATC's Community Outreach program takes children and youth out on the Appalachian Trail and other nearby trails to learn about nature through experiencing it. "Begun in 2009, the outreach program has also taken more than 650 children and youth and their adult sponsors on overnight trips to Georgia's Len Foote Hike Inn," explains Ottinger.

The program annually gets more than 1,500 students out on the Appalachian Trail and other nearby trails. Participants include grades 2 through 12 students from four county school systems near the A.T. as well as inner city youth from Atlanta.



WHEN KIDS WHO HAVE HAD LITTLE EXPOSURE TO THE WOODS SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES HIKING FIVE MILES BACK INTO A MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS, MANY OF THEM DISPLAY A COMICAL COMBINATION OF FEAR AND BREATHLESS ENTHUSIASM.

Activities include classes on the Trail, day hikes, backpacking overnights, Trail maintenance, and Hike Inn overnight stays. "We also partnered with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light to bring Latino youth to the Hike Inn," says Ottinger. "With funding from a recent community service award we received from Georgia Natural Gas, we hope to expand the Outreach Program to additional schools and community groups." GATC was recently honored by the Georgia Natural Gas company with a TrueBlue Community Award in recognition for the outstanding work of the Community Outreach program. A panel of judges made up of corporate and community leaders, including the former president of Atlanta Gas Light, a representative from the Atlanta Mayor's office, and the head of Community Relations for WXIA-TV, selected

From left: Eight-graders from north Georgia enjoy an A.T. hike — led by GATC volunteers — to the top of Blood Mountain; Students from an inner city school in Atlanta experience the Trail during an overnight trip and stay at the Hike Inn — GATC works with Atlanta's Phoenix Boys Association to give them an opportunity to experience the natural world.



GATC's outreach program from nearly 100 applicants for the top award and a \$10,000 grant.

Working with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the program assists teachers in implementing the ATC's Trail to Every Classroom initiative — 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 Appalachian Trail. 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, while growing academically and professionally.

Using the outdoors as a literal and figurative learning laboratory, teachers animate education in a way that could never happen in a conventional classroom. When kids who have had little exposure to the woods suddenly find themselves hiking five miles back into a mountain wilderness, many of them display a comical combination of fear and


Clockwise from above: The Hike Inn works in coordination with GATC and provides lodging, food, and environmental education during outreach overnight trips; Middle school students from northern Georgia participate in Trail work; A student from Atlanta takes in the scenery during a hike; Middle school students pose before tackling some work on the Approach Trail after an overnight stay at the inn.

breathless enthusiasm. They speak with terror about seeing a snake or bear, all the while wishing desperately to actually see one of these creatures. Of course, the stress and sweat of labouring up a mountain trail elicits groans and complaints from time to time, but when triumphant kids reach the lobby of the Hike Inn, the enthusiasm is palpable. You would think they had just won a gold medal in the Olympic 10,000-meter race. In years to come, thousands of students will visit the Hike Inn and be inspired by a near-mystical opportunity to break

away from the “real world” and immerse themselves into an even better real world.

“Young people today are increasingly sedentary, spending time indoors connected to electronic devices but losing connection to nature,” says Ottinger. “Many who live near the Appalachian Trail have never heard of it; most have never been on it.” He goes on to explain that the Hike Inn overnights give students a chance to experience the natural beauty of the North Georgia Mountains. At the inn, students learn about solar power, composting toilets, green building design, and minimizing waste. While hiking in and out, students learn about stewardship of the outdoors, plant and tree identification, trail construction,

and about threats to the forest such as the hemlock woolly adelgid. “They experience nature, become comfortable in it, and appreciate the value of preserving it for future generations,” says Ottinger.

Appalachian Education and Recreation Services (AERS), the not-for-profit that runs the Len Foote Hike Inn, is currently developing an expanded outreach program for young people called the Outside School. This initiative will expand the lessons the Hike Inn has learned about working with students, seek out grants and other funding, and deliver the message of the wilderness to a broader base of kids, particularly those who may otherwise never get to see what it means to walk deep into the woods. 

Richard Judy is board president of AERS, an ATC Life Member, and a 1973 A.T. thru-hiker. His novel, *THRU: An Appalachian Trail Love Story*, is published by the Appalachian Trail Museum, which receives all proceeds of sales. Richard's own A.T. story will be featured in the upcoming March/April issue of *A.T. Journeys* and will include excerpts from his new book. For more information visit: hike-inn.com and georgia-atclub.org

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
I HOPE EVERYONE HAD A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON.

First I would like to thank everyone who made 2013 a successful year for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and for helping with either physical or fiscal support to ensure that our mission is continued into this New Year. It seems like yesterday when I wrote my first column for *A.T. Journeys* but it was seven years ago and the excitement of doing what I do has not worn off. I am honored everyday by the response I get from our supporters. I call to thank them for their support and they turn the tables and tell me what an awesome job the staff of the ATC does.

I have a renewed excitement this year because, as the ATC’s board chair Sandi Marra pointed out, we have an incredible Board of Directors who are committed to helping the organization succeed and excel as never before. Our executive director, Ron Tipton, is eager to meet as many of you as he can and tell you personally about his enthusiasm for our mission and goals. The various committees of the board have a renewed energy and are eager to challenge us and themselves to provide the very best recreational experience on the East Coast. And we will.

We’ll begin the year by “Hiking the Hill.” We will be advocating on your behalf to get Congress to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. You can add your individual voice as well by calling or writing your Representative and Senators.

In the spring we will hold our fifth annual Leaders in Conservation Awards dinner gala in Washington, D.C. where we will honor two members of Congress for their service to the Appalachian Trail and confer our Vanguard Award to the Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. We are very pleased that longtime ATC member and recently returned Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Don Beyer, has

joined with the ATC Board of Directors member Terry Lierman to chair this year’s gala. We’ll have more information on the gala in the March/April issue.

Finally, thanks to your generous support, throughout the year we will be able to make needed maintenance on the Trail: building shelters, repairing the footpath, providing support to users through our Ridge Runners, adding more communities to our Appalachian Trail Community program, training more teachers through the Trail to Every Classroom program, and much more.

Thank you for your continued support of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. ⬆

All the best for 2014
Royce W. Gibson | Director of Membership & Development

Thanks to your generous support we will be able to make needed maintenance on the Trail: building shelters, repairing the footpath ... adding more communities to our Appalachian Trail Community program, training more teachers through the Trail to Every Classroom program, and much more.



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Looking for a hiking partner for a north-bound thru-hike of the A.T. starting in March of 2015. Need someone to periodically check in with during the hike for safety precautions. If interested, contact: hikergirlemily@gmail.com.

Woman, 63 years old, looking for section hiking buddy for Pennsylvania/ New York/ New Jersey hikes in 2014. Would like to start in second week of May; planning 10 to 12 miles per day. Contact: sylvia.fine@gmail.com.

Healthy 67 year-old male, looking for hiking partner(s), male or female, to hike a very challenging section of the A.T.: Monson, Maine to Gale River Trail, New Hampshire, just south of Galehead Hut. Timing: start early August 2014. This section will complete the A.T. for me. In 2013, I hiked the 100 Mile Wilderness from Katahdin south to Monson. Monson is easy to get to from Bangor

Airport (I would fly in). Total distance for this section is 246.2 miles. Ten to eleven miles per day in this section would be a challenge but doable. "Nero's and zeros" where and when appropriate. Would like to do a week pre-hike, perhaps in Virginia, to warm up and get to know you. Contact: tomkluesener@gmail.com.

For Sale

Books: *Hiking The Appalachian Trail* (2 volume set), Rodale Press, 1975, First Edition, new. \$59.00. *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.

For Your Information

Volunteers needed Weekends in Harpers Ferry Visitor Center. Volunteers are needed to greet

visitors, provide local hike recommendations, and help generate support for the A.T. and the ATC. If you have customer service or related experience, like to hike, and are available on a Saturday or Sunday two days a month, please contact Laurie Potteiger at: lpotteiger@appalachiantrail.org for more information.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is recruiting for several internship positions in 2014 including: Public Relations; Marketing Assistant; Events; Visitor Services; Development Database; and Development Events. For position descriptions, more information, and to apply visit: appalachiantrail.org/jobs.

Visitor Center Assistant

wanted. A Seasonal Part-Time position in the Harpers Ferry visitor center will be available starting in the spring and running through December 2014. Responsibilities

will include a mix of customer service and administrative duties. Requirements include hiking and backpacking experience, knowledge of and a passion for the Appalachian Trail, customer service and sales experience, and proficiency in Microsoft Word and Excel. For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/jobs.

The Fourth Annual ATC Cake Contest March 1. ATC will hold a cake contest at its Harpers Ferry visitor center in celebration of the organization's 89th birthday. For information about the celebration or how to submit an entry visit: appalachiantrail.org/ev

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ON THE DAY INTO MY RETIREMENT WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT IT WAS NOT LIKE I thought it would be, I laughed. I was sitting along the back wall of a lean-to in the Adirondacks, my cooking kitchen along one side of the down sleeping bag that I had pulled up over my legs and my wilderness journal on the other side. This had been a characteristic of my backpacking life since leaving the A.T. on my winter hike from September of 1979 to March of 1980. I thought that the big "R" would mean that I could go back-packing anytime that I wanted. That I could go on Tuesdays and have the trails all to myself. That I would lose all of the weight of my working life. That finally, there would be time to become the writer that others said I should be. Only some of that was true. What I found out about retirement is exactly what I found out about thru-hiking the A.T.: it is not how I planned it but rather what I found out along the way. And the differences between these would determine any eventual outcome.

On my A.T. hike, I was not prepared for day-after-day of wearing the same wet socks and shorts when it rained 10, or 12, or 23 days in a row. I was not prepared for how dirty I would become. There were times that I smelled so bad that I could not even sit next to myself. I had brought along a large, loose-leaf notebook and thought that I could pen a novel, a sort of traveling fantasy story like Tolkien would have written but there was no time for it. No inspiration for it. One might believe that I had a fire every night but the truth is that I only had thirteen on the entire trip. Usually at the end of the day, it was too dark and I was too tired to bother with a fire.

I wasn't alone in discovering what the new reality was about. Other thru-hikers told me about how they struggled with the cold, the absence of others on the Trail, or how instant oatmeal was just not cutting it. And then daylight. We only had less than eight hours of it each day to hike with, making the nights that much longer. But it seems to me that these adversities are what make the Trail so compelling to us. Backpacking in general presents us with obstacles to overcome along the way. These challenge us, our beliefs, and often predict how the trip will turn out. The beauty of the sport hinges on these presentations. These create the difficulties that spawn the creative efforts necessary to manage them more effectively. On September ninth, when I summited Katahdin, there were 53 others dreaming of the south. The last one of those rolled over in a lean-to in Pennsylvania in mid-December and said that he couldn't stand the cold any longer. That December presented me with the psychological challenge of being alone that would define the remainder of my hike. It is one thing to hike solo but quite another to realize how alone I had placed myself. I would not find another person on the Trail until the last week of February. This is how I made it:

I broke each day down into managing three central aspects. Finding water, finding the right mix and amount of food, and shelter. I moved away from the need to achieve a certain number of miles each day by slowing down. I began paying closer attention to the weather, trying to understand when the temperatures dropped what it could mean to me and where I slept that night. The lean-tos are handy for laying out the gear but I would sleep warmer in my solo tent. Understanding the weather helped me to make decisions on crossing peaks or sitting tight for eight hours. It is one thing to have the "let's go for it" attitude but quite another to realize when it is not safe. What happened to me is that I was able to fashion a hike that became mine. It was not one bound by the voices of others in the lean-tos or those with longer legs than mine. I stopped the worry about measuring up to the standards of others to simply trying to understand my own limitations and how to deal with those. I learned how to live a life that was more conducive to me.

Retirement is the same. By not losing sight of how well the A.T. prepared me for my adult life, I will find ways through retirement that I have not yet thought about. My thru-hike left me with an incredible sense of confidence. All that I have to do now is fire up the stove for another cup of coffee, pick up my journal, and recall what I have learned.

Michael "the Monk" Keck
LIVES IN BLACK RIVER, NEW YORK.

"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.

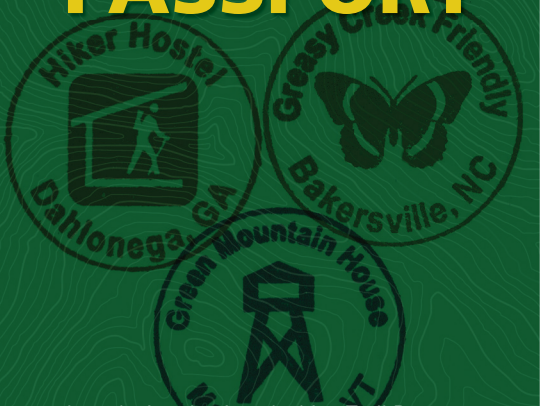
BACKPACKING IN GENERAL PRESENTS US WITH OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME ALONG THE WAY. THESE CHALLENGE US, OUR BELIEFS, AND OFTEN PREDICT HOW THE TRIP WILL TURN OUT. THE BEAUTY OF THE SPORT HINGES ON THESE PRESENTATIONS.

Do you want your photography published in *A.T. Journeys*?



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