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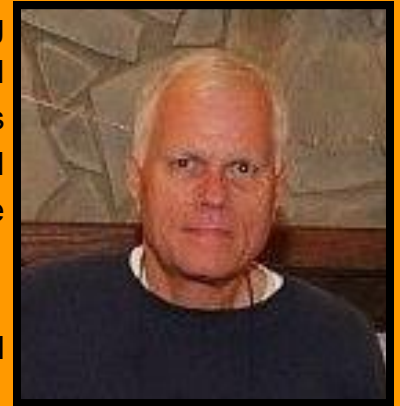
VOLUME 30, ISSUE 6

MAY 29, 2013

"Father of BMT" Inducted Into Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame

By George Owen

David Sherman, long honored as the "Founding Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail," was inducted **June 7** into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame as part of the third class of five honorees. This occurred at the annual AT Hall of Fame Banquet at the Allenberry Resort in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania.



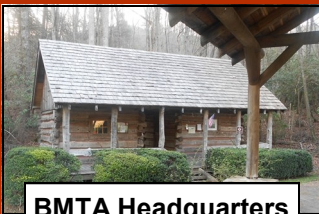
This Hall of Fame is part of the Appalachian Trail Museum in Gardners, PA.



During the 1970s David served as director of the Office of Planning and Research for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), at which time he was reading and researching much on Benton MacKaye. He discovered MacKaye had early on proposed a route for the Appalachian Trail that would come down the more western main range of the southern Appalachians. Sherman began mapping and proposing a route which follows much of today's Benton MacKaye Trail and it would be about 95 percent on public land. At the same time, David began talking to some of us that are now BMTA "Founding Members", (Dave himself is one of six). The

Benton MacKaye Trail Association and work on our trail was birthed into reality in 1979-1980.

- President: David Blount
- Vice President: Darcy Douglas
- Secretary: Sara Bland
- GA Maintenance: Tom Keene
- TN/NC Maint: Ernie Engman
- Smokies Coord: Bob Ruby
- Trail Construction: Bill Hodge
- Hiking: Ralph Heller
- Membership: Vic Fredlund
- Treasurer: Margaret Evans
- Publicity: Marge Heller
- Newsletter Editor: Gene Nix
- Conservation: George Owen
- Past President: Dick Evans
- State Rep GA: Steve Bayliss
- State Rep TN: Rick Harris
- State Rep NC: **Vacant**



BMTA Headquarters

Subsequent to his high position in the GA DNR, Dave went on to an outstanding career in both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. Serving in both agencies, he is credited with gathering new authorities and funding to complete protection of the Appalachian Trail corridor. After Congress enacted the 1978 Appalachian Trail amendments to the National Scenic Trails Act, he played a leadership role in securing the tracts of land necessary for preservation of the AT's scenic, ecological, and cultural values. For awhile he was appointed as manager of the Park Service Appalachian Trail Project Office. Later, when invited by the U.S. Forest Service to join that agency, he held the critical position of Deputy Chief of Land Acquisition for that entity.

Occasionally we at BMTA have been able to convince Dave to come South again from his home in Washington and Arlington to join us for very special occasions. The last was when he joined us for the weekend of our 30th anniversary in 2010 at Blue Ridge. Sherman had retired from the Forest Service before this occasion.

David (also known simply as Dave) hails from Albany, GA. He is joined by another Georgian this year in being inducted into the AT Hall of Fame, Eddie Stone, who had much to do with the development of the AT in Georgia over the years. Three others inducted this year are David Field, Ruth Blackburn, and David Startzell – who last served as executive director of the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC – last word recently changed to “Conservancy”) for 34 years until 2012.

We of the BMTA salute David Sherman in all of his accomplishments, and now especially for this signal honor of induction into the AT Hall of Fame. Those of us “old-timers” in the “know” are quite aware, quite sure, the Benton MacKaye Trail would not now exist completed on the ground if it had not been for Dave’s dreaming and pushing others of us to build the trail over the years. He often helped continuously behind the scenes in ways and contacts beyond most folks’ knowledge. Thus the Benton MacKaye Trail and our association stand as one of his most significant accomplishments!



Commemorative hiking sticks all around for the 2013 class of inductees into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame. From left Carol Neachalec, representing the late Ruth Blackburn; David Sherman; David Field; Mark Rodman, representing the late Everett (Eddie) Stone; and Steve Paradis, representing David Startzell.

< < < New Benton MacKaye Sign >>>

Ralph Heller, BMTA Hiking Director, had a vision for a new BMT sign to be placed at Amicalola Falls State Park. He wanted it to indicate that the BMT can be reached by taking the approach trail of the Appalachian Trail (two-tenths of a mile past the start of the AT). So he followed through with his idea and was given permission by the Park Rangers. After having the sign made, he painted it and installed the sign on [June 21st](#).



In addition, thanks to the Heller's, our new BMT Map produced by Backroads Less Traveled Maps now hangs in the Amicalola Falls Visitor Center!

< < < Missing Horse >>>

Missing Horse - On Friday, 6/8/2013, Dewey Campbell was doing an pre-ride on a pack project to the top of Big Frog Mountain for the Youth Conservation Corps. One of his pack horses, a red-dish mare, had a panic attack, (after packing for over 8 miles with no problems.....strange) bucked off her pack saddle and took off down Big Frog Mountain to the Southwest. If you are familiar with the area, this happened near the spring up there. For you GPS users, the UTM coordinates of her last known location are: 16S 725659E 3875548N. This is one of the most remote and steep areas in the Big Frog/Cohutta Wilderness with many ravines. Because of this, it is unlikely she would go back up to her original location. We looked for her up there [yesterday \(6/9/2013\)](#) with no luck. The general direction we expect her to travel would be toward Beech Bottoms. She is wearing a halter and lead line. If you run across her, please contact Dewey at [706-271-6097](tel:706-271-6097).

Thanks....

Richard T. "Jim" Holland
706-258-2830

Arts In The Park... Blue Ridge Georgia . . .

By Marge Heller

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association had another successful year at "Arts in the Park" in Blue Ridge, GA. During the two day event, we shared information on our trail to lots of folks. In addition to welcoming a few new members, our merchandise sales and donations were twice as much as last year!



Sara and Jerry Bland
Dick and Margaret Evans

Marge Heller, Publicity Director, would like to thank the following members for giving their time and enthusiasm to the BMT Memorial Day weekend: Jerry & Sara Bland, Dick & Margaret Evans, Joy Forehand, Dan & Mardee Kauffman, and Jane Olds.



Joy Forehand



Dick Evans



Jerry Bland and Margaret Evans

Arts In The Park... Blue Ridge Georgia . . .



Jane Olds



Dan and Mardee Kauffman



Ralph Heller



Feedback From a Thru-Hiker: By Ralph Heller

Sometimes we get a really good letter from thru-hikers when they send in their Completion Report. Ken LaFlamme (Pilgrim) sent us this letter with his report after he completed section hiking the BMT June 5, 2013. He started section hiking the trail in [January 2011](#). It is interesting to hear about all our members he met during his quest to hike the entire BMT and assistance he received. The Mark and Gilbert he mentions are Mark Yost and Gilbert Treadwell. Ron Brown has a shuttle service for hikers in the North Georgia/TN area, and Bob/Mary Jo Stamper run the ASKA Lodge B&B on Weaver Creek Road, just off Aska Road near Blue Ridge. Hats off to all who helped Ken in his journey. Having received Ken's permission, the following is the text of his letter.

June 7th, 2013

To the BMIA,

I'd like to thank all the people involved in the BMTA for making it possible for me to hike the 300 mile little brother of the AT.

The first person I ever met who was involved with the BMT was George Owen when I was thru hiking the AT in 2006. George was nice enough to give me a lift to Blueberry Patch Hostel in Hiwassee and filled me in on the BMT.

Then I met Dick Evans and a group of BMTA members doing a day hike while I was taking a break on the bridge over Forney Creek. We had a great conversation and a nice woman took some pictures of me with my camera. (I never get pictures of myself hiking!).

Sometime last year I met Steve Bayliss and Bob Ruby who were doing trail maintenance north of Fowler Mountain. On my most recent 'finish-it-up' hike I met Mark and Gilbert at GA 60. I had seen several blow downs since leaving Springer but couldn't really pinpoint any of them.

I'd especially like to thank Bob Ruby. He was a great help in getting me in contact with Ron Brown and the Aska Lodge. Ron was the only shuttle I used on the whole trail. I probably did the trail 1 ½ to 1 ¾ times if-you count all the out and backs I did.

Of course, I'd like to thank Ron Brown himself for the lift and Bob and Mary Jo Stamper for allowing to park at the Aska Lodge while I was out in the woods.

The very last little piece of trail I needed was between the Appalachian Hwy and the bridge on Jo Ann Sisson Rd. When my feet hit the pavement I felt a momentary sense of elation as I finished another long distance journey. Yet at the same time it was anticlimatic. It's over. Now what?

I suppose there are many options. The Pinhoti and Cumberland trails come to mind. Or I can continue to work on a 500 mile pin in the Smokies.

In any case, once again, thanks to all who made my journey on the BMTA possible!

Happy Trails everyone.

Ken "Pilgrim" LaFlamme, Knoxville TN (for now)

Question: how do you move a 16 foot long hiking bridge ?

By Dick Evans

Question-how do you move a 16 foot long, 3 foot wide hiking bridge weighing some 1,000 pounds from the bottom of a twenty-foot deep washout to a new location (By the way, it was on its side in the mud, on a 47% slope)? Answer-Very Carefully!



When the Benton MacKaye Trail exits the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness headed south, it is routed just to the north side of the Cherohala Skyway on the Tennessee/North Carolina border. A narrow side-hill trail there, it crossed a water drainage from the highway over a bridge designed by the Forest Service and built by a cooperative series of work trips . However, the amount of water draining during heavy storms of 2008 and 2009 washed out the bridge and resulted in the bridge falling into a new crevasse on the side a very steep slope, closing the trail. Given the location and the hazardous nature of the work required, any attempt to correct the situation was delayed until [April 2010](#). Dick Evans asked a Robbinsville friend, Carroll Ensley, an experienced Rigger (and horseman) to take a look at the predicament. Carroll designed a cable suspension type of rig to lift the bridge out of the ditch without endangering personnel and we were able to get the bridge to a stable location. Until a permanent solution was sought, the Trail was detoured over a short section of the Cherohala Skyway.

Rick Harris and Ken Jones , assisting in the "Big Lift", laid out a proposed trail relocation for Forest Service approval that moved the bridge location some 50 feet downhill. The Forest Service worked with the NC Department of Transportation to try to get some assurance that the drainage would not get worse, but finally approved the relocated trail in late Winter of 2013.

In late May, we were able to get a small select group of folks to the site and, again under Carroll's direction, we winched the bridge into its new location and secured it to the footings that had been previously built.



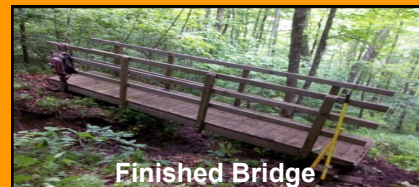
Group 2010

The original work trip included (from left in photo) Carroll Ensley in background, Paula Fredlund, Annette Ensley, Eric Eades and Vic Fredlund. Not shown, Rick Harris, Ken Jones, Dick and Margaret Evans.



Group 2013

The group this year included (from left in photo) Vic Fredlund, Brenda Harris, Rick Harris, Dick Evans and Curt Griggs. Not shown, Carroll Ensley.



Finished Bridge

The bridge is now in place, but steps will be built and the short section of relocated trail will be constructed this Spring / Summer.

Upcoming Hikes...Ralph Heller: Hiking Director

By Ralph Heller

Saturday July 6: Trout Adventure Trail Hike: The Benton MacKaye Trail Association and Trout Unlimited together will lead two hikes on the Trout Adventure Trail in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Group 1 will hike about 7 miles on the BMT and AT and Group 2 will hike an easy 2.2 miles round trip to Long Creek Falls where both groups will meet around 12:30 p.m. This is a free event sponsored by Trout Unlimited, with lunch and a discussion included on the area's mountain trout and efforts to preserve and conserve the habitat. All pre-registered hikers will receive lunch and a distinctive Trout Adventure Trail patch. Children are welcome and encouraged.

To register and for further information on caravan meeting location in Blue Ridge, e-mail: trout.adventure.trail@gmail.com.

Saturday-Friday July 20-26: Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Deep South Region 39th Biennial Gathering: Open to all trail using groups, this 4-day gathering will feature numerous hikes each day, seminars, and social gatherings. You can come for a day or stay the whole period. For information and to register for this really big event...

[go to http://www.appalachiantrail.org/who-we-are/events/2011/07/26/atc-cullowhee-2013](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/who-we-are/events/2011/07/26/atc-cullowhee-2013)

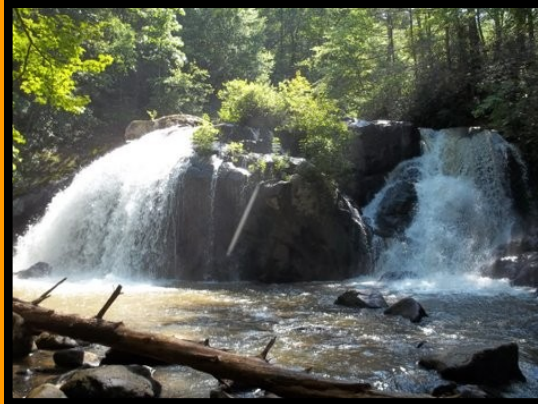
Sunday August 11: Hike from Watson Gap to Dally Gap and back. This hike will be approximately 7.5 miles round trip. The difficulty level is moderate/strenuous due to length but there is not a large altitude change. This is not an Easy Trek hike. Bring plenty of water, as it will be mid summer. Mostly shaded hike is largely in Cohutta Wilderness and will include creeks and possibly beavers. Group size limited to 12 hikers due to wilderness restrictions.

Pre-register by calling Hike Leader, Darcy Douglas at 404-497-0818, or email bmtadarcy@yahoo.com.

TurtleTown Falls Trek . . . June 22nd

By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

On **Saturday June 22**, the Easy Trek hikers traveled to Farner, TN to for the 3.7 mile round trip hike to TurtleTown Falls. The weather was great for mid-June, in the low 80's and sunny. I was trip leader, ably assisted by Sara and Jerry Bland, and there were 21 folks on the hike. The participants received a two-for-one treat, as there are two waterfalls on this loop hike. The trail which follows along TurtleTown Creek was in great shape, well blazed, and with a recently reworked tread. We did pick up trash along the trail, which filled two garbage bags. The highlights of the hike, two waterfalls, did not disappoint. Due to all the recent rain, the falls were spectacular with a high flow of water. Everyone commented about how beautiful the falls were and took lots of pictures. We welcome Ken Mitzel and Kathy Stafford who joined as new members.



" Member Comes To Rescue Of Fellow Hiker"

By Sara Bland

Wendy Knowles can be spotted on just about every Easy Trek Hike. She joined the BMTA in 2012 after learning about us in the Upcoming Events section of the Times-Courier. Wendy is a true friend to her hiking companions as demonstrated recently: She voluntarily sacrificed her hike to transport one of our hikers who became ill from the trail back to her car in Blue Ridge.

She initially became aware of the North Georgia Mountains in 2006 when she joined friends for a mountain bike ride in the area. After several adventures here, she bought a cabin in Walnut Mountain in 2009. Now she can enjoy biking, kayaking, riding her motorcycle, and of course hiking with the BMTA's Easy Trekkers in the woods.

Oh...in her spare time (ha!), she works as a Certified Medical Transcriptionist and Certified Coding Specialist for a large hospital in south Florida. We are so fortunate that she chose to be a part of the BMTA.



Wendy Knowles with her two nephews Nico and Maleo

Georgia Worktrip Planned... July 13 Springer to Big Stamp Gap

July 13 – GA Worktrip: We will complete the work on improving water diversions on historic section 1a – Springer Mountain to Big Stamp Gap.

Breakfast meeting details: To reduce driving, breakfast meetings at two places, both beginning at 8:00AM and departing at 8:30AM sharp for the 45-minute drive to the trailhead.

- For those coming from Atlanta and other points south: meet at the Hardee's in East Ellijay. (It's on the left at the light just before you cross the river northbound on 515/76.) Tom Keene, coordinating – (cell) 770-548-4935.
- For those coming from Blue Ridge and points north: meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. George Owen, coordinating – (cell) 706-897-3366.

Trailhead meeting details: We will meet initially about 9:15am at the official AT parking area near Springer Mtn. on FS 42; and then drive in convoy the 1.5 miles down to Big Stamp Gap.

Trip Leader: Tom Keene, (cell) 770-548-4935.

Again, both breakfasts beginning at 8:00AM and departing at 8:30 sharp for the 45 minute drive to the trailhead.

IMPORTANT BACKCOUNTRY INFORMATION

CAUTION! BEAR ACTIVITY IN THESE AREAS

Trails: Laurel Falls Trail , Abrams Creek Trail and Anthony's Creek Trail .

OTHER INFORMATION

The following TRAILS are CLOSED: Chimney Tops, Scott Mountain from site 6 to Schoolhouse Gap (site 6 open). Gabes Mountain, Snake Den, Baxter Creek, Big Creek

The following CAMPSITES are CLOSED: #11, 29, 34, 36, 37, 38

Other TRAIL INFORMATION: The bridge at the southernmost end of the Smokemont loop trail is closed due to construction in the area.

Georgia June Work Trip: Few Accomplish Much...June 8

George Owen Reporting

It was surprisingly cool and pleasant for the Georgia [June 8](#) work trip to Springer Mountain. An overcast morning with a breeze gave the seven that showed up the energy to accomplish quite a bit.

Starting out with breakfast meeting places at both Ellijay and Blue Ridge, we all came together about 9:15 a.m. at the Springer Mountain Appalachian Trail parking lot, then five drove on down Forest Service Road 42 for 1.8 miles to the Benton MacKaye trailhead at Big Stamp Gap.

This five walked up to where work in May was completed just past the Owen vista; from there we spent the next several hours both improving and creating numerous water drainages for the trail. By noon we were atop Ball Mountain, and by quitting time at about 2:30 we were at the gap between Ball and Springer summits. That left only about a few tenths of a mile to go sometime in the near future to complete all drainages in this area.

Meanwhile David Blount and newcomer Eric Hedden went up the Appalachian Trail to begin finishing trimming the BMT from near Springer's summit down to Ball Gap. (Eric had to leave late morning.) The five met David shortly after lunch.

On our way out mid-afternoon, we all stopped and either quietly or in soft speech drank in the lovely view at Owen vista for over twenty minutes before descending to Big Stamp Gap to end the work day.

I wish to welcome Shelley Stubbs as a newcomer to our monthly trips with this outing, and Barry Allen for his assistance and good suggestions as always as a co-trip leader.

Sometime in the weeks ahead a few of us hope to return to the upper side of Springer Mountain to finish the last short section of water erosion controls.

PARTICIPANTS: Barry Allen, Hank Baudet, David Blount, Eric Hedden, Ralph Heller, George Owen, Shelley Stubbs.

HOURS WORKED: 37.5

HOURS TRAVELED: 18.5

Leave No Trace ~ Trainer Course



SOUTHEASTERN FOOT TRAILS COALITION

Presents

Leave No Trace ~ Trainer Course

August 2- 4, 2013

News Release

The Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition will be conducting a Leave No Trace Trainer Course for those seeking to learn the seven principles of outdoor ethics for personal enrichment or to teach others. The course features a short backpack and overnight campout in the Chattahoochee National Forest. The course fee includes food and educational materials.

The Trainer Course is a vital component of the nationwide Leave No Trace program, to help recreationalists minimize their ecological impact while enjoying the outdoors. The Trainer Course assists the participants in learning more about the seven principles of Leave No Trace and techniques for disseminating these low impact skills to others.

The goals for this Trainer Course are to prepare the attendees so they will understand and be able to teach the value of minimal impact on the environment and the Leave No Trace Ethics.

Date: August 2-4, 2013 (soft start on Friday)
Time: 9:00 am Saturday to 4:00pm Sunday
Cost: \$85.00/ including materials
Place: Chattahoochee National Forest
Presenter: Jay M Dement, Leave No Trace Master Educator
More information: <http://southeastfoottrails.org/SEFTC-LNT-Workshop.htm>
jay@jayDphotos.com, 404/731-1901

#

Chainsaw Certification Class: June 8th

Please contact Jim Holland if you would like to attend this class. Attendees will need current CPR/ First Aid to enroll.

Due to the heat in July and August, this may be the last class until early September.

Thanks...

Richard T. "Jim" Holland
 175 Hells Hollow Drive
 Blue Ridge, GA 30513
 706-258-2830
lanconn@tds.net
www.threecreeksarabians.com
 Amateur Radio Callsign KI4BEN

BMTA Welcomes New Members...

By Vic Fredlund

Ann Miller	Ellijay, GA	Steven Shelt	Evans, GA
Robert Collins	Ellijay, GA	Ken Mitzel & Kathy Stafford	Atlanta, GA
Jack Abbott	Mineral Springs, GA	Gerald Wald	White Springs, FL
Alvin & Martha Cash	Ellijay, GA	Philip and Debra Guhl	Ball Ground, GA
Lisa Murphy	Orange Park, FL	Chuck & Angela Wildeman	Cumming, GA
Louis Perno	Atlanta, GA	Todd Russell	Presque Isle, ME
Shelley Stubbs	Atlanta, GA		
Martha Fowler	Ellijay, GA		
Brenda Pack	Decatur, TN		
Robert Berry	N. Richland Hills, TX		
Bob & Nicole Covert	Marietta, GA		
Don & Mary Jo Bray	Talking Rock, GA		
Susan Burkley	Tate, GA		
Richard Umbel	Hogansville, GA		
Larry Van Dyke	Calhoun, GA		

Save This Date...

BMTA Annual Conference



November 2013						
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Regina's Pacific Crest Trail journey, a comparison in hiking experiences.



The PCT called me right after I walked from Maine to Georgia in 2007. I had walked the AT to “get it out of my system” but what I discovered is that hiking IS my system. Just three months after celebrating at Springer Mountain, I was standing at the southern terminus of the PCT on my first visit –ever- to the state of California. Here I was, not just visiting, but setting off to walk from Mexico to Canada! I had studied Yogi’s Guide to the PCT, and skimmed through the three-book guide from Wilderness Press. That series read like a detailed travelogue, and rather than help me understand and prepare for the terrain and the natural history of this trail, it confused me and made me nervous about what I might encounter.

I had not hiked above 6,700 feet in elevation. I had not camped in desert. I had not walked over ten miles between water sources. I had not hiked through snowy mountains or used an ice axe. I had rarely carried a pack that needed 100 miles of trail food plus a full day’s supply of water to boot.

I prepared for desert walking with a long-sleeved white shirt, a hat that covered my neck, a scarf, and a dress. I had chosen a loose calf-length dress, thinking that it would keep the sun off my legs while still providing ventilation. I didn’t really like wearing long pants for hiking. I had packed sunglasses that fit over my prescription glasses. I was also equipped to carry 5 liters of water in collapsible bottles.

None of these had been part of my AT walk and I had not yet considered hiking the BMT yet. Now, I’ve done them all, so here’s a short comparison of these three amazing, wonderful, transformational, fabulous, life-changing trails!



In many respects, the AT and the BMT are almost twins when it comes to comparing them to the PCT. Both are trails through the Appalachian Mountains, following this old (ancient), worn down mountain chain. The PCT goes higher and encounters more extremes. The PCT is drier, and snowier. It's longer, more remote, and farther from towns.

And yet, it's similar to the BMT in its lack of shelters and crowds of people. Still, my experience on the PCT was one of camaraderie with "the class of 2008" and occasional walking with a group (Team Bad Wizard). Even though I had companions on my winter BMT hikes, for most of my BMT walks I walked as a solo hiker.

I will focus in this article on just a few of the unique features of the PCT.



DESERT:

First of all, what the PCT traverses in southern California isn't truly desert, it's "chapparal". Huge, branching cacti are *not* the dominant plants along the southern portion of the PCT. There are lots of plants and small cacti, as well as colorful, blooming bushes! That was my first surprise. The flowers and colors astounded me!

LONG WATERLESS STRETCHES:

Although the natural water sources on the PCT in southern California can be up to 30 miles apart, the only time I actually walked 25 miles between water sources was not in California, it was in Oregon, and it included a section on the shores of the deepest lake in North America! The trek around and north of Crater Lake sported no natural water sources and no water caches either. Because of the much appreciated efforts of local volunteers, water caches, those meccas of liquid trail magic, are stocked and maintained in southern California for the first 100 miles of the trail. That's what allowed us to refill our water bottles at least every 15 miles in the desert. But this was not always so in the volcanic soils of southern Oregon.

On both the AT and the BMT, it's rare to have water sources any more than 10 miles apart, except maybe in Pennsylvania during a drought. I remember the first time I had to walk 10



miles to the next water source, heading north out of Helvey Mills shelter near Bland, VA. “Let’s leave early in the morning before light and not stop until we get to the water!” We were nervous and concerned. “Would we be ok?” We were. Now, since hiking the PCT, where 15-mile waterless stretches are common, I feel comfortable pacing my drinking, carrying more water, and trusting my body. I know it’s ok to go that far!

“COWBOY CAMPING”

Yee-Haw! On the PCT, I learned a camping style that was new for me, coming from the east where the dew settles in the early morning. Sleeping out without a tarp is uncommon on the AT and BMT, at least for me. I like to stay dry under my tarp. However, sleeping out under the stars, literally spreading out a ground cloth, pad and sleeping bag next to the trail, is what we often did in southern California.

To beat the heat, we walked into the night, and then stopped well after dark to sleep for a few hours. Not a drop of rain or dew fell and sleeping under the blanket of stars was magical! It took a little patience to find a flat, open spot along the trail, though. Sometimes we would walk for as much as 5 miles before a good spot showed up. One time, we encountered a hiker who just couldn’t wait any longer. There we were, my hiking partner, John, and I. Walking along in the dark, we almost bumped into a pack on the trail. Just beyond the pack was a hiker wrapped up in a sleeping bag! We had no idea who it was as we stepped gingerly and quietly around the peacefully sleeping form.



Next day, after reaching our resupply point, we polled the hikers and found out who it was. “I just couldn’t walk anymore!” she said.” And there wasn’t any smooth place to sleep, so I just stopped right there!”

Once we reached Kennedy Meadows at mile 700, we consistently needed a mosquito net tent, although we often used just that by itself, still sleeping out under the stars. In Oregon and Washington, however, the tarp kept us dry in the more frequent dampness and rain, and then our tarp kept off the snow and sleet for the last few nights!

RESUPPLY:

On the AT and BMT, resupply is available often! Using the excellent thru-hiker guides for both trails, it’s easy to plan resupply intervals as frequent as every three days! I generally like a 4-6 day resupply interval, except for the first two days out of town, when the pack feels heavy!



05/23/2008 17:06

Since the BMT can be done within one month, it's possible to send out all my resupply boxes via US Postal Service, using their flat-rate boxes, before starting out on the hike. One thing we did differently for our winter BMT walk, though, was to drop off three of the resupply boxes ourselves as our very supportive shuttle driver took us from Atlanta to Standing Bear Farm for our southbound thru-hike. That way, we could include fuel canisters, something we can't mail, in our resupply.

Resupply on the PCT was less varied and frequent than on the AT and BMT. There are fewer choices of places for resupply and fewer places to send maildrops, so all the hikers are generally using the same ones. The resupply locations tend to be much further from the trail on the PCT, but the systems of support were there!

The most notable resupply spot on the PCT is Kennedy Meadows, the gateway to the Sierra and the end of the desert. Here, it's time to start using a required bear-proof food canister, which adds 2-4 lbs of "useless" weight to the pack and takes up a lot of space too! Most hikers mail their canisters to the Kennedy Meadows Store, which has a huge pile of hiker boxes! Some hikers receive as many as 6 or 8 packages to make gear changes and receive food! As for me, I was the luckiest hiker of all to have my brother and sister-in-law come up for a weekend camping trip from San Diego, bringing our bear canister and clothing changes, plus the best grilled salmon feast ever!



The most unusual resupply was that in the middle of the Sierra, at Independence, CA. The trailhead for the resupply was 9 miles off the PCT and over an 11,000 ft pass! That side trip took us to the parking lot for day hikers arriving from Independence, 13 miles off the PCT and about 8,000 feet lower in elevation! That's a time we used our social skills to meet day hikers and find a ride down the mountain! Our luck put us as extra baggage crammed in the back of a van of Korean hikers who had been hiking a loop in the opposite direction of our journey. We happened to meet them back at the parking lot and they offered us a ride! Another creative tactic hikers use at Kearsarge Pass is to have a friend hike in with their resupply! That generous service allowed our friend, Rockstar to stay on the PCT and not take that 18-mile side trip. I didn't mind it though, because Kearsarge Pass was beautiful and the trail to it went by a crystal clear lake. Independence was a unique tiny town, complete with a Subway and very generous people. Our ride back up the mountain was from a local resident who was refurbishing a historical hotel. He stopped his sawing, and asked, "Will you be going back to the trail? I can take you there around 3:30 or 5:30." He wouldn't even take any money for the long drive up that 8,000 foot climb. "I like an excuse to come up here!" he said. Our other unique resupply was in Ashland, Oregon. In Oregon, there are virtually no towns near the trail for 500 miles. What's done is to buy all our food in Ashland, pack it up and ship it out to all the small resorts and camps along the trail. We shopped for a day at the grocery store and co-op, then hauled all that food, about 50 lbs, to our hotel room where we divided, sorted and packed up our re-supply boxes. Then, we hauled all those boxes to the post office for shipping! What a full day that was!



Resupply was definitely different on the PCT, but it worked! With research and planning, we never went hungry!

BECOMING AN ATHLETE:

Another big difference for me on the PCT was my daily hiking distance, at least for the second half of the trail. In Etna, CA, with over 1,000 miles to go to the border, we calculated that in order to reach our goal before the predicted snow date, we would have to log at least 21 miles each and every day! Now, for me “a nature walker” who fairly leisurely covered the AT in seven months at a range of 10-14 miles per day, and the BMT in 25 days at 12-17 miles per day, it took a drastic change of mind to become a trail athlete. I realized, while talking with another hiker who worked as a college football coach that he had a different reaction to things like sweat or hot feeling muscles or feeling tired. To him, I realized, those were signs that things were going just great and his body was warmed up and ready to work! I had always resisted sweating activities and thought that tiredness meant “take a rest.” It took me a week or so of reprogramming my mind and some silly songs I made up.....

“I’m a hiker and I’m o.k. I sweat when I eat and I work when I play” and cheering myself on to change my daily mileage, but for the last 1,000 miles and 2 months, I walked at least 20 miles per day. You can be sure, though, that at that 20th mile marker I was ready to stop! That



is, if there was a campsite there. If not, we kept walking 'til we found a flat spot, sometimes up to five more miles! We reached the Canadian border on October 6, just about when the deep winter's snow started falling that year! At that moment I had become not only an athletic backpacker but also a PCT thru hiker!

For more pictures and journal see:

<http://www.trailjournals.com/mssnglnk>

Questions?

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