

# **Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure 2012**

## **A Travelogue and Photo Album**



**From Springer Mountain, Georgia  
To Mount Katahdin, Maine**



**by**

**Dan Kohlhepp**

**with**

**Gerry Curtin**

**Mike Jones**

**Jim Caldwell**

**Chris Curtin**

**Donna Kohlhepp**

**Molly Ingold**

**Dan Glatthorn**

**Art Fields**

**Julie Fields**

**First Edition**





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**February 2013**



## Dedication

This travelogue is dedicated to Gerry Curtin, my friend and fellow hiker. Gerry was the first person to actually commit to the Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure (BATA). When Gerry said, "Yes, let's do it," the BATA changed from being a dream floating around in my head to a real adventure. Gerry was an unlikely catalyst for the BATA since he had never pursued "outdoor sports" such as hiking, camping, hunting, or fishing. Gerry was an "organized sports" kind-of-a-guy. While Gerry was a dedicated runner and a physical fitness enthusiast, he had never owned a pair of hiking boots until after he said, "Let's do it."

Gerry is a rare combination of an extroverted people-person and a detailed organizer. When we decided on a hiking schedule, I made one reservation (the Big Moose Inn), and then Gerry took over and made all of the other accommodations. (The only real bust in our accommodations turned out to be the Big Moose Inn.) Gerry found modestly priced, "clean well lighted" hotels in towns that none of us had ever visited, and as our prospective hiker census ebbed and flowed, Gerry adjusted our reservations with total equanimity.

As a rookie hiker, Gerry became a veteran in a couple hours, and used his hiking sticks like a pro. Gerry's stamina and endurance was a continuous comfort to everyone. He never got tired, never complained, and always enjoyed our follies.

Gerry Curtin was a great hiking partner and skilled organizer who made the Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure happen. Thank you, Gerry.





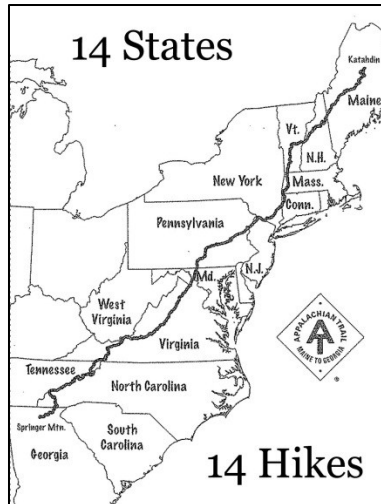


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## Introduction

### CLEARLY,

The dream of hiking the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine is deeply embedded in the Baby Boomer Generation's collective psychic early in our youth. However, as we get older, more responsible, and less athletic, this dream may diminish somewhat, but it never completely fades away. It's always on the "bucket list." Unfortunately, the reality of our legs hiking each of the 2,121 miles seemed far-fetched, and the prospect of hiking the trail all at once seemed even more far-fetched. The idea of carrying a heavy backpack on artificial knees, arthritic ankles, and touchy backs appeared crazy. But as part of the Baby Boomer Generation, we have always defined our world as we wanted it to be rather than to accept it as it is. Therefore the dream of hiking the Appalachian Trail simply had to be re-defined on new terms that would be acceptable to our Boomer bodies, yet capture the adventure of an exciting challenge. Here's the new proposition (or re-defined dream):

"Hike the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine by hiking the AT somewhere in every state: 14 states equals 14 hikes."

As we shared this dream with our friends and family, we emphasized that

1. the hikes would not be too physically challenging,
2. there would be no competition among the hikers, and
3. every night would be slept in an air-conditioned hotel room with hot showers, flush toilets, and Wi-Fi connections.

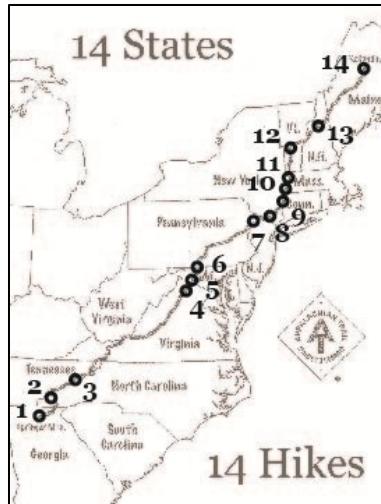
Prospective adventurers could hike all or some of the hikes, and could join us anywhere along the trail. Most importantly, there would be a tee-shirt involved. To us, this seemed like an irresistible, age-appropriate adventure.

The purpose of this book is twofold. First, to recall, remember, and record this trip of a lifetime, and second, to provide a guide, blueprint, or model for other Boomers who want to hike the Appalachian Trail on their own terms.

Each chapter begins with a summary of the plan for the day, the people involved, the motel accommodations, and the dinner location. This is followed by a statistical “Box Score” which includes the location, elevation, time and distance of the day’s hike. The journal reflections (written in Dan’s first person) attempt to capture the spirit of the hikers and the challenges encountered during the day (no problems; only opportunities). We’re sure that the hiker’s personalities shine through in these objective narratives. Finally, several photographs of each hike are presented to help the readers visualize the trail conditions and natural environment of the hike.

The latitude and longitude of each trailhead are included to help the readers find the parking areas for each hike which we found to be a one of the most challenging parts of every hike ... where to begin. The motel and restaurants are briefly described since finding a “clean, well lighted place” to sleep and eat can also be challenging after a long day on the Trail. We are not necessarily recommending these establishments; rather we are reporting our experiences as we enjoyed them. The final chapter tries to make sense of this adventure and falls short. We suspect that we will be working on this final chapter for many years to come.

This remembrance/travel guide was written with a smile and a profound sense of irony and the absurd. Any mistakes or inaccuracies are entirely the responsibility of the primary author. The co-authors and co-adventurers are only guilty of participating in the events and are not responsible for the accurate reporting of them.



## Pre-Hike Planning

The pre-hike planning started in earnest when Gerry retired and decided to do the hike with Dan. We (Gerry and Dan) agreed on the goal of “14 states and 14 hikes,” but the uncertainty surrounded the actual locations of the hikes. Certain hikes at certain locations were a given:

- Springer Mountain, Georgia (southern terminus);
- Mount Katahdin, Maine (northern terminus);
- Clingman’s Dome, Tennessee (highest point on the Appalachian Trail);
- Harpers Ferry, Virginia (Headquarters of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the nexus of three states, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland);
- Delaware Water Gap on the Pennsylvania and New Jersey border; and
- Mount Washington, New Hampshire (a legendary mountain).

This preliminary list provided us locations for 9 out of 14 states. To this list we added 5 more:

- Fontana Dam, North Carolina (Shuckstack Mountain);
- Bear Mountain, New York (the lowest point on the Appalachian Trail);
- Bulls Bridge, Connecticut;
- Mount Greylock, Massachusetts (the highest point in Massachusetts); and
- Norwich, Vermont (next to Dartmouth University).

Meanwhile, we were putting out the word to our friends about the exciting trip we were planning and inviting people to join us. Almost everyone said, “That’s a great idea, I’d love to join you.” Our expectations soared as we worried about where to lodge everyone, but firm commitments were harder to get. We realized that we would plan the hike with a high degree of uncertainty regarding the participants.



Ironically, Mike, Molly and Jim were the first ones to express enthusiasm and commitment!

In March, 2012, at the NCAA Wrestling Championship in St. Louis, we used a questionnaire to focus on the remaining issues of the BATA 2012. Here are the results:

- When do we hike?
  - Start Date: Assemble in Georgia Tuesday Night May, 29. First hike May 30th
  - End Date: Katahdin, June 21st.
  - With a break in the middle to take care of business and family responsibilities
- Hiking Hours?
  - Start Time: 9:00 am. Enough time to have breakfast, drive to the trailhead, and maybe even stretch a little
  - End Time: 3:00 pm. Enough daylight to fix or solve any emergencies that we might encounter
- How far do we hike?
  - 10 miles or
  - 6 hours
  - Whichever comes first
- How do we measure distance and time?
  - Use Dan's pedometer or
  - Use Dan's watch
- What about injuries or illnesses?
  - Do whatever the sick or injured person wants to do.
- What direction do we hike?
  - Out five miles and back or
  - Out 2.5 miles and back; turnaround and go out 2.5 miles and back or
  - It depends
- How do we hike?
  - We should hike together regardless
  - Camaraderie
  - Protection
  - We don't leave the trailhead until everyone is accounted for
- How do we communicate on the trail?
  - Questionable cell service
  - Dan's Walkie Talkies
  - Yell loudly (preferred mode)

Our friend Ron said that he was in Maine last year at Baxter State Park and the only place to stay was the Big Moose Inn. Immediately, Dan called the Big Moose Inn and made reservations for June 20 and 21 so at least we would have place to stay for the last hike of the Appalachian Trail.

Gerry was responsible for finding a place to stay to stay in Georgia so we would at least have a place to start our adventure. However in a burst of energy, Gerry made the hotel reservations not only in Dahlonega, Georgia, but also for every night of the entire trip. Furthermore, not only did he make the reservations, he guaranteed them as well! Our adventure was now very real especially in the eyes of Gerry's VISA card.

At his point, we were able to tell our friends where we would be every night and where they should join us. It seemed so simple, but in the immortal words of Pogo, "Nothing simple is ever easy!"

As we got closer to the starting date, we began to scrutinize our equipment: what we had, what we didn't have, and who had what. We assembled an equipment matrix that itemized what gear we needed and who should bring it. Suffice it to say that all of the hikers independently decided to bring all of the equipment themselves.

Finally, we needed to get the all-important tee-shirts. Dan B., my friend who prints tee-shirts and enthusiastically supported the BATA (and planned to join us on the trail like everyone else) suggested that we get a special "moisture-wicking" shirt that could be printed front and back. We were ready to go.

"You need a motto on the shirt," Dan B. implored so we immediately adopted the Appalachian Trail Conservancy motto:

### **The Journey is The Destination**



I Hiked The  
**APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
in

- ☐ MOUNT KATAHDIN, Maine
- ☐ NEW HAMPSHIRE
- ☐ VERMONT
- ☐ MASSACHUSETTS
- ☐ CONNECTICUT
- ☐ NEW YORK
- ☐ NEW JERSEY
- ☐ PENNSYLVANIA
- ☐ MARYLAND
- ☐ WEST VIRGINIA
- ☐ VIRGINIA
- ☐ TENNESSEE
- ☐ NORTH CAROLINA
- ☐ SPRINGER MOUNTAIN, Georgia

**BATA**  
—2012—

**The Journey Is The Destination**





## May 28, 2012, Monday: Memorial Day

The Plan: Drive to Roanoke, VA

Hikers: Dan and Jim

Hotel: Hampton Inn, 7922 Plantation Rd, Roanoke, VA 24019

Dinner: The Logan Steakhouse, Roanoke

The old Chinese saying, “the longest journey begins with a single step,” rang in my ears as I left Arlington, Virginia on a hot and sunny Memorial Day driving straight into the sun. I was off on an adventure that I had been discussing for 40 years and actively planning for 15 months. I set the Toyota’s cruise control so I wouldn’t exceed the speed limit too much. I was pumped.

I was meeting my friend Jim in Roanoke where we would spend the night and then drive on to Dahlonega, Georgia to meet Mike and Gerry. Jim left Detroit at 6:00 am so we could meet at 6:00 pm. Now a retired General Motors executive, Jim became my best friend in 1959 when we shared the same home room in seventh grade at the DuBois Area Junior High School. For the next six years, we took every class together and played every sport together. More importantly, we always seemed to date girls who were best friends. In junior high school, we dated best friends Gigi and Janet, and lucky for us, Jim's older brother, Buzz, drove us on all of our dates for years. In high school we dated best friends Janice and Cindy, so when I got my driver’s license early, we continued to be best friends and date best friends.

After high school, Jim went to Grove City College, and I went to Penn State. Following college, Jim got married and moved to Detroit while I went to grad school, moved to Oklahoma, and got married. Our lives got busy, complicated, and disconnected, but now after 45 years, we were getting back together.

Arriving almost simultaneously at 6:00, we checked in, loaded a luggage cart, and decided to go to the nearby restaurant for dinner, which, upon arrival, we realized was closed because of the Memorial Day holiday. Heading on to the Valley View Mall, we found Logan's Steakhouse and enjoyed hamburgers, large salads and some Flat Tire Beer. As we caught up on 45 years of life and recalled our childhood memories, Jim was able to describe (with amazing accuracy and detail) my many misadventures and indiscretions, none of which I remembered. In a sense of reciprocity, I shared with Jim my vivid memories of his misadventures and indiscretions, and again, none of which he could remember. We agreed that these memories of misadventures and indiscretions should be kept in our own minds and never shared again.



### **May 29, 2012, Tuesday: Drive to Dahlonega, Georgia**

The Plan: Meet in Dahlonega and get ready to hike Springer Mountain

Hikers: Dan, Jim, Mike, and Gerry

Hotels: Holiday Inn Express, and Quality Inn, Dahlonega, GA

Dinner: Caruso's Italian Restaurant, Dahlonega

Jim and I left Roanoke early for our 7½-hour drive to Dahlonega, Georgia where we would meet my long-time friends Gerry and Mike. Neither Jim nor Gerry nor Mike had met each other yet, so I tried to give Jim a little background.

After 43 years in the steel business, Gerry had recently retired from Nucor Steel in Atlanta. Gerry and I first met in September, 1965 when we both started at Penn State. Gerry became a famous lacrosse player, and for four years, he was also my fraternity brother, fellow business major, roommate, co-conspirator, and kindred spirit. As members of the Fiji championship wiffle-ball team, Gerry and I have shared reunions at Penn State with our fellow teammates every year since 1976. We now also meet every spring for the NCAA National Wrestling Championships.

Mike and I arrived at the University of Oklahoma at the same time in 1974. I had just finished five years of graduate school, and Mike had just finished five years in the US Army, after having graduated from West Point. We started out as professor (me) and graduate student (Mike), but when we discovered our shared passion for fishing (and then hunting) we became best buddies. Since our OU days, Mike has been my business and investment partner, chief financial officer, CPA, auditor, and confidant. We try to go fishing or hunting together every year.

So now my friends from high school, college, and graduate school will finally have a chance to meet each other. I was lowering my expectations!

On the way to Dhlonega, Jim and I made a short side trip to Damascus, Virginia. According to our guidebook<sup>1</sup>, Damascus is known far and wide to all Appalachian Trail hikers as a trail town. "It loves Appalachian Trail hikers." In fact, the AT goes right through the town. Within a block of the trail is the Damascus United States Post Office and the AT registration station where hikers can pick up valuable supplies and encouraging letters, which had been mailed to them by caring families. Hikers can also mail home excess gear and reassuring letters. Just for good luck, Jim and I stopped and put our feet on the AT and mailed a couple post cards.

Mike had arrived in Dhlonega a day early and had already visited some of his Cherokee ancestral homelands as well as the United States Army's Mountain Ranger Training Base where he had spent a delightful winter in 1970. Gerry also arrived earlier in the day since his drive from Atlanta was only a couple of hours. When Jim and I arrived, Mike and Gerry had already met at our hotel and decided on a place for dinner: Caruso's.

At dinner, we tried to figure out where the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail actually was and how we were going to get there in the morning. On separate occasions that afternoon, Mike and Gerry had visited the same sporting goods store and talked to the same sales clerk and received completely different maps and directions to the trailhead. We decided that our first order of business after dinner would be to determine the correct directions to the Springer Mountain trailhead.

Also at dinner our conversation turned to politics, and it became clear that there was some divergence of political opinions at the table. In the spirit of scholarly research, we developed a political survey scale which would measure, on a scale of 0 to 10, one's political position in the political arena: Zero would be a far-left liberal, and a 10 would be a far-right conservative. Five would be the middle. Using this survey tool, we surveyed ourselves, and determined the mean score was 6.8, clearly a little right of center. We decided that we would interview hikers on the Trail to see if the AT hikers were of the same political persuasion as ourselves.

Back at the hotel, we prepared our gear and packed our knapsacks. Mike studied the maps with coaching from all of us. Finally after 45 minutes, several sets of directions and three different maps, Mike said "I've got it. I know where we're going." With that, we went to bed secure in the knowledge that we would begin the Appalachian Trail adventure first thing in the morning.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim and Nancy Duffus, *Guide to Car-Hiking the Appalachian Trail*, Authors Choice Press, 2002, p. 56.



Jim on the Appalachian Trail in Damascus, Virginia



Hikers set down their gear as they open "care" packages from home.







## May 30, 2012, Wednesday: Springer Mountain, Georgia

Hike: Springer Mountain, Georgia

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Jim, and Mike

Hotel: Fontana Village Resort, Fontana Dam, NC

Restaurant: Fontana Village Resort Dining Room

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N34°38.25' Longitude: W84°11.7'	3,426 '	4.75	8.9

Our spirits soared as we assembled at the Quality Inn to convert our three cars into one. Jim would drive his Chevrolet Tahoe to Springer Mountain trailhead. Mike was the navigator in the front seat with Gerry and me in the back. We set off confidently at 7:00 am with easy instructions: we would go north towards GA 600 to just before Succes where we'd turn left on Georgia Forest Road No. 42. At 8:45, we stopped the car, got out, and studied a roadside trail map to try to figure out where we were. We reassembled in the car with the knowledge and conviction that Georgia Forest

Road No. 42 was also known as Cooper Road, which was only two miles away. Cooper Road (aka Georgia Forest Road 42) immediately turned into a dirt road.

We drove on and on and on and on. All the time, Mike studied his maps and regaled us with stories about the “Winter of 1970” at the Army Ranger Camp. He went on at length about surviving in the woods and described a plant called “green tip” that was found in the Georgia woods and tasted much like asparagus. In my most sincere manner, I asked Mike if he preferred a hollandaise sauce or a lemon-butter on his asparagus.

“You won’t believe it,” Mike said, “but I had a bad experience with hollandaise sauce. Let me tell you about it. You know I have this plate in my mouth, and I love hollandaise sauce. So when I went to the dentist, he looked in my mouth and saw my upper plate and demanded ‘What have you been eating?’ I told him nothing extraordinary, but it is Spring, and I do love asparagus with hollandaise sauce. The dentist said, ‘Oh my God, this is a stainless-steel plate you have in your mouth. Hollandaise sauce will corrode your stainless-steel plate. You need to get a plate made out of chrome.’ The dentist stood up straight and in his most sincere manner, he stared directly into my eyes and said: ‘You know Mike, there’s no plate like chrome for the hollandaise!’ ” We never saw it coming!

As we drove on and on, Mike quit looking for trail directions and was simply following contours on the map. Much to our relief, we arrived at the trailhead at 9:45, only two hours and 45 minutes after leaving Dahlonega.

The Springer Mountain Trailhead Parking Lot was in the middle of nowhere, almost inaccessible to those without the navigation savvy of our Army Ranger. At that time, we determined to report the longitude and latitude of the trailheads to make it easier for the Boomer Hikers who would follow in our footsteps. From the parking lot, we were able to hike one mile south to the top of Springer Mountain. As the fearless leader, I led off, and shortly we were all perspiring heavily as we pressed on with terrific enthusiasm, found the Springer Mountain Appalachian Trail Southern Terminus memorial, and enjoyed a major photo session.

As we reversed our course and back-tracked down the trail to the parking lot, Gerry led off with Jim a close second, Mike following him, and I took up the rear. As we went back to the cool shadowy side of the mountain, Jim stepped on a sloped rock and went sideways over the trail down the mountain and came to rest in the branches of trees. We hauled him back to his feet, and announced that his trail name would be “First Down.”

Back at the parking lot after only one hour of hiking, we took a lot of stuff out of our packs and decided to press on to our north where the Trail appeared to go downhill to a shelter where we would have lunch. It was a beautiful day. The walking was superb. The wind blew just enough to make us cool, and our expectations of hiking the Appalachian Trail were being fulfilled.



We only met one hiker on the trail, Spiderman, and when we asked him to take our political spectrum survey, he indicated he was a 5.0. At the trail shelter, we had lunch, and everyone enjoyed his “tuna fish snack lunches.” As we prepared to leave, a young hiker joined us. He had neither a trail name nor a political philosophy. When we asked him to rate himself on our scale, he said that he wasn’t even on that scale because he was in a totally different dimension. We believed him, and all pressed on.

Realizing that our goal of the sooner of 10 miles or six hours was somewhat confused by our initial, out-and-back, 2-mile hike, we recalculated and decided to turn around and head back toward the parking lot. We finished at 2:30 p.m., which gave us 4 hours and 45 minutes on the trail with a distance of 8.9 miles according to my pedometer<sup>2</sup>.

Mike directed us to a different route back to Dahlonaga, and we ended up in the middle of an Army Ranger maneuver with roadblocks and soldiers in uniform carrying guns. “I’ll take care of this,” Mike announced and jumped out of the car. In a few minutes, Mike was laughing with the ranger sergeant, shaking hands, and posing for pictures!

We finally got back to the hotel in Dahlonaga, where we repacked into three cars and drove 2 hours and 45 minutes to Fontana Dam, North Carolina. We stayed at the Fontana Village Resort where we met Gerry's son Chris who was waiting to join us for the next two days of hiking. Chris is a professor at nearby Appalachian State University (Boone, NC) where he specializes in installation art. He explained that installation art provides an artistic environment and sometimes is known as environmental art. Chris described his work with enthusiasm, detail, and a gleam in his eye. Clearly this was a committed man with an artistic vision. He also was young and strong and had 2 percent body fat!

Checked in, we reassembled for dinner at the Fontana Village Dining Room where Gerry and I shared a nice bottle of sauvignon blanc from New Zealand. The others had various types of draft beer. Mike and I had the salmon special while my other partners had various kinds of red meat sandwiches. We brought Chris into the political spectrum discussion, where he ranked himself a 2.0.

After dinner we checked the maps and realized that the trailhead was only a mile and a half away so we were content with the knowledge that the next morning would be a quick trip to the trailhead, and the hike would be mostly along the mountain ridges.

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<sup>2</sup> This mileage measure soon became known as “Dan Miles.”

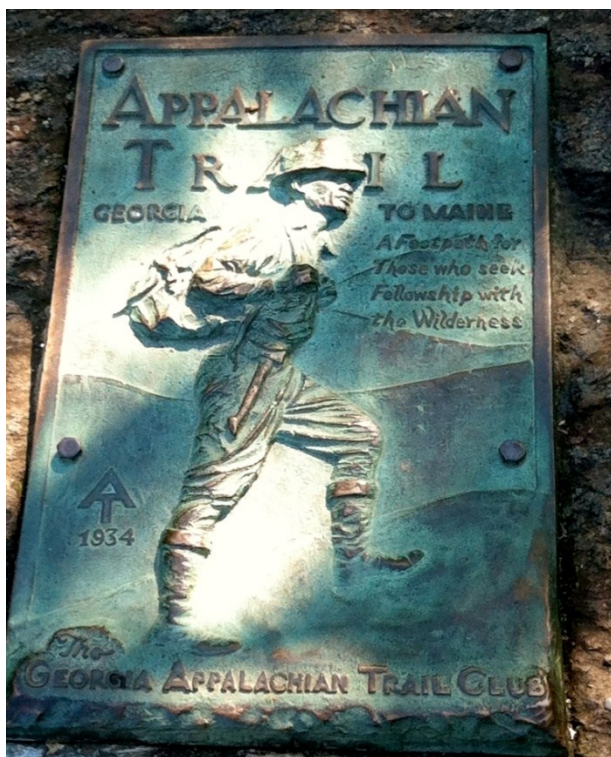


Trying to Find the Springer Mountain Trailhead, Mike, Jim and Gerry study the National Forest Roadside Map.



Bronze Plaque marking the Southern Terminus of the Appalachian Trail





Bronze Plaque at the Southern Terminus which dedicates the Appalachian Trail:  
"A Footpath for Those who seek Fellowship with the Wilderness."



"Mike the Navigator" searches for the Appalachian Trail Blaze



Our First Lunch on the Appalachian Trail



Mike, Gerry and Mike: Re-hydrating After our First Hike





Mike and Army Ranger Sergeant at checkpoint for maneuvers:  
We were allowed to pass!



The sign for a specialized "Gated Community"  
where Mike Jones is remembered and revered.





## May 31, 2012, Thursday: Shuckstack Mountain, NC

Hike: Shuckstack Mountain, Fontana Dam, NC

Hotel: Baymont Inn, Cherokee, NC

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Jim, Mike, Chris

Restaurant: Paula Dean's Kitchen, Cherokee

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N35°27.65' Longitude: W83°48.6'	1,908'	4.25	8.8

We (Mike, Jim, Gerry, Chris, and I) hiked up Shuckstack Mountain from the trailhead at the upper Fontana Dam which had an elevation at 1908 feet above sea level to the mountain top at 4,020 feet. The map indicated a short, 15-minute drive to the Fontana Dam parking lot. However, we were able to make it in 45 minutes with several wrong turns and several turns that we thought were wrong but were really right.

After the requisite trailhead photos, Mike announced: "Lead on fearless leader!" I started up the trail at a good pace which I soon realized was way too fast as the trail just kept going up and up. After 30 minutes, I was perspiring heavily and unable to focus clearly. I stepped aside and declared that it was time for new leadership. The new leadership promptly announced that it was time for a rest! During the rest, Jim said that he would get started to gain a lead on the mountain so he wouldn't hold us up. As it was, Jim became the leader for the entire climb up the mountain. With Jim in the lead, Mike followed, then me, Gerry, and Chris.

I could hear Mike talking to Jim, and was listening as Mike referred to the “hiking instructions” that were posted at the beginning of the trail. They reminded him of another trailhead sign.

“We were fishing in Alaska when we saw posted signs that said, ‘Beware of Bears! All hikers must carry pepper spray and wear bells on their person.’ It was a very dangerous area because there were both black bears and grizzly bears. Black bears are smaller and not very dangerous, but grizzlies are much larger and more aggressive. The best way to tell them apart is by examining their scat. You know, their poop. Black bears have piles that are 4-6 inches in diameter, but grizzlies are much larger, twice as big. And when you get close to grizzly droppings, you are overwhelmed by a strong odor of pepper spray and, looking closely, you can see all these little bells in their poop!” Jim said nothing.

“Perhaps I’m talking too much,” Mike proffered.

“No,” Jim said, “as long as I can hear your voice, I know I’m not dead!”

We hiked up and up and up the mountain until we reached the Shuckstack Fire Tower, which had spectacular 360-degree views and an elevation of 4020 feet. This 2000-foot vertical climb left us exhausted. Mike, “the Navigator,” studied the maps and announced that we had lost the Appalachian Trail! Finally, after extensive study of his “favorite” map, he announced that the map was over 25 years old, and while the trail may have changed, the contours of the mountain hadn’t. The Navigator suggested an alternative cross-country return route that would enable us to pick other trails that would eventually take us back to our cars. No one responded. The Navigator then suggested that we could just re-trace our steps down the mountain. The immediate response was unanimous.

The way back down to the car was a 2,000-foot drop. Walking downhill was much easier from a cardiovascular point of view, and the strain on the front of the legs and knees was much, much greater, but on we pressed. Going downhill, Chris and Gerry were in the lead, followed by Jim, Mike and myself. I was careful not to trip and used my hiking sticks judiciously for each step. When we were on a level spot, I picked up the pace since I had fallen seriously behind. On the Washington, D.C. trails people passing slower walkers (mostly bike riders) would say “on your left” which indicated that they were going to pass on your left. So with my new spirited pace, I was almost behind Jim, and I was almost ready to say “on your left” when my left foot caught a root, my left stick got stuck on the edge of the trail, and I crashed headlong down the left side of the mountain. At that point I realized the only way to save myself from a serious fall was to throw my neck out across several saplings to catch myself and break the fall. This worked quite well although the noise and the screaming alerted everybody to my predicament. They came back up the trail to see if I was all right, which, of course, I was. To save my dignity, I noted that a man without a muscular neck such as mine would probably have broken it.



Unfortunately at this point my feet were above my hips and my hiking sticks were stuck under my butt and latched onto my wrists. With the help of Chris, Mike and Jim, I was able to get re-setup and earned the nickname "Second Down." We pressed on.

When we returned to the trailhead parking lot, the official time was 2:45 pm, which meant we had hiked 5 ½ hours. The official mileage was 8.8 Dan miles. We all agreed that this was a serious hike, and one that we had neither never expected nor endured before.

Lucky for us there was lots of cold beer at the car and we rehydrated ourselves from the hike. We did meet another hiker, and, of course, the political survey was given and once again we continued to move the mean from the right side towards the middle of the political spectrum.

We drove for an hour to Cherokee, North Carolina where we stayed at the Baymont Motel, voted "the number one Baymont Motel in the United States." Checking in, we asked if there were any good restaurants nearby. When the desk clerk asked if we were interested in a buffet or a sit down dinner, Gerry had the foresight to ask him if there were alcoholic beverages served at the nearby restaurant called Diane's Diner. He explained that this was an Indian reservation so no alcohol was served on the reservation with the exception being the Cherokee Casino. After a two-minute discussion, we decided that we'd have dinner at a casino.

Reassembled in our "dress clothes," which included jeans and fresh tee-shirts, we went to the casino to find that Ruth's Chris Steakhouse was at the front door, and that Paula Dean's Kitchen was at the other end of the resort in the hotel, about a half mile away. We decided that Ruth's Chris Steakhouse would be the appropriate choice.

Unfortunately Ruth's Chris Steakhouse said we had to wait an hour to eat, but we could sit in the bar for that time which sounded like a good idea given the condition of our legs. However the service was so slow at Ruth's Chris Bar that we sent Chris (with the young legs) to check out Paula Dean's Kitchen. He came back in 15 minutes with a little, red-light, buzzing vibrator, As he joined us, the vibrator went off so we shuffled the half-mile to Paula Dean's.

For dinner we all had Paula Dean specialties. Gerry had the potpie; I had the crawfish and shrimp jambalaya. We had a nice bottle of pinot grigio and a non-descript bottle of chardonnay. It was during the pinot grigio when I asked Gerry if he knew what pinot grigio and sex in a canoe had in common. He shook his head, and I said, "They are both close to water!" No comment.

Our meals were dutifully devoured. Passing through the casino on our way out, we all vowed never to be “one of those people” sitting, smoking, and drinking at the slot machines. Famous last words!



Chris and Gerry: Son and Father  
Ready to hike at Fontana Dam



Fontana Dam, North Carolina





Shuckstack Mountain Fire Tower with Chris in the middle

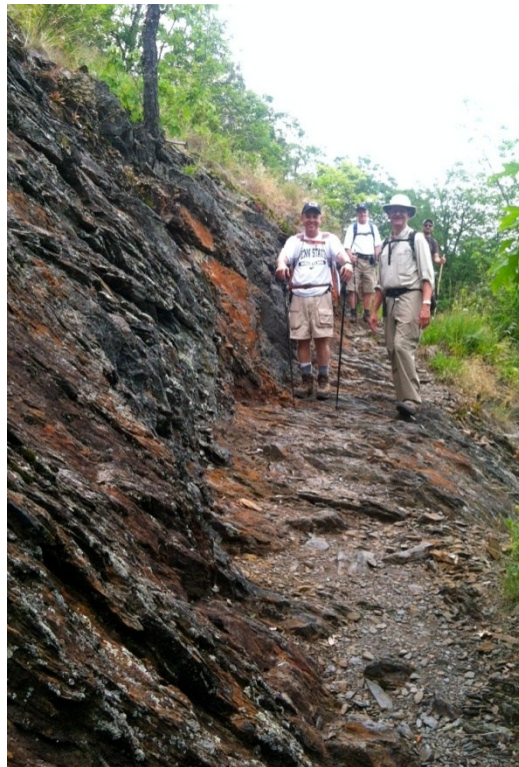


Jim, Gerry, Mike, and Dan





Jim and Gerry thinking about the hike back down the Mountain



Appalachian Trail cut into Shuckstaff Mountain: Dan and Mike





Taking a breather on the way up the Mountain: Chris, Jim, Gerry and Mike



Tired Buckaroos try to eat lunch: Mike, Jim, and Gerry





Jim made it to the top!



Downhill hikers: Gerry, Dan, Mike and Jim





Chris and Mike looking back as they hike downhill.



Mike and Jim re-hydrating at the end of a tough hike.





Five Tired Hikers: Jim, Dan, Chris, Gerry, and Mike





## June 1, 2012, Friday: Clingman's Dome, TN

Hike: Clingman's Dome, Tennessee

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Jim, Mike, Chris

Hotel – Hampton Inn, Roanoke, VA

Restaurant: Coach and 4 Restaurant, Roanoke

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N35°33.39' Longitude: W83°29.7'	6,012'	6.0	7.0

Friday morning was rainy and cool as we drove uphill, 15 miles west toward Clingman's Dome State Park. We were immediately engulfed by fog (that's why they're called the Smokey Mountains), and our speed was reduced to 15 miles per hour. In the dense fog, we wondered if we would be able to find the turn to Clingman's Dome. Once again, we affirmed that the journey may be the destination, but finding the trialhead was half the challenge!

Finding the parking lot in the fog and wet drizzle, we decided to hike the short distance up a paved road to the Observation Tower. Half way up the trail, we stopped for a rest and realized that our breathlessness was probably caused by the 6000-foot elevation!

As we walked up the 0.6 mile road to the Clingman's Dome lookout tower, Mike said, "You guys have got to come to Oklahoma to go pig hunting. We have giant wild pigs

down there. In fact when I was on my way home from Tulsa airport late at night a month ago, I ran into a big boar with my car. However it was a glancing blow, and there wasn't any serious damage to the car. I stopped the car, but I couldn't find the pig anywhere. I didn't think any more about it until the next day when I drove up to Pawhuska, Oklahoma. I was in the Seven-Eleven store getting a cup of coffee and a donut when a state policeman came in and asked if there was a man named Mike Jones in the store. When I admitted to being him, he asked if I was at the Tulsa Airport the night before. The police officer said that he was investigating a hit-and-run incident involving a pig. I said, 'I did hit a pig last night, but I couldn't find it anywhere. There wasn't any damage. But how did you find me here in Pawhuska?' The state trooper looked at me, shook his head, and said: "The pig; he squealed!" No comment.

Continuing on up the tower to the 6,641-foot elevation, we would have had spectacular views if it weren't for the "smoke," as the locals say. At the Clingman's Dome Lookout Tower, we went up another 100 feet of elevation. We could look 30 or 40 miles in every direction if we hadn't been totally enveloped with fog. As it was, we saw nothing, but we had the thrill of standing at the highest point in Tennessee and the highest point on the Appalachian Trail.

Since the temperature was falling and the rain was increasing, we decided to take a short 3-mile hike to a shelter for lunch and then back again. Since Clingman's Dome is the highest point in Tennessee, the hike to the Double Springs Shelter was all downhill, but it was treacherous with rocks and mud.

On the way to the shelter we met several hikers. In particular three, 50-something women from West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio, all of whom lived within 10 miles of each other. They had been hiking the Appalachian Trail for three days. Their trail names were Shimmie, Dr. Timex, and Sparky. They took our survey: two said they were a 5 on the political spectrum scale, Sparky said that she was a 9.5.

When we left the parking lot, the temperature was 53 degrees, the winds were 20 to 30 miles an hour, and the rain was a steady but light drizzle. But when we got to the shelter, the wind had started to blow harder, and the rain had intensified. We enjoyed our trail lunch and had a poignant conversation about the chance and circumstances that Chris, Mike, Jim, Gerry and I would ever have lunch together as a group again. We agreed that the probability was close to zero, but still a good idea.

Our return trip up to the parking lot was led by Chris, followed by Gerry and Jim, and then by Mike and me. Our upward climb was slow and hot even though the temperature had dropped into the 40's, and the wind had picked up. The fog was still dense, as we focused on the rocks at our feet. The Appalachian Trail became a young brook gurgling and babbling as it swelled with water, turning rocks and logs into slippery traps for unsuspecting boots filled by tired and wet hikers. Unbelievably, the rain and wind continued to increase as we became soaked from

the inside-out and the outside-in. Chris and Gerry arrived at the parking lot at least a half-hour earlier than Mike and I. The total time was 6 hours, and the total distance was 7 miles.

In driving rain, we tried to say good-bye to Chris who was leaving for Boone, NC and to Mike who was leaving for Tulsa, OK. Now down to two cars, Gerry, Jim, and I drove 3.5 hours to the Hampton Inn in Roanoke, VA where we were welcomed with blue skies. We enjoyed several bottles of my favorite Spanish cava and a decent meal at the nearby "Coach and 4 Restaurant."



On top of the Clingmans Dome Lookout Tower: Chris, Jim, Mike, and Gerry





Clingmans Dome Lookout Tower: Dan and Gerry



A Ridge Top Trail Break: Mike, Chris, Jim, and Gerry





Almost to Double Springs Shelter



The Foggy and Drizzling Appalachian Trail



A Group Shot after Lunch at the Double Springs Shelter:  
Jim, Chris, Gerry, Mike, and Dan



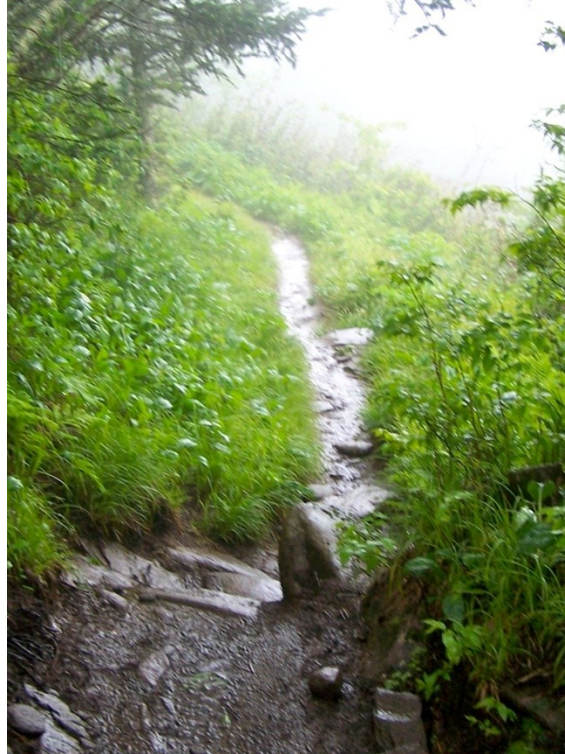


Mike: Ready to start back up the Trail and leave the Double Springs Shelter behind.

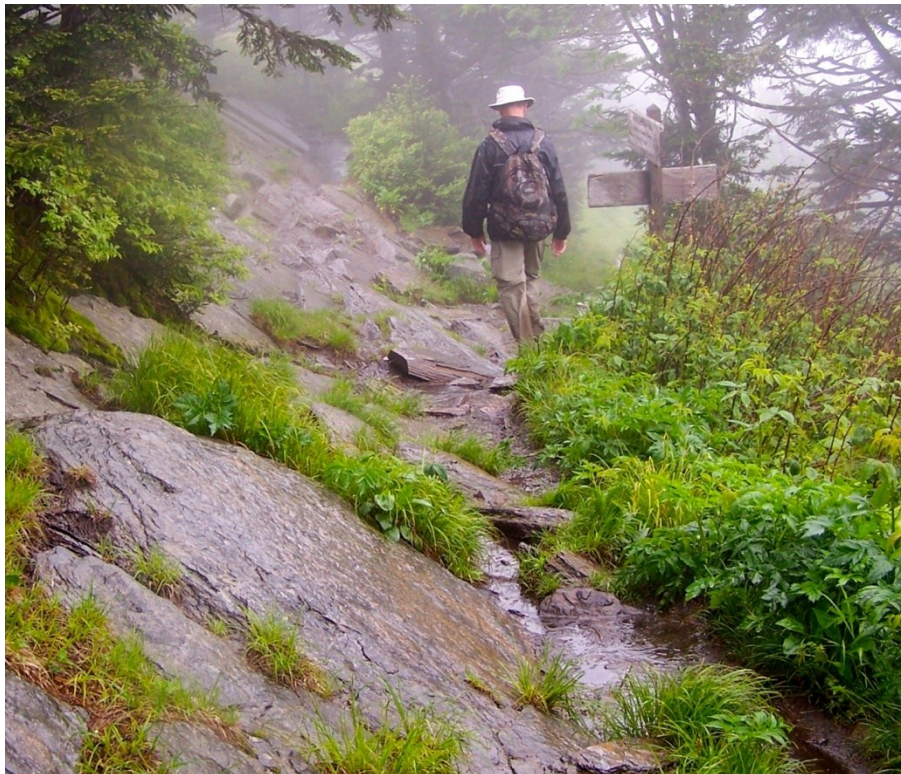


Mike: Climbing up the slippery Trail





The Trail starts to become a stream



Mike: Navigating waterfalls now on the Trail



Dan: Wet from the inside-out and the outside-in.



Clingman's Dome Lookout Tower on a clear day (Courtesy of Mike Hoyt)



Clingman's Dome vistas on a clear day (Courtesy of Mike Hoyt)







## **June 2, 2012, Saturday: Travel Day**

The Plan: Drive to Charles Town/Harper's Ferry, West Virginia

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Molly, and Donna,

Hotel – Hampton Inn, Charles Town, WV

Restaurant: The Mediterranean Restaurant, Charles Town

Jim left early for a family reunion and surprise birthday party in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, planning to rejoin us Sunday night in Harpers Ferry, WV. Gerry and I got a later start as we headed north on Interstate 81 to meet my wife Donna and friend Molly in Charles Town, West Virginia.

Donna's friendship with Molly predates Donna's and my meeting at Ohio State by 10 years. Growing up in Upper Arlington, Ohio, they became best friends in junior high school and have been best friends ever since. A Russian major in college, Molly was an excellent athlete in several sports, and is now a passionate car-camper and golfer. She was the first person after Gerry to embrace the Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure (BATA), and rearranged her work, family, and vacation schedule to join us for hikes in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Her only condition was that her BFF had to join her in the BATA, at least for the dinners. Donna agreed.

Donna's plan was to stay with Molly at the hotel and then to join us for lunch, happy hour, dinner, and nightcaps. Donna had no intention of joining us on the hikes, but it still seemed like a reasonable plan to Molly and me.

On the way to Charles Town, Gerry and I decided to locate the Snickers Gap trailhead in Virginia for our Sunday hike since we have experienced so much trouble



finding where to start. Following our 2002 guidebook<sup>3</sup>, we drove to the end of Virginia Route 601 where we stopped to reconnoiter. A nice young man working in his yard asked us if we were trying to find the Appalachian Trail. Although real men don't ask for directions, we listened carefully as he told us, "Turn around and go back to the unmarked gate with the 'no parking' signs on both sides of the driveway. The Appalachian Trail is just a half-mile down the driveway."

We did as told, found the gate, and left with an uneasy feeling. Later that night we checked some other maps, and found a trailhead at the intersection of was Virginia Routes 7 and 679. It may not be obvious, but we were getting smarter!

Donna arrived at the Hampton Inn about the same time we did so we had a late lunch at the nearby Applebee's Restaurant. We caught up on our travels and learned that Molly would be arriving in a couple hours. Our hotel arrangements seemed weird, but appropriate. Molly and Donna would occupy a junior suite, and Gerry and I would stay down the hall in a double. Clearly the Junior Suite would be the party room.

Gerry and I enjoyed the hot tub as we waited for Molly to arrive, and we were finally invited to the Junior Suite for happy hour. The key question was: where do we have dinner? Donna reviewed our options. We chose the Mediterranean Restaurant, and I called for reservations: "I am Amhed, and I will set a table for you." It didn't sound too crowded. When we arrived, Amhed greeted us and showed us to the big window table for eight. We felt special even though the blinds were closed to keep out the late afternoon sun. In response to our cocktail orders, Amhed said, "we don't serve alcoholic beverages, but there is a gas station just two blocks away that has an excellent wine selection." We were chagrined and disappointed, but Gerry quickly volunteered to make the wine run to the nearby gas station.

Amhed served a truly delicious appetizer, and then peaked out the window through the closed blinds. He looked back at us and said, "Does your friend have a drinking problem? He seems to be swaying back and forth as we walks down the sidewalk."

We looked at each other, and I suggested that he must be a little tired (and hoped that Gerry didn't drop the wine). Amhed looked back through the blinds, and reported that Gerry had fallen against a storefront window, but he didn't go through. "I think he will be alright," Amhed said. He looked back at us as I was getting up to go save my friend. With a giant toothy smile he said: "I was just kidding!" I went to the window, threw open the blinds, and viewed an empty street. Who would have figured that we would get excellent food and a waiter with a "sense of humor"?

Gerry finally returned cold sober with an excellent wine selection of too many wines. We finished our meals, thanked Amhed for a very enjoyable evening, and took the extra wine back to the Junior Suite for a nightcap.

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<sup>3</sup> Duffus, p. 78.

We agreed to meet at 8:00 am for our Virginia hike, and Gerry and I went down the hall to our room.



Donna: Happy hour at the Junior Suite



Molly: Happy Hour at the Junior Suite



Gerry: Happy Hour at the Junior Suite



### June 3, 2012, Sunday: Snickers Gap, VA

Hike: Snickers Gap, Virginia

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, and Molly

Hotel: Hampton Inn, Charles Town, WV

Restaurant: A Special Place that can't be disclosed

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N39°75.9' Longitude: W77°52.4'	1202'	5.0	8.0

The Hampton Inn in Charles Town had just opened four weeks earlier. They were still working out the bugs, but the breakfast person was probably the most upbeat, positive, extroverted person in West Virginia. While Gerry is upbeat, positive, and extroverted by nature, he seemed quiet by comparison. Nevertheless, Gerry and Happy Lady were a lot to endure at 7:00 am! Finally, Molly and Donna appeared, and we were ready to go. Donna explained that she was just there for moral support only, no hiking.

Molly, Gerry and I drove straight to the Snickers Gap Trailhead without a wrong turn or a major anxiety attack. We had an uphill hike to Raven Rocks, but it really wasn't too bad. It was almost reasonable.

We interviewed several groups of hikers on the AT about their political self-assessment using our 10-point survey scale. It was interesting how liberal this group of hikers were. Gerry objected that the respondents were either too young or



employed inside the Washington Beltway which seriously “biased” our survey. At that point, our political survey was abandoned.

As we hiked, we were on the look-out for my friend Chuck, my ex-girl friend’s ex-husband. I had met Chuck at Penn State and looked forward to seeing him since he was hiking south on the AT from Harper’s Ferry to Snickers Gap, and we were hiking north from Snickers Gap. We didn’t connect with Chuck on the AT, but I’m sure he would have enjoyed our post-hike happy hour.

We had lunch at Ravens Rocks, which was a great out-cropping with 50-mile views. As we enjoyed our trail lunch, Gerry chatted up a skinny through hiker from Indiana as well as several day hikers from Washington, DC. On our left, we were surprised to find ropes tied to trees only 100 feet away where ordinary people rappelled down the cliffs. They may have looked ordinary, but they were crazy!

We finally agreed to let Gerry release his “inner marathon runner”, and he headed back to the trailhead at a very rapid pace. Molly and I continued to enjoy a reasonable pace with perfect hiking conditions: cloudy skies and cool breezes. We met a group of day-hikers who said that they used to live on the AT until it was moved. They explained that their homes were only a half mile away, but the AT had been moved so that the hikers would not have to walk on Virginia Route 601 to get to Virginia route 7. This confirmed our suspicions that the AT was changing even as we hiked it. The volunteers who maintain the Trail for people like us are amazing and deserve our thanks and gratitude.

With Gerry ahead, we finally had a chance to use our walkie-talkies. Gerry confirmed that he was at the car, and that the beer was cold. We picked up the pace and arrived to a smiling Gerry 25 minutes later. Official time was 5 hours, and the official distance was 8 miles.

At the Hampton Inn, we rejoined Donna who had hiked the Appalachian Trail in Harpers Ferry and Maryland and had found a special place for dinner in Harpers Ferry. We agreed on a hot tub, a nap, and happy hour before we left for dinner.

Just in time for happy hour at the Junior Suite, Jim arrived from his family reunion looking well rested for the next day’s hike. He was meeting a college friend for dinner at a bowling alley, the Beer and Bowl Pub, so he passed on our special place in Harpers Ferry.

We had called ahead for reservations at our special place in Harpers Ferry so we were surprised to find it empty except for one other table. We ordered the nightly special: a special steak treated with special sauce covered with a special coating. While our hostess was delightful, the food was horrible! We aren’t giving the restaurant name because no restaurant could be that bad for very long and stay in business! Something major had to change for it to stay in business.



Returning to the hotel for nightcaps at the Junior Suite, we met Jim who said that the Beer and Bowl Pub was not a place to eat food, "Bowl – yes; Beer – yes; Food – no!"



Gerry and Molly: Crossing into West Virginia on the AT



Other day hikers enjoying lunch at Raven Rocks

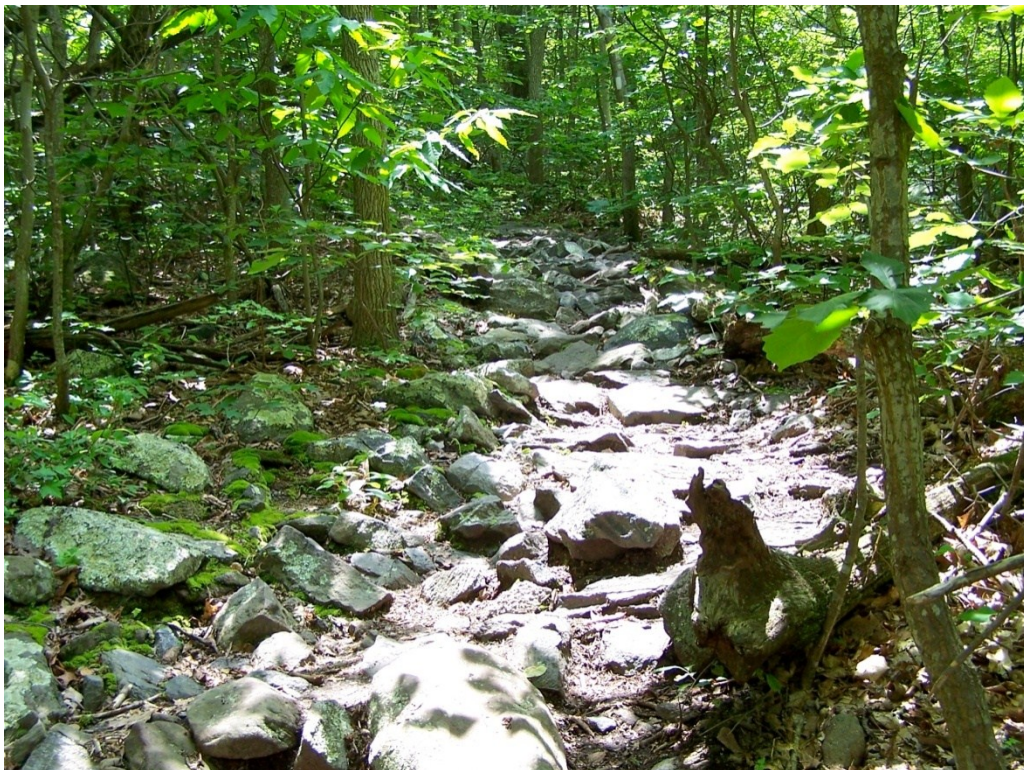


Dan, Molly and Gerry: After a trail lunch at Raven Rocks with 50-mile views



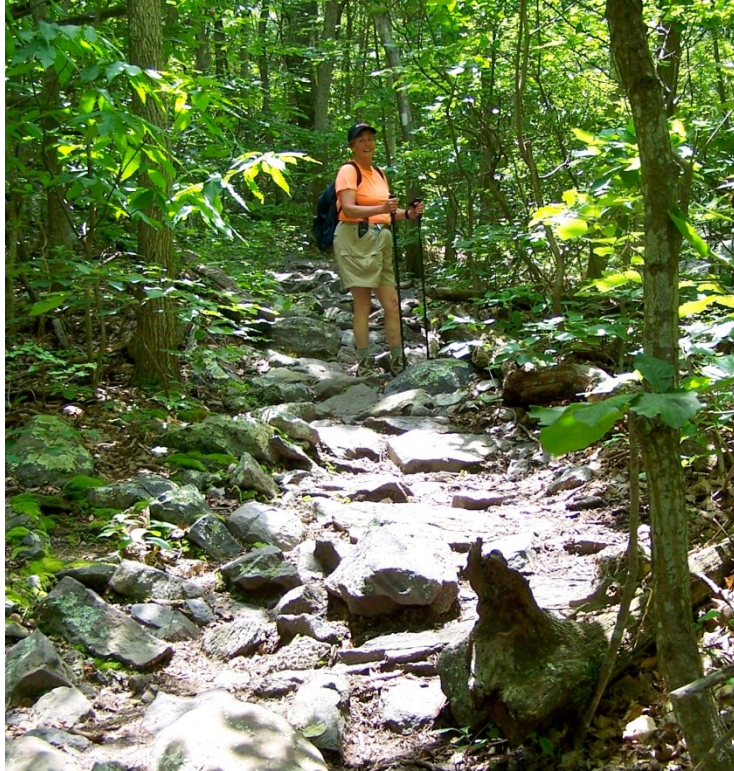


A tough hiker from Indiana (L) and day hiker from DC (R)



A rocky trail, but not too bad.





Molly surveys a trail of rocks



Molly and Gerry: A toast to a great hike!





## June 4, 2012, Monday: Harpers Ferry and the Blue Ridge Mountain

Hike: Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to the Blue Ridge in Virginia

Hotel – Hampton Inn, Charles Town, WV

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Molly, Donna, Jim, and Ed

Restaurant: Applebee's, Charles Town

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N39°19.39' Longitude: W77°43.9'	309'	6.0	8.0

Jim, Gerry and I exchanged pleasantries with the Happy Lady at breakfast until Molly and Donna appeared. Molly was ready to go, and Donna wasn't talking yet. After a couple of pictures in the parking lot, we were off to Harpers Ferry and our West Virginia hike. The town of Harpers Ferry is a national historic park as well as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Headquarters. Founded in 1747, Harpers Ferry has so much history that it seems trite to hike through and around it, but that was our plan.

On our way into the historic town, a red Jeep Cherokee followed closely behind us. I made several wrong turns trying to find a parking place, and the red Cherokee followed directly behind us. I was sure that I was going to be arrested by an undercover Park Ranger, but we pressed on until we reached the parking lot next to the historic train station. The red Cherokee was right behind us, and it parked two spaces away. Prepared to get arrested, I introduced myself to Jim's college friend

Ed! Ed decided to join us for the hike, go figure. (Jim didn't recognize him in the Jeep.)

As usual, we started our hike by climbing uphill, but this time the uphill climb was on 62 stone steps carved in the 1820's that went right through historic Harpers Ferry from High Street to the Harper House and St. Peter's Catholic Church. We started to catch our breath when we came to the famous Jefferson Rock. The story is that President Thomas Jefferson stood on this rock, viewed the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and announced "the two rivers rush together against the mountain, render it asunder, and pass off to the sea....." Writing to his friends in France, he wrote that this view alone was worth the voyage across the ocean.

From Jefferson Rock, we hiked down the mountain to the Shenandoah River and the US Route 340 Bridge. Just where we broke out of the woods at the foot of the mountains, a stone staircase had been built. As the fearless leader, I only heard the scream as Molly rolled down the steps. Embarrassed but unhurt, Molly declared that she was fine, but she refused to do a re-enactment for photographic history. Nevertheless, she earned the trail name, "Fifth Down." We crossed the Shenandoah Bridge confident that Molly was a lot tougher than we had thought.

As we crossed the bridge, we met a tough hiker that we had met the day before. He was 54 years old and looked like an advertisement for "don't let this happen to you." He allowed a picture, but he had to hurry since he was on a tight schedule.

On the Virginia side of the Shenandoah River, we climbed the Blue Ridge Mountain until we reached the top and looked for a place for a trail lunch, aka, a break.

On the way back to Harpers Ferry, we discussed literature, world politics, family dynamics and baseball trivia. Gerry and Jim were amazing:

1. What were the World Series champions each year in the 1950's?<sup>4</sup>
2. Who was the majors' last triple crown winner?<sup>5</sup>
3. What two teams played in the first overtime NFL championship game and who won?<sup>6</sup>
4. What year did Don Larson pitch the only perfect World Series game, and beating whom?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 1950 – Yankees; 1951 – Yankees; 1953 – Yankees; 1954 – New York Giants; 1955 – Brooklyn Dodgers; 1956 – Yankees; 1957 -- Milwaukee Braves; 1958 – Yankees; 1959 – L.A. Dodgers; 1960 – Pittsburgh Pirates.

<sup>5</sup> On the date of the hike, the most recent Triple Crown winner was Carl Yastrzemski, Boston Red Sox, 1967. His stats were 44/121/.326 (HR/RBI/bat. avg.). In 1966, Frank Robinson won it when he was with the Orioles. Before that, Mickey Mantle won in 1956. Last NL player was in 1931!

<sup>6</sup> New York Giants and the Baltimore Colts. Colts won.

5. Who threw out the first pitch in the 2001 World Series?<sup>8</sup>
6. In 1956, what baseball team won 111 games in a 154 game season and then lost the World Series in four straight games?<sup>9</sup>

As we crossed the Shenandoah River and headed uphill to Harpers Ferry, we detoured to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy headquarters where we signed in, bought souvenirs, and took the obligatory “ATC Picture.”

We left the ATC Headquarters on Washington Street and hiked downhill to our car where we met Donna, who was doing her own AT adventure. Comparing notes, we decided that our next destination should be lunch at the Secret Six Tavern with its locally brewed craft beers. This was a good decision. The patio lunch overlooking the historic train station was delicious! The official time (including lunch) was 6 hours, and the official mileage (including the detour to the ATC) was 8 miles.

We drove back to our Charles Town hotel and enjoyed a hot tub, a nap, and a happy hour at the Junior Suite. Our dinner at nearby Applebee’s was both unfortunate and forgettable. The Junior Suite nightcap was highlighted with champaign and potato chips, and we agreed to start again at 8:00 am in the morning.

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<sup>7</sup> In the 1956 World Series, Yankees pitcher Don Larson pitched a perfect game against the Brooklyn Dodgers

<sup>8</sup> President George Walker Bush threw out the first pitch in 2001 World Series. The Arizona Diamondback beat the New York Yankees.

<sup>9</sup> The Cleveland Indians lost to the New York Giants in 4 straight games after winning 111 games in 1954. (The Indians beat the second place Yankees by 8 games and the last place Philadelphia A’s by 60 games!)



Jim on the Jefferson Rock: "the view was worth the voyage across the ocean." TJ



A 54-year-old Though-Hiker: Not Much Fun





Starting to climb the Blue Ridge: Gerry, Molly, Jim, and Ed



Trail Lunch on the Blue Ridge Mountain: Molly and Jim





Almost Home: Gerry, Jim, and Molly



The ATC Picture: Dan, Gerry, Molly, and Jim



Lunch at the Secret Six Tavern: Molly, Dan, Donna, Gerry and Jim







## June 5, 2012, Tuesday: C&O Canal and Weverton Cliffs, MD

Hike: C&O Canal and Weverton Cliffs in Maryland

Hikers: Dan, Molly, Donna, Jim, and Gerry

Hotel: Hampton Inn, Charles Town

Lunch: Private Quinn's Tavern, Harpers Ferry

Dinner: Mediterranean Restaurant, Charles Town, WVA

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N39°19.39' Longitude: W77°43.9'	309'	6.0	9.9

At Tuesday's breakfast at the Hampton Inn, Gerry and the Happy Lady truly bonded. They were so nice to each other so early in the morning that I forgot to get my yogurt. Finally, Jim and then Molly arrived to give me a break from the early morning happy talk.

We drove to the exact parking spot in Harpers Ferry that we had the day before. But instead of climbing the rock stairs, we gingerly crossed a pedestrian footbridge that was built in 1985 as an add-on to a railroad bridge that was built in 1896! The sign on the bridge said that we were 1,011 miles north of Springer Mountain, Georgia but still 1,165 miles from Mount Katahdin, Maine. This information could be very discouraging for a through hiker, but it makes the BATA hikers smile.

The railroad-pedestrian bridge crossed the Potomac River and put us in Maryland on the C&O Canal Path, which now coincided with the Appalachian Trail.

For the first time since we started our Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure, we were walking on a flat, rock-free trail. We stretched out our strides and picked up our pace. The C&O Canal on our left was calm and tranquil while the Potomac River raged on our right. As we headed east, we almost missed the AT Blazes that indicted a sharp left turn off the C&O Canal that took us over the railroad tracks, under US Route 340, and up the mountain to the Weverton Cliff Overlook where we stopped for a snack and a visit with a section hiker, "Papa Reese."

Papa, 69 years old, was hiking from Harpers Ferry to Duncannon, Pennsylvania with a 40-pound pack on his back. We were impressed as he gave us tips on our future hikes in New England. He warned us about Mount Katahdin in Maine, which he attempted four times and never reached the top. Twice the weather was so bad that Baxter Park officials closed the trail, and twice his co-hikers (and family members) pooped out. He invited us to continue with him, but we were ready to turn back and meet Donna on the C&O Canal.

Hiking solo again, Donna was hiking on the C&O and missed the AT turn-off. She was heading toward Brunswick, Maryland when we reached her via cell phone, turned her around, and arranged to meet her at the missed turn. Our return trip on the C&O Canal was a welcome relief to legs, which were becoming a little shaky after six hikes in seven days.

Gerry, Molly and Donna had a faster pace than Jim and me, so we separated into two groups. Jim and I enjoyed some quality time together on the AT as we strolled at a more age-appropriate pace.

Re-crossing the Potomac River to Harpers Ferry, we all met and stored out gear in our cars then continued our hike across the street to Private Quinn's Tavern for a light lunch and locally brewed craft beers. The total time including lunch was 6 hours, and the total distance including lunch was 9.9 miles.

We returned to the Hampton Inn for a hot tub soak, a short nap, happy hour at the Junior Suite, and then dinner at the Mediterranean Restaurant in downtown Charles Town, again.

The Mediterranean Restaurant still did not serve alcohol so Gerry again volunteered for the wine run to the nearby gas station, and promptly returned with two reds and two whites. We toasted to our hikes, our friends, and our yet-to-be-scheduled "reunion hike."

The nightcap at the Junior Suite was short as we all prepared to leave in the morning. Molly was headed back to Ohio to visit her son and his new bride. Jim was driving to Detroit for a 2-day rest before he attempted the Iron Butt Challenge on his motorcycle. Donna, Gerry and I were going to our condo in Arlington, Virginia, where Gerry would leave for Atlanta the next morning.



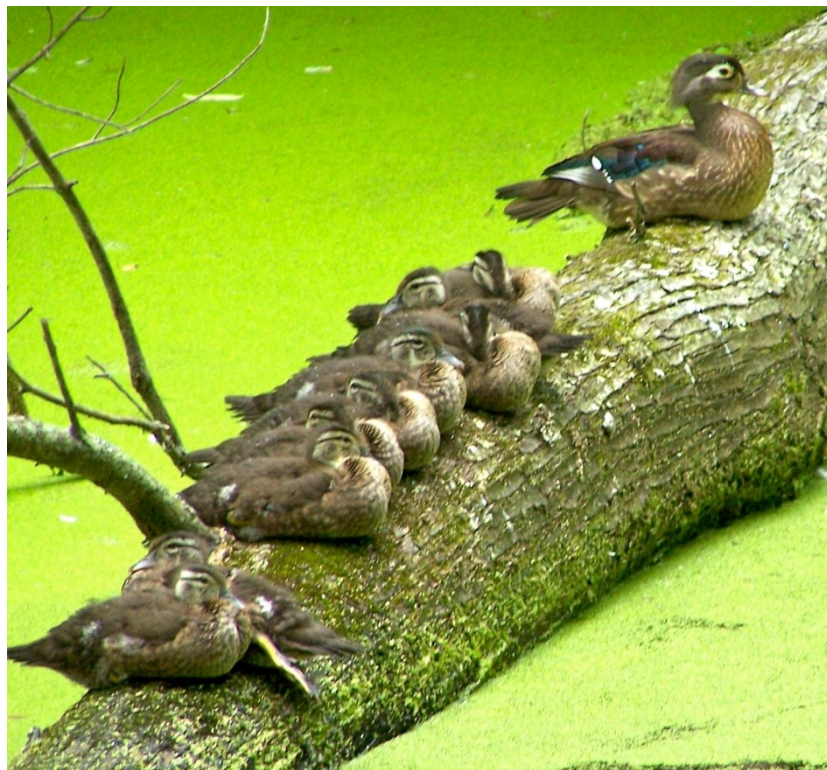
The six states that composed the southern half of the BATA was now over. We had scheduled a week's rest to take care of some business and then go north to finish the eight hikes that would be the northern half of the BATA. We were all tired, but we had garnered memories of a lifetime.



Taking a break at Weverton Cliffs: Gerry, Dan, Molly, and Jim



Gerry and Dan with sectional hiker Papa Reese



A hen wood duck and her ducklings on the C&O Canal





Jim contemplates the Potomac River



Dan and Jim's View of the C&O Canal as Donna, Molly and Gerry leave them behind!





Molly and Donna: Best friends at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers.



The Shenandoah on the left and the Potomac on the right:  
Gerry, Molly, Donna, and Jim





The End of the C&O Canal and the AT in Maryland:  
Gerry, Dan, Donna, Jim, and Molly



A Toast at the End of the Hike: Gerry, Jim, Molly, and Dan







## **June 11, 2012, Monday: Haverford High '65 Reunion**

The Plan: Drive to Philadelphia

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel: Hampton Inn, Plymouth Meeting, PA

Restaurant: Ruby Tuesday's, Plymouth Meeting, PA

Gerry and I were ready to start the northern half of the BATA. I picked him up at Reagan National Airport in Arlington, Virginia, and we headed north to Havertown, PA (just west of Philadelphia) for a Haverford Class of '65 All Sports Reunion.

At the Oakmont National Pub in Havertown, we met Gerry's classmates Bill, Bob, Rich, and Nick. Also Gerry's brother Frank, his wife Marie, their children Pat and Katherine, and Pat's new bride Lisa joined us for draft beers, life updates, reminiscences, and speculation about the merits of hiking the Appalachian Trail as we know it.

In high school, Gerry, Bob, Rich, and Nick played football together while Gerry and Bill were lacrossers. Both Rich and Nick were retired teachers; Rich was a wrestling coach, and Nick was an athletic director. Bill has earned his living as a reporter, editor, and college professor.

After basketball, Bob spent a life-time in the sporting goods sales business (with Nike and now New Balance). He now operates one of the largest sports representative distribution systems on the East Coast. Bob has been our consultant on hiking shoes and boots. Gerry loved his New Balance 993 hiking boots, and my New Balance 900's were so comfortable that I wore them after every hike as a gentle respite for my tired feet.

Bill has been recommending books for me to read ever since we first met at Gerry's house during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. At that time, his hobby was writing book reviews for the *New York Times*. His summer book recommendations were:

- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*;
- William Landay, *Defending Jacob*;
- Joseph Kanon, *Istanbul Passage*; and
- Erik Larson, *In the Garden of the Beast*.

This was a very impressive group to be sure. When I asked Bill in what year he won the Pulitzer Prize, he simply said, ""Which one?"



Bill: Two Pulitzer Prizes!





**Front Row:** Bob Young, Jan Sachs, Randy Marks, Pete Barbour, Nick Settanni, Lorin Barr. **Row 2:** Don MacClaren, Bob Pettit, Kingman Davis, Gerry Curtin, Bob Keyser, Tom Truax, Fred Brutsche, John Linehan, Mr. Renshaw (Coach). **Row 3:** Dave Rudolph, Mike McCoy, Rick Lawson, Ted Loux, Nick Delviscio, Bob Evans,

Rick Taylor, Ed Greene, John Ward, Vince Mannino, Mr. Kalmach (Coach). **Back Row:** Charles Zoll, Mike Schneider, Rich Koshgerian, Joe Samango, Rene Capriotti, Bill Schwartz, Greg Lacivita, Rick Schaffer.

Gerry #62, Bob #87, Rich #66



#### Varsity Lacrosse

**Front Row:** John Keers, Royer Smith, Larry Stoloff, Gary Bullock, Craig McGarvey, Steve Basile, Chas Zoll, Rich Koshgerian. **Row 2:** Steve Barson, John Little, Tom Truax, Jim Suter, Rick Ruf, Gerry Curtin, Don MacClaren, Larry Berger, Steve Yost, Lee Berman, Bill Allen.

**Back Row:** Mr. Scott (Coach), Fred Brutsche, Art Abriss, Larry Cozzens, Bob Armstrong, Bill Baldino, Rob Bush, John Callender, Jack Echterling, Joe Samango, Curt Haring, Nick DelViscio, Mr. Shapley (Coach).

Gerry #23; Rich no number, bottom right





Dan G. #21 (See Hike on June 16<sup>th</sup>)



## **June 12, 2102, Tuesday: Travel Day**

The Plan: Drive to Delaware Watertown Gap, PA

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel: Pocono Inne Town, Stroudsburg, PA

Restaurant: Siamsa Irish Pub

In a relentless rainstorm, we drove north to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area at Stroudsburg, PA (Exit 310 on I-80). When we checked into the Kittatinny Point Visitors Center, the National Park Service ranger advised us to hike the New Jersey side of the Appalachian Trail on Wednesday and the Pennsylvania side on Thursday. Evidently more rain was expected on Wednesday, and the New Jersey side was less treacherous in the rain. This “re-schedule” was important for those friends planning to meet us at the trailhead on Wednesday at 9:00 am. We planned to start at the Dunnfield Trailhead in New Jersey on Wednesday, and the Delaware Water Gap Trailhead in Pennsylvania on Thursday.

At the Visitors Center, we met a through hiker, the Sandal Man. He had started in Georgia on March 8, and he hiked the entire trail in his sandals! Otherwise, he seemed like a very nice young man who could use a good meal and pair of hiking boots! He had grown up in Valdosta, GA (close to the Florida line), and now lives somewhere in northern Florida.

As the rain continued, we drove up the Delaware River Valley on US Route 209 to the Dingman Falls Visitor Center, which was closed where we met other camper/hikers who were wondering why the gate was locked. We speculated that it was because the National Guard was doing secret military maneuvers in the 70,000-acre park.

Unfazed we found a nice bar along River Road for a late lunch and the CNN News reports on the Jerry Sandusky Trial in Bellefonte. How sad. Gerry and I knew most of the Penn State “characters” and always had kind thoughts about them. Enough said.

We had dinner at Siamsa Irish Pub, which was just across the street from our hotel and enjoyed a couple of drafts as the Atlanta Braves lost to the New York Yankees on television. The rain had passed through so the next morning looked good.





## June 13, 2013, Wednesday: Delaware Water Gap, NJ

The Hike: The New Jersey side of the Appalachian Trail at the Delaware Water Gap

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel: Pocono Inn Town, Stroudsburg, PA

Dinner: Flood's Restaurant

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N40°9'2" Longitude: W75°12.5'	355	5.25	10.25

Today, Gerry and I enjoyed the best weather and easiest hike of the Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure. Blue skies, low seventies, no humidity, and a nice cool breeze made the 10.25-mile hike in 5.25 hours a cakewalk!

We delayed our early morning start as we waited for some friends who said that they might join us, but had gone "silent" as the hiking day approached. We watched a group of seven soldiers in camouflaged fatigues prepare for the day's hike, which confirmed our suspicions that there were "secret maneuvers" going on.

Starting at the Dunnfield Trailhead in New Jersey, we hiked east and uphill to the Sunfish Pond where we ate lunch and visited with through hikers as they stumbled by us. The AT along the pond was a joke, a jumble of ankle-twisting rocks and snake hideouts. Our walking sticks served us well, especially since we had Gorilla-glued and Gorilla-taped all of the joints on the sticks the prior night. Without the

sticks we would have had to give up. We have no idea how our Sandal Man had walked across these rocks in open-toed sandals and rain the day before.

At Sunfish Pond we also encountered an elaborate and extensive field of rock cairns. Cairns are rock piles customarily used above the tree line to mark a trail. However, these cairns were on the lake shore. Sometimes cairns are used to mark an historic or momentous event which would make more sense to Sunfish Pond hikers. The AT was so rocky and treacherous that I can imagine that some hikers wanted to mark the historic moment that they almost got out of the rocks. Finally, the ancient Greeks used cairns to celebrate Hermes, the god of overland travel. The real message of the cairns may have simply been, "Hermes, please help us!"

We also visited with a pair of young Amish men who were section hiking. During our chat we couldn't help but notice that they had high-tech poles, packs, and boots, but of course, their clothes were plainly sewed. We wished them well, and held back our questions about what were they doing on the Appalachian Trail during the growing season.

Despite the rocky trail around Sunfish Pond, we were impressed with the condition of the trail and the AT white blazes which made navigation a cinch.

As we hiked, Gerry and I debated the Pulitzer Prize committee's decision not to award a prize for fiction this year. In a rare moment of agreement, we thought that the prize should go to Chad Harbach for the Art of Fielding. But then we started to debate what the book was really about. I thought that it was about college baseball, and Gerry said that it was really a love story about two gay guys. Go figure.

While we hiked, my niece Kelly had a baby boy (her fourth) who is named Josiah Jack after his paternal grandfather. I love the name Josiah, and both the mother and child are healthy and doing fine.

I re-charged the battery of my Kodak Camera during our break in Washington so it would be ready for the second half of the BATA. But to my chagrin, I realized that the fully charged battery was on my desk in Arlington, VA. After completing our hike, we went to a nearby Best Buy store to get a new battery where we learned that Kodak doesn't make cameras or batteries any more. Consequently, I bought a Nikon camera that is one-third the size and five times as powerful.

Back at the hotel, we got e-mails from our missing friends and would-be hikers who simply reported that "life got in the way."

At the Flood Restaurant, we ate under a picture of Gene Mills, "the pinning machine" and a member of the ill-fated 1980 Olympic Wrestling Team, thanks to President Carter. Gene wrestled for Syracuse University and only lost two matches in his collegiate career. One of his two losses was to Pete Morelli, a DuBois High wrestler who wrestled for Clarion University at the time. It's a small world.

Tomorrow, we were hiking the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware Water Gap and then driving on to Central Valley, NY where Mike has threatened to rejoin us.



Gerry resting on a White Blaze





Dan making a fashion statement with a White Blaze



Sunfish Pond Explained





Cairns on the shore of Sunfish Pond



A forest fire re-growth provides a lookout over the Delaware River Valley.







## June 14, 2013, Thursday: Delaware Water Gap, PA

The Hike: Pennsylvania Side of the Delaware Water Gap

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel: America's Best Value Inn, Central Valley, NY

Dinner: The General MacArthur Dining Room in the Thayer Hotel at West Point

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N40°9'78" Longitude: W75°14.2'	355	5.5	10.0

Gerry and I got an early start at the Delaware Water Gap Overlook One, the parking area for the Pennsylvania side of the Appalachian Trail. Our hikes had taken on familiar pattern: hike straight up a mountain until exhausted, eat lunch, and stumble back down the mountain. Today's hike was 3.5 miles uphill to Mount Minsi (a 1,000 feet vertical climb) and an old fire tower at 1465 foot elevation. At the top, the AT became a nice ridge road going east that gave us an opportunity to catch our breath until two giant black bears lumbered across the road only 40 yards in front of us. We stood still for another five minutes to be sure that they smelled us and then whistled our way another two miles to the radio tower and pipeline right-of-way.

Just after the bears, we met a lady hiker from New Jersey who had lost her job and now was hiking the AT with her border collie. They both looked tired, especially the dog! At the vista view on the pipeline, we met a guy from Spain who had been working in the United States for 32 years and treated himself to AT day-hikes as a

reward for his long commute. He gave us lots of restaurant recommendations in Madrid and Barcelona, which we promptly forgot. Oh well.

At the Minsi Mountain Overlook, we enjoyed lunch and a spectacular view of the Delaware Water Gap (looking south) with a couple and their son. As we finished lunch, two National Park rangers, John (from Villanova University) and Billy (Drexel University), suddenly appeared. After brief greetings and introductions, they agreed to a photo shoot. Gerry promptly engaged them in trip down memory lane to the great Philadelphia college basketball teams that played at The Palestra, the University of Pennsylvania's basketball court.

On the way back down the mountain, we carefully placed our feet and sticks to avoid a sprained ankle or a twisted knee. We were so careful, in fact, that we missed the turn in the AT and walked on downhill until the noise from I-80 was at our backs (not a good sign). Finally, we met a nice couple walking toward us, and Gerry asked them for directions, only to find out that they were from Ireland. After another walk down memory lane about Ireland, they gave us some good information. They were visiting the U.S and taking day-hikes in the mountains while their daughter attended a gymnastics camp at nearby East Stroudsburg University. It turned out that we were only a half-mile from the AT trailhead where Gerry's 4-Runner was waiting for us.

We had hiked 10 miles in 5.5 hours.

As we drove east on I-80, Mike called us from Central Valley, NY. As promised, he was re-joining our BATA and had already checked into the America's Best Value Inn. He had also made dinner reservations for us. We met at the Bear Mountain Lodge about 4:00 pm to find the trailhead for tomorrow's hike and enjoy a cold beer. Ironically, the craft beer sold at Bear Mountain Lodge was brewed by the son of my JHU co-worker, Margot.

Dinner that night was at the Thayer Hotel at the United States Military Academy on the outside terrace of the General MacArthur Dining Room which overlooked the Hudson River. It was a beautiful evening as the sunset over the Hudson Valley, and Mike entertained us with historic and personal stories of the area.



The Delaware Water Gap and I-80



Gerry resting on the old foundation of the Minsi Mountain Fire Tower





At the radio tower and pipe line looking north.



At the radio tower and pipe line looking south





The Minsi Mountain Overlook of the Delaware Water Gap



NPS Rangers: John from Villanova University and Billy from Drexel University





The AT goes straight up Minsi Mountain



The AT winds through patches of Mountain Laurel





Gerry 's happy to find the stream that goes back to the car.



Mike, Gerry and Dan: Dinner on the Terrace of the MacArthur Dining Room in the Thayer Hotel



Dinner on the Hudson River: Lots of History and Memories



## June 15, 2012, Friday: Bear Mountain, NY

Plan: Tour the United State's Military Academy at West Point

Hike: Bear Mountain, NY

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, and Mike

Hotel: Holiday Inn, Danbury, CT

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N41°18.75' Longitude: W73°59.3'	108'	3.25	5.0

We arrived at the Visitor's Center and Museum on the West Point Military Reservation at 8:00 am only to find that nothing opened until 9:30 am. Without missing a step, Mike re-directed us to another parking lot and took us on a walking tour of the Academy, complete with old memories and historical "facts". Our tour included:

- Michie Stadium (and Blake Field);
- Lust Reservoir and the Vietnam Memorial rock gift from the Class of '69 and other classes;
- Protestant chapel and a copy of the Cadet Prayer;
- Old Fort Putnam which was closed (still too early);
- Trophy Point and a piece of the "Chain" that the Americans rebels had strung across the Hudson during the Revolutionary War;
- Flirtation Walk;
- The Plain, aka the parade grounds;



- The Mess Hall where the entire Corp of Cadets eats dinner together;
- The First Division Old Cadet Barracks;
- The Reconciliation Walk and Memorials;
- Field house and gym; and
- Marty Marhr's ginger-bread house.

Finally, we headed back to the Visitors Center, Museum, and Gift Center which was now open. Our walking tour was 4.75 miles and took 4 hours.

Our drive to Bear Mountain was a quiet one as we all contemplated the enormous amount of history that West Point was part of. As the United States has had history full of war, it also has a history full of West Point graduates who served our country in leadership positions, both militarily and politically. It was just hard to fathom.

At the Bear Mountain Lodge, we had a light lunch then began our ascent of Bear Mountain's 800 granite steps, which were originally built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's and have been recently been rebuilt by volunteers and professional stone masons led by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The Perkins Lookout Tower at the top of the mountain provided panoramic views, which included the Manhattan Skyline!

Returning to Bear Mountain Lodge, our hike lasted 3.25 hours and covered 5 miles. We then drove to Danbury, CT, checked into the Holiday Inn, and ate diner at the Black Angus Restaurant across the street. Gerry and I shared a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc from Chile, and the three of us shared a celebratory bottle of Proseco from Italy. We toasted Mike, West Point, and the United States of America.



Our too early start: Fort Putnam was locked!



Big Mike and Little Gerry at Fort Putnam





Gerry and Dan at Trophy Point



Gerry and Mike at West Point's parade grounds with the Mess Hall behind.





The Bear Mountain Inn

Connecting People with Nature since 1920

## Work In Progress

### The Bear Mountain Trails Project

**Building a Trail for the Ages**  
Each year, more than 500,000 people hike on Bear Mountain. This high level of use, on trails not designed to withstand it, has resulted in serious erosion on many of the trails here. As a result, since its initial construction in 1922, the world-famous Appalachian Trail (A.T.) on Bear Mountain has been re-routed numerous times. The BMTCP aims to create trails that will withstand heavy use for years to come, protect the environment, and offer a unique hiking experience for the public.

**800 Hand-cut Granite Steps**  
The Appalachian Trail relocation currently features 800 hand-hewn granite steps and one mile of stone crib walls. Each step measures 4-5 feet long and weighs about 1,000 pounds. Each was split and shaped from rocks on the mountain and maneuvered into place without the aid of motorized equipment. Using only their hands or helped by a series of overhead

cables rigged up in the surrounding trees, trail workers moved these rocks distances of up to 300 feet.

Most Trail Conference projects rely exclusively on volunteers. But the scale of this project and the skills required—reminiscent of the construction of many of the roads, walls, and buildings built in Harriman State Park in the 1930s by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps)—led the Trail Conference and its partners to recruit a team of professional trail builders from all over the country to lead the construction effort and train hundreds of volunteers.

**The Volunteer Legacy**  
By the time this segment of the relocation was completed and opened on National Trails Day 2007 (June 5), roughly 800 individuals had volunteered over 30,000

hours to aid in the completion of one of the most technically challenging stretches of trail-building along the entire Appalachian Trail. Along the way, they learned and practiced artisanal masonry skills, extending an old-fashioned craft into the 21st century. As an added benefit, many will be able to put their skills to work on other trail projects in the region.

As you climb Bear Mountain, please look at the work and thank the trail builders and maintainers. This piece of trail represents the commitment, skills, and passion that volunteers routinely dedicate to our treasured park resources throughout the region and state.

There will be continued opportunities to get involved with this historic project through 2013. For more information, go to [www.nynjtc.org/bmp/bear-mountain-trails-project](http://www.nynjtc.org/bmp/bear-mountain-trails-project).

Ever wonder what those rectangles painted on the trees are? These are trail blazes and they function as a way of guiding people through the wilderness without having to cause significant impacts to a park's natural appearance. As you get further into the backcountry, the ability to read these symbols will become crucial in making it to your destination and most important, finding your way back. Here's how:

Straight Ahead	Left Turn	Right Turn	Trail Branch	Trail End

**The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference** partners with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of over 1,700 miles of public trails. We offer volunteer opportunities for people who love the outdoors. Visit us at [www.nynjtc.org](http://www.nynjtc.org).

**The Appalachian Trail Conservancy** is the national nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and development of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in order to provide outdoor recreation and educational opportunities for trail users. For more information about ATC please visit [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

**The Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation** (OPRHP) provides recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources by operating and maintaining 179 parks and 31 historic sites.

**The Palisades Interstate Park Commission** (PIPC) is a co-equal system of New York and New Jersey and jointly manages more than 50,000 acres of wilderness areas, wildlife habitat, and cultural sites that form the backbone for 10-20 parks, hundreds of miles of trails, and eight heritage properties.

The Bear Mountain Trail Project led by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy





A Few of the 800 Granite Steps



Some Pretty Fancy Stonework!





Hiking Poles were helpful on these steps.



Mike at the top of Bear Mountain with the Hudson River below.





Gerry with the New York City Skyline behind



Putman Tower on the top of Bear Mountain sans elevators



## **June 16, 2012, Saturday: Bulls Bridge and Schaghticoke Mountain, CT**

Hike: Bulls Bridge, Connecticut

Hotel – Yankee Peddler Inn, Torrington, CT

Hikers: Gerry, Dan K, Dan G and Mike

Dinner: Eat, Drink, Live!

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N41°40.53' Longitude: W73°30.4'	386'	4.75	8.8

Dan G drove over from Duxbury, Massachusetts (just south of Boston) to join us on our Connecticut hike. Dan G attended Haverford High School with Gerry before he came to Penn State on a soccer scholarship and became my good friend as well. We were all fraternity brothers and best friends until Dan G got drafted into the Army.

When Dan G arrived at 9:00 am, we drove to the AT trailhead at Bulls Bridge, Connecticut where a covered bridge crossed over the Housatonic River. Mike and Dan G had never met, but they became fast friends as they compared their tours of duty in Vietnam. Dan G had been a medic assigned to the U.S. Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division from August, 1968 to October, 1969, and Mike was a first lieutenant with the Army's First Air Cavalry Division from April, 1970 to March, 1971.

As we climbed the Schaghticoke Mountain, the AT veered back into New York State, then continued onto the Schaghticoke Indian Reservation and then back into Connecticut.

At the Schaghticoke Campsite, we decided to leave the trail and turn downhill with the intention of hitting the Schaghticoke Road, which paralleled the Housatonic River and would take us back to our cars. It looked like a 1,000 foot drop in elevation over a half mile.

The downhill “hike” was a spectacular example of “Don’t Follow the Leader!” Ranger Mike blazed the trail until his scream and delayed response (“I’m alright”) convinced us to find another way down. We re-crossed Dry Gulch Creek, which was really a series of beautiful waterfalls, where Mike rejoined us. Hiking downhill is always stressful on the legs, feet and knees, but skidding downhill well out of control is downright scary as well as outright painful on the legs, feet and knees.

We found the Schaghticoke Road exactly where a “no trespassing “ sign was posted, but we were all in one piece. The road back to the cars was flat as we passed several Schaghticoke Indian structures, trading posts, and sweat lodges.

Our loop hike was 8.8 miles and lasted 4.75 hours. As we re-hydrated back at the cars, Gerry made us promise never to leave the Trail again. We all agreed.

In three cars (Dan G’s, Mike’s rental, and Gerry’s 4-Runner), we drove to Torrington, CT. When we checked into the Yankee Peddler Hotel, we crowded into the antique elevator, and debated what the controls meant as Mike jerked handles and levers. As we bounced up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, we all agreed this was a mistake. We never again used the elevator.

Torrington was a somewhat downtrodden town that had been a successful New England manufacturing town before World War II. It reminded Gerry of Bedford Falls, New York in his favorite movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*. We had dinner at the restaurant across the street from our historic hotel. It’s name was Drink, Eat, Live!

It had been a full, rich day.





Dan G, Gerry, and Mike at Bulls Bridge



Dan G and Gerry starting to sweat at the overlook





Dan G and Gerry stop and smile as they climb the AT



Dan G with the Housatonic River Valley behind





Dan G. tries to find a way down the mountain to the Schaghticoke Road



Dan G., Gerry and Mike safe but illegal on the Schaghticoke Road





Assorted structures on the Schaghticoke Indian Reservation



Gerry and Dan G. re-hydrate after our first Loop Hike





Mike, Gerry, Dan G, and Dan K. celebrate a good hike and a safe return.







## June 17, 2013, Sunday: Mount Greylock, MA

Hike: Mount Greylock, Massachusetts Highest Peak at 3,492 feet.

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel: Chez O'Donnell in Webster, NH

Dinner: Chez O'Donnell

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N42°38.26' Longitude: W73°10.0'	3491'	2.0	3.0

We all enjoyed an early breakfast at the Nutmeg Café with a sassy waitress who called us guys, boys, and dears. Everyone in the Café wished us a Happy Father's Day, which took us back a little since none of us had thought of it yet.

Dan G drove back to his family in Boston; Mike flew back to his family in Tulsa; and Gerry and I drove north on Route 7 to Massachusetts's Mount Greylock where the AT traverses the 12,500-acre state park for 11 miles. The 7.5 mile Mount Greylock Scenic Byway was a two-lane road with vista views, pull-overs, and trailheads every half mile, and it took us right to the top of Mount Greylock.

The top of Mount Greylock was a hub of activity as runners, cyclists, hang gliders, and hikers circled around the Veterans War Memorial Tower and the historic Bascom Lodge. A trail race was in progress, and this was where exhausted runners completed the uphill portion of their race. Hang-gliders were meticulously checking their kites as they summoned up the courage to leap off the mountain.

Since Mount Greylock was the highest point in Massachusetts, we had to hike downhill. Our plan was to hike north from Greylock Mountain (elevation 3491') on the AT through a slight saddle to Mount Fitch (elevation 3110') and back. The state park maps showed that the AT didn't even cross one contour line. However and unfortunately, the AT went straight down the very steep mountain side. As we hiked, the AT actually got steeper! We were amazed by the dozens of runners who passed us running up this trail. Simultaneously, we were dreading our return trip back up the mountain.

It was becoming clear that: (1) we had either made a serious mistake and missed a turn, or (2) the AT map was wrong, or (3) the AT had moved since the maps were made. Our aching knees finally convinced us to turn around and hike back up the mountain, finishing the last half mile on an asphalt road! Our legs felt better going up the roadway, but our hearts pounded as we couldn't get enough oxygen.

Our Hike was 3 miles long, and took only 2 hours, but the AT kicked our butts today!

Back in the car, we drove west through Florida, Massachusetts (no palm trees or hurricanes) and north to Webster, New Hampshire to spend the night at the home of Gerry's wife's sister, Judy O'Donnell, and her husband, Bill. They have a beautiful home (built in 1795), a great Yankee Barn, and organic gardens galore. Our dinner was fresh garden vegetables and baked wild salmon. We drank wine and visited about Judy's therapy dog, Sadie, and her new puppy, Sammy, (both Labs- Sadie is black and Sam is "yellow"), the challenges of country living, the automation of dairy farming, and future trips to far away places (or was that the wine?) ..... a delightful evening.



Gerry enjoys a view of the Housic Mountain Range from Mount Greylock



At the top of Mount Greylock, the Veterans War Memorial Tower provides a spectacular view as runners and hang gliders work below.





From the Tower, our hike from Mount Greylock to Mount Fitch looked easy.



Runners are close to finishing a race to the top of Mount Greylock on the AT.



A beautiful and historic farmstead where the O'Donnells provided us a welcome respite.







### June 18, 2012 Monday: Norwich, VT

Hike: Elm Street to the Happy Shelter in Norwich, Vermont

Hikers: Dan and Gerry

Hotel – Baymont Inn, West Lebanon, NH

Dinner: Seven Brew Pub, Lebanon, NH

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N43°42.63' Longitude: W72°19.2'	750'	3.5	8.4

Judy was up early and fixed us a hearty, country breakfast to get us started for our hike in Norwich, Vermont. We got to Hanover, NH at 9:00 am, which gave us enough time for a brief tour of Dartmouth College and coffee at the Dirt Cowboy Café, where every cup of coffee was individually brewed.

We crossed the Connecticut River to Norwich, VT where our hike was to begin, and of course, we couldn't find the trailhead. Someone, vandals no doubt, had removed the street signs from the poles so Elm Street was never identified as such. I think that the locals figure that if you don't know where the Appalachian Trail is, you shouldn't be on it. We finally found a white blaze and a sign on a poster board. We parked on the side of the road, hoping that the road construction crews down the street wouldn't bother the car.

We hiked from Elm Street (elevation 750 feet) south to the top of Mosley Hill (elevation 1150 feet), and then onto the Happy Hill Shelter (elevation 1460') . After

a brief lunch of granola bars and water, we retraced our tracks back to the car. This was the easily the least challenging hike, with virtually no vistas or natural beauty, but it was a most enjoyable hike, just what our 65-year-old legs needed. As we approached Elm Street, we were passed by a skinny, young man with an oversized pack who was taking baby steps at an incredible pace. We stopped him (probably out of jealousy) and asked if he was a through hiker. Not even out of breath, he said he had started at Springer Mountain, Georgia on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and he was on his way to Mount Katahdin. He was the furthestest most north through hiker we had met. He excused himself, pressed on, and we never got his name. We bet that he wins the through-hiker race!

The total hiking time was 3.5 hours, and the total hiking distance was 8.4 miles.

We drove south to West Lebanon, New Hampshire where we are staying at the Baymont Inn and Suites. We had already experienced the “best Baymont property in the US” in Cherokee, NC, but this one was okay, also.

From the hotel, we walked downhill to the Seven Brew Pub for dinner. In my mind, the best part of brew pubs is the “sampler.” I tried the seven-brew sampler, evaluated each beer, and then ordered another sampler. We ate at the bar, watched some baseball on TV, and walked back up the hill to the Baymont Inn .



Gerry finishing lunch at the Happy Hill Shelter.



A Dartmouth Outing Club Sign, Nice Work







## June 19, 2012, Monday: Mount Washington, NH

Hike: Mount Washington to Mount Jefferson and back

Hikers: Gerry and Dan

Hotel: Town and Country Lodge, Gorham, New Hampshire

Restaurant: Town and Country Lodge

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N44°15.92' Longitude: W71°17.8'	6288'	2.5	4.2

When Gerry and I reached the top of Mount Washington (elevation 6288') in New Hampshire at about 11:00 am, the wind was blowing hard, and the temperature had dropped into the 50's. We had already stopped at the Pinkham Notch Visitors Center (and the Appalachian Mountain Club Headquarters) for maps and postcards. We drove the 8-mile Mount Washington Auto Road to the top and listened to a great CD about the history of the mountain and the construction of the road. The 40-mile views were dramatic, scary, and impossible to describe.

Our plan was to intercept the Appalachian Trail where it crossed the Mount Washington peak, then hike north and downward, and then upward again to Mount Jefferson (5716' elevation) and then back again. Since we were above the tree line,

the AT was marked with cairns,<sup>10</sup> and boulders with the white AT blaze painted on them. From the beginning of the hike, each step was an opportunity to twist an ankle, sprain a knee, or break a neck. Our walking sticks were useful, even though there was no dirt to stick them in. The rocks on the trail were scarred with nicks from the myriad hiking sticks that had stabbed or tried to stab them.

Within ten minutes we had shed our coats and over shirts as we focused on every step down the ridge and along side the cog railway that shuttled passengers to the top and back down again. They all waved to us and wondered what two old guys were doing in a jumble of rocks on the side of the mountain. To our right was a cliff that dropped 4500 feet straight down to the Great Gulf Wilderness Area. The thrilling view made us reflect on our own mortality and madness. This goat trail could lead us to an untimely end of a great trip.

As we stopped to reconsider our turning point of Mount Jefferson, two middle-aged women came springing down the path, one wearing just a sports bra on her top and the other just wearing sandals on her feet, and both wearing big, over-sized smiles. We had talked to them earlier on top where they were waving to a digital camera that was linked into the Mount Washington web site. They confirmed that they had their picture taken on the summit, since the sandal-lady said that her husband had e-mailed her a copy. They asked us our trail names, and when we asked theirs, the sports-bra lady simply said, "Just call us Crazy!" With that, they leaped on down the path. What were they eating? What were they drinking? What were they thinking?<sup>11</sup>

Gerry and I watched the happy hikers spring down the hill, and quickly agreed that our new destination would be Sphinx Col (elevation 4,975 feet)<sup>12</sup>. At Sphinx Col, we turned around and looked up the 1,300 feet to the summit and our car. We took some pictures of the Great Gulf Wilderness to the east and the Burnt Ravine to the west. It was a slow, plodding hike back up the mountain as we carefully picked our steps. Unhurt, we would be able to hike Mount Katahdin in two days.

The top of Mount Washington was a hustling place with the railroad passengers, car tourists, and hikers from several trails all converging at the same place for photos, souvenirs, and a dandy snack bar with hot soup and chili dogs! Consequently, we bought souvenirs and enjoyed clam chowder with a chili dog before heading back down the mountain and lodging at the Town and Country Resort in nearby Gorham.

The hike was 4.2 miles, including the walk to the snack bar, and it was 2.5 hours, not including the walk to the snack bar. It was a physically scary hike, but nothing got

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<sup>10</sup> Cairns are rock monuments, pronounced karns. Per Webster, cairns are a mound of stones erected as a monument or landmark to provide direction.

<sup>11</sup> See the Mt Katahdin Journal, June 22. Maybe they were related to the other ladies that we met on Mount Katahdin, Maine.

<sup>12</sup> A col is a pass between two mountain peaks or a gap in a ridge.



hurt, injured, sprained or broken so we were well exercised and ready for our last hike on Thursday.

The Town and Country Lodge was quite nice with a hot tub, restaurant, and bar that we shared with the Purple Helmet Motorcycle Club, most of whom were from Toronto. It was quite a sight when they lined up their 30 motorcycles for the official photograph.



From the top of Mount Washington we look out over the Cog Railroad and the Mount Washington Auto Road



Carins mark the AT in this treeless environment





Redundancy: white blazes on boulders and cairns mark the AT in a hostile environment: No trees, No soil, Just rocks.



Our Destination: Mount Jefferson





The Cog Rail Road: 3 miles directly up the summit with a 37 degree incline at Jacobs Ladder.



Gerry contemplates the Great Gulf.





Dan thinks, "One miss step and I would tumble 4500 feet to the bottom of the Great Gulf!"



Gerry looks at Mount Jefferson and decides to turn around at the Sphinx Col.



The Purple Helmet Motorcycle Club poses for pictures at the Town and Country Lodge.







## **June 20, 2012, Wednesday: Drive to Mount Katahdin, ME**

The Plan: Drive to Big Moose Inn, ME

The Hikers: Gerry and Dan

The Hotel: The Big Moose Inn, ME

Dinner: River Diver Pub and Restaurant

Today was a driving day, north to Baxter State Park, the home of Mount Katahdin and the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. My hunting buddy, Art, and his young wife Julie said they were going to join us for the last hike up Katahdin, but I really didn't expect them to show up until I called him to see where they were. Unbelievably, they were in a sporting goods store in Bangor, Maine buying Julie some hiking boots for the hike! Buying hiking boots the day before one of the most challenging hikes in the East was a leading indicator of something, but I didn't want to think what.

Art and I first met in 1984 when I was looking for real estate projects to invest in, and Art was looking for investors in his real estate projects. It was an easy friendship from the start and just got better as we skied, hunted, fished and golfed together over the last 38 years. Meanwhile, we became business partners in multiple real estate developments. As Trammel Crow once said, "Real estate is a body contact sport," and Art and I have had a lot body contact over the last three decades.

I first met Julie 18 years ago at a cocktail party at the Bell South Golf Tournament. It turned out that we had a mutual friend in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish existentialist Soren Kierkegaard. We quickly became kindred spirits in a room full of golf-addled alcoholics or alcohol-addled golfers. I tried to hire Julie to work with me in

Washington, DC, but Art thought otherwise. Julie also has a habit of daily running and seasonal marathons!

Since we were just south of Bangor when we connected on our cell phones, we agreed to meet them at the Sea Dog Restaurant and Brewery on Front Street for lunch. Even though the temperature had soared into the 90's, we ate on the deck and enjoyed the view of the Penobscot River along with a sampler of craft brews and lobster rolls. Blueberry, raspberry, and apricot beers along with the Seadog Ale and a Bangor Stout were the perfect samplers for a hot day in Bangor!

Julie chatted up the bar manager, Chris, as she bought several "Good Dog, Bad Dog" tee shirts. He had hiked Mount Katahdin over a dozen times. As we circled around our latest hiking sage, he declared that Mount Katahdin was the most beautiful mountain and the greatest hike in the eastern United States. "The best way to hike it is to take the Chimney Pond Trail to Chimney Pond and then take the Saddle Trail to the top." When Gerry told him that we were already assigned to the Roaring Brook Paring Area, he declared, "That's perfect!"

As he took photos off the bar's walls to give us all better looks at tomorrow's challenge, I secretly thanked God that this trip might actually work out after all.

Our dream of the Big Moose Inn was slightly compromised when we checked into our prepaid, lakefront "sleeping cabin," which reportedly accommodated six people. Art and Julie graciously declined our offer to share our spacious accommodations as they checked into the main lodge. We had to put down a \$10 deposit to get a key to Cabin 6, the first real metal key that we had received in three weeks of lodging (and likely for 30 years of business travels prior).

When we entered the non-air-conditioned cabin, my first thought was, "I'm glad Donna didn't decide to join us here!" There was one big room with a kitchen table, a sofa, a chair, a bunk bed, and another bed. In the corner was a walk-in closet that had another set bunk beds. Including the screened porch that had a futon, I could see how six very good friends could sleep in the cabin under adverse circumstances. The only thing missing was a bathroom! Across the parking lot was a four-door out-house. Door #1 was the toilet for Cabin 6, and Door #4 was the shower and sink for Cabin 6. Again I thought, "I'm glad Donna's not here!" Upon further inspection, we found no towels or toilet paper.

Before dinner we had just enough time to check out the guard station at Baxter State Park to be sure that our reservations were in order. The ranger couldn't have been nicer and encouraged us to start early in the morning and to "take lots of water, at least two liters per person, and a flashlight each as well." When we asked him how long the hike to the top of Mount Katahdin would take, he looked us over and said, "Probably 8 or 10 or maybe 12 hours. Good luck!"

Danielle at the General Store recommended that we have dinner at the River Diver Pub and Restaurant where her friend Ellen Marie worked. Ellen Marie worked at the Big Moose Inn the previous year, but now she thought that the River Diver was much better. Go Figure.

Ellen Marie was our waitress at the River Diver Pub and Restaurant where our meals were just fine, thoroughly adequate. When Marie Ellen took our picture on the patio with Mount Katahdin in the background, we met a Baxter State Park Ranger who gave us more valuable information about the tomorrow's hike. "I spent last night getting a man 40 pounds heavier than me off of the mountain," he reported. "A middle-aged couple tried to start hiking the Appalachian Trail, just ridiculous."

When he looked at our concerned faces, he immediately said, "Don't worry, you'll do fine." His wife added helpfully, "Be sure to take some Fig Newton's for energy."

Back at the Big Moose Inn, we agreed to leave at 6:00 am on Thursday.



Gerry, Dan, Julie, and Art after dinner at the Diver Pub and Restaurant.  
Mount Katahdin is in the background.







## June 21, 2012, Thursday: Mount Katahdin, ME

Hike: Mount Katahdin

Hikers: Gerry, Dan, Art, and Julie

Hotel: The Big Moose Inn

Dinner: The Big Moose Inn

Box Score:

Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hours	Dan Miles
Latitude: N45°55.14' Longitude: W68°51.4'	1038'	11.5	17.1

Since the Big Moose Inn didn't serve breakfast until 8:00, Art, Julie, Gerry and I left for Baxter State Park (BSP) at 6:00 am with only a cup of coffee and a glass of juice. When we got to the guard shack and gate to BSP, the ranger checked us off the list of the day's allowed hikers and directed us to Roaring Brook Parking Lot, only 10 miles away. When we told him that we were hiking the Appalachian Trail to the top of Mount Katahdin, he said the AT was called the Hunt Trail at BSP and that the Hunt Trail may be accessed from another parking lot 12 miles from the Roaring Brook Parking Area. Once again, we remembered that while "the journey may be the destination," finding where to start is half the challenge. When I asked him where the Saddle Trail intersected the Hunt Trail, he simply said, "At the top." We arrived at the parking area at 7:00 am.

Ranger Russ checked us in at the trailhead (elevation 1038 feet) on the Chimney Pond Trail which would lead us 3.4 miles to Chimney Pond (elevation 2850 feet)

and the beginning of the Saddle Trail. The Saddle Trail was only 2.2 miles<sup>13</sup> and would take us to the top of the mountain (elevation 5267 feet). “Be sure to say hello to Ranger Mark when you sign in at Chimney Pond, and be sure to have a good time,” he said.

Our hike up to Chimney Pond took 2.5 (Gerry) to 3.0 hours (Art) and was very rigorous to be sure. We passed several groups of junior rangers (probably summer interns) who had just spent a week at the Chimney Pond camp working on the trail. They were happy to be going down the mountain and ready to start their weekend. Several groups of young hikers and a couple middle-aged women who were in a hurry to get to the top of Katahdin also passed us.

At Chimney Pond, Art announced that he was not going up the Saddle Trail, but rather was going to hike back to the Roaring Brook Parking Area after a well deserved lunch break. “This is nothing like the half marathon I walked in Savannah,” he said with his characteristic understatement. Julie decided to hike on with Gerry and me for another half-hour (beyond Ranger Mark’s station at the side of Chimney Lake) and then return to hike back down the trail with Art.

We had to check in with Ranger Mark and pass on the morning greetings from Ranger Russ. Ranger Mark confirmed that we had adequate water and flashlights for our final hike up the mountain. I think he was also calculating the probability that he would have to come and carry us back down the hill. “The weather on top may be treacherous, so enjoy the hike and don’t push it,” he advised hopefully.

The Saddle Trail started out bad and got worse. Not only did Julie not have a backpack (which she left with Art), she also had young, strong legs. So once she became the leader, she set a blistering pace and was soon out of sight. When Gerry and I stopped for a rest, she walked back down the mountain to see if we were all right! Feeling guilty about leaving Art back at Chimney Pond, Julie headed down the mountain to Art and left Gerry and me to press on. We had walkie-talkies so we always knew where Julie was as she headed down the mountain alone.

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<sup>13</sup> I should note the miles quoted on trail signs or maps may be different from the distances reported in “Dan Miles,” which are based on my 28-inch stride. Each Dan Mile equals 2,263 Dan Steps, which are presumably 28 inches each. However, the 28-inch steps are measured on a flat surface, and I know that many (probably most) of my steps going up the mountain or down or over and around rocks are less than 28 inches long. Thus, Dan Miles on the Appalachian Trail have an upward bias. But since the same measure was used throughout the AT, Dan Miles are relatively accurate ordinal and interval measurements. That is, four Dan Miles are longer than three Dan Miles, and eight Dan Miles are twice as long as four Dan Miles. I am explaining the calculation of Dan Miles because whoever is calculating the “AT Miles” carved into the wood signs along the trail has a serious downward bias. Probably, thinking that the hiker needs some optimistic news, the AT Miles are always calculated to be less (sometimes much less) than Dan Miles. However, I expect that the actual hiking distances on the ground (around rocks and back and forth on switchbacks) are closer to Dan Miles than to AT Miles.



The Saddle Trail went up the middle of the Great Basin until we hit a rockslide that required us to climb on all fours. Our walking sticks literally got in the way as we hauled ourselves up and over rocks and cliffs. I took comfort in the thought that there were no snakes this high up, since we would be eyeball-to-eyeball with them if they did live in these rocks. We took numerous breaks and finally made it to the tree line, where the bugs became almost insufferable. It was becoming clear to us that we might not make it to the top of the mountain, which was now shrouded in dark clouds. Our new strategy was that we would press on until 1:00 pm and then turn back down the mountain even if we didn't make it to the top. Twelve hours of hiking would probably be our maximum physical limit.

The ridge trail at the top of the rockslide headed straight up to the summit, which was allegedly only one more mile. It was 12 Noon. Surely we could go one mile in one hour we thought, even though we had already been hiking for five hours. The trail got steeper, rockier, and more obscure as we became surrounded in cold fog and a stiff breeze. We must have looked pretty sorry as several youthful hikers gave us encouragement and lied to us saying, "The last half mile is really easy!"

The two middle-aged women who passed us going up the mountain stopped on their way down and chatted breezily with us about a "wonderful day" or some other nonsense. They were taking the longer Hamlin Trail back down to Chimney Pond so they could see more new vistas. I secretly cursed them because I didn't know if we would even reach the top. Onward we pressed, going from one rock pile to the next, freezing as we went on and on and on!

We reached the top of Mount Katahdin at 12:59 pm. There were a half dozen hikers standing around, so we snagged one and told him to take out picture "Now!"

We then saw the white blazes marking the Appalachian Trail, and we walked down 50 yards then climbed back to the Mount Katahdin sign and declared ourselves finished with the Appalachian Trail. Gerry said, "Let's get out of here!" We still had to go back down the mountain.

We climbed down until we got below the clouds, then stopped in the sunshine to re-hydrate, chew on an energy bar, and congratulate each other. We tried to be profound, but mostly we were just profane! The thought of climbing back down the mountain was overwhelming.

As we have reported earlier, the hike up is hard on the cardio-vascular system, but the hike down is really hard on the legs. We systematically picked our way back down realizing that there was nothing left in our shaky legs. When we got to the rockslide, we set our walking sticks aside and tried to slide down on our butts. It wasn't pretty, but it was safer!

Reaching Chimney Pond, we signed in at the ranger station and took a short break only to be confronted by the two Chatty Kathys that had already passed us twice.

They had a “wonderful hike” down the Hamlin Trail and seemed as perky as ever. I hated them.

Gerry and I headed down the Chimney Pond Trail expecting to make better time than we had on the way up. Much to our surprise, the way down was much rockier and steeper than the way up! We had to go back into survival mode as we methodically worked our way over and around giant rocks and steep slopes. We were getting more tired by the minute, and the sun was setting behind us on the longest day of the year. Gerry and I separated, as I was afraid that if I stopped I couldn’t restart, and Gerry’s strategy was to take strategic breaks and then press on.

As I was concentrating on the 28 inches in front of my foot, I heard laughter and women’s voices, as the Chatty Kathys were about to pass me again! Much to my chagrin, they stopped to give encouraging words to me, an old guy who pooped out on the trail. “Your buddy looks pretty tired and there is blood running down the front of his leg,” they reported.

I had forgotten that Gerry had scratched his knee on a rock, and the minor cut had bled like crazy. “That’s old blood,” I told them, “he’ll be alright.”

“Be careful now, this is when you can get hurt,” they advised me. (I wished they would leave me alone.) “You should think about a cold beer at the end of the trail,” they further advised. (This I could relate to!)

“We have two people waiting for us at the bottom of the hill in a white Toyota 4-Runner that is filled with ice cold beer!” I told them in my most confident voice.

“Good luck and be careful,” they shouted as they bounded down the hill. Smugly, I thought that if this were the Olympics, they wouldn’t have passed the drug test! It also occurred to me that perhaps God was sending perky, energetic, middle-aged women to harass me on the AT as a way of teaching me humility.

Finally after 11.5 hours, Gerry and I reached Ranger Russ’s Cabin, checked in, and stumbled toward the white 4-Runner filled with cold beer. As we got within 30 yards of the car, Art jumped out and yelled, “Your girlfriends stopped by and told us that you said to give them all of the beer!” (I knew then that God could be spiteful to unrepentant sinners.) Suddenly, I realized that Art was kidding, and I only had ten more steps to take!

Gerry and I were whipped, beat, and exhausted. We never expected this kind of hike on the AT.

After a shower and a couple more beers, we were only ten minutes late for our dinner reservations at the dining room in the Big Moose Inn. We had the crab cake appetizers, the steak specials, and a bottle of Malbec, but mostly we enjoyed just sitting there and telling Julie how hard the trail got after she left us!

After dinner, we visited the Loose Moose Bar and toasted our day's hike with a bottle of Chandon Brut. It was a good day indeed: we had hiked 17.1 miles in 11.5 miles and finished our Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure.



Julie and Art hiking the Chimney Trail





Art, Gerry, Dan and Julie: Taking a break at Chimney Pond



Art, Gerry, Dan and Julie with Mount Katahdin in the clouds behind.





Dan and Gerry at Chimney Pond

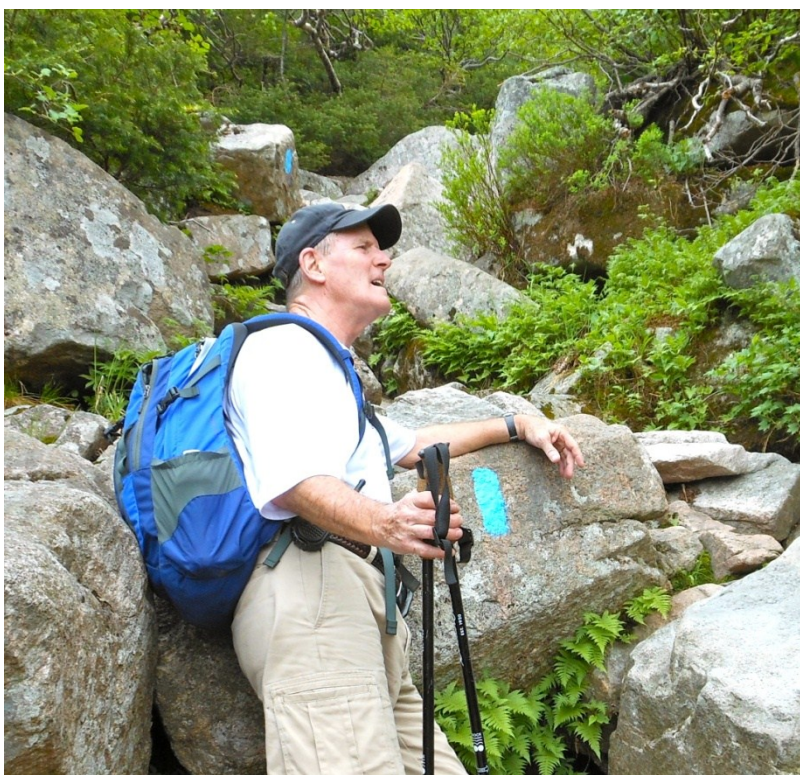


Julie stands on the edge of Chimney Pond with Mt. Katahdin above





Baxter State Park Signs with inspirational mileage measurements.



Gerry suffers as he contemplates following the blue blazes straight up the rocks!





Looking down at Chimney Pond



Gerry finally made it above the tree line; "from here on down, it's all uphill."





Mount Katahdn is up in the clouds.



Dan and Gerry finally make it to the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail





The White Blazes mark the AT way to Katahdin



Finally below the clouds, Gerry looks at the long way down!





More misleading signs!



Gerry and Dan at the start of the Chimney Trail on the way back down.



Gerry collapses; Dan rejoices!





Gerry and Dan: "The Journey is the Destination"



Art, Julie, Gerry, and Dan: Enjoying a celebratory bottle of Champaign.



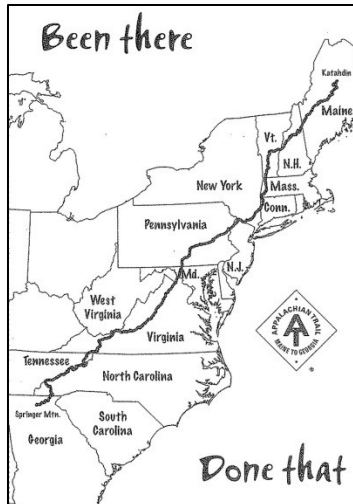


A quiet evening at the Big Moose Inn



Our lakeside cabin at the Big Moose Inn





## Summaries, Lessons Learned, Do-Overs, and Last Thoughts

### Hike Summary

Below is a summary of the hikes we made. The latitude and longitudes are critical for anyone trying to find the elusive trailheads. Our hikes lasted from 2 to 11.5 hours, but the average time was 5 hours. The distance of the hikes measured in Dan Miles ranged from 3 miles at Mount Greylock to 17 miles at Mount Katahdin, with the average distance being 8 miles. Our initial goal was to hike for 6 hours or 10 miles, whichever came first, but looking back, the averages of 5 hours and 8 miles seem like very reasonable hikes.

The trail elevations are misleading. Usually we started at the bottom of the mountain and hiked up, but occasionally we started at the top of the mountain and hiked down. The Bear Mountain hike started at the Hudson River (elevation 108') and went up, while the Mount Washington hike (elevation 6288') started at the top and went down. Clingman's Dome is officially the highest point on the Appalachian Trail (elevation 6641'), but the trailhead (elevation 6012') was below the top of the mountain.



State	Name	Date	Trailhead Location	Trailhead Elevation	Time Hrs.	Dan Miles	Hikers
GA	Springer Mountain	5.30	Latitude: N34°38.25' Longitude: W84°11.7'	3,426'	4.75	8.9	Dan, Mike, Gerry, Jim
NC	Fontana Dam	5.31	Latitude: N35°27.65' Longitude: W83°48.6'	1,908'	4.25	8.8	Dan, Mike, Gerry, Jim, Chris
TN	Clingmans Dome	6.01	Latitude: N35°33.39' Longitude: W83°29.7'	6,012'	6.0	7.0	Dan, Mike, Gerry, Jim, Chris
VA	Snickers Gap	6.3	Latitude: N39°75.9' Longitude: W77°52.4'	1202'	5.0	8.0	Dan, Gerry, Molly, Donna
WVA	Harpers Ferry	6.4	Latitude: N39°19.39' Longitude: W77°43.9'	309'	6.0	8.0	Dan, Gerry, Molly, Donna
MD	C&O Canal	6.5	Latitude: N39°19.39' Longitude: W77°43.9'	309'	6.0	9.9	Dan, Gerry, Molly, Donna
NJ	Delaware Watertown Gap	6.13	Latitude: N40°97.2' Longitude: W75°12.5'	355	5.25	10.25	Dan, Gerry
PA	Delaware Watertown Gap	6.14	Latitude: N40°97.8' Longitude: W75°14.2'	355	5.5	10.0	Dan, Gerry
NY	Bear Mountain	6.15	Latitude: N41°18.75' Longitude: W73°59.3'	108'	3.25	5.0	Dan, Gerry, Mike
CT	Bulls Bridge	6.16	Latitude: N41°40.53' Longitude: W73°30.4'	386'	4.75	8.8	Dan, Gerry, Mike, Dan G
MA	Mount Greylock	6.17	Latitude: N42°38.26' Longitude: W73°10.0'	3491'	2.0	3.0	Dan, Gerry
VT	Norwich	6.18	Latitude: N43°42.63' Longitude: W72°19.2'	750'	3.5	8.4	Dan, Gerry
NH	Mount Washington	6.19	Latitude: N44°15.92' Longitude: W71°17.8'	6288'	2.5	4.2	Dan, Gerry
ME	Mount Katahdin	6.21	Latitude: N45°55.14' Longitude: W68°51.4'	1038'	11.5	17.1	Dan, Gerry, Art, Julie
	Averages				5.0	8.0	

## Hiker Summary

Below is a summary of the hikers who participated in the Boomer Appalachian Trail Adventure. Gerry and Dan hiked in all 14 states, and Jim hiked in 6 states, followed by Mike (5 states), and Molly and Donna (3 states). The average age of the hikers was 62 and the range was from 41 to 66 years old.

The hikers hometowns were in 8 different states, and their current residences are in 8 different states. Only two hikers still live in the state of their hometown.

New Balance boots were worn by 4 hikers; two hikers wore L.L.Bean boots; and 2 hikers wore Vasque boots. No one complained about his/her boots so this an endorsement of sorts.

Finally, the hikers' scores on the political spectrum scale ranged from a conservative high of 8.25 to a liberal low of 2.0. The average score was 5.8 which means that the hikers were just like the rest of U.S., moderate and just a little right of center.

Name	States	DOB	Hometown	Current Residence	Hiking Boots	Political Spectrum
Dan	All	1947	DuBois, PA	Arlington, VA	LL Bean Katahdin	5.0
Gerry	All	1947	Havertown, PA	Roswell, GA	New Balance 6050	8.0
Jim	GA, NC, TN, VA, WVA, MD	1947	Falls Creek, PA	Grosse Pointe, MI	Vasque	8.25
Mike	GA, NC, TN, NY, CT	1947	Pawhuska, OK	Tulsa, OK	New Balance	6.0
Chris	NC, TN,	1971	Dunwoody, GA	Boone, NC	New Balance	2.0
Molly	VA, WVA, MD	1951	Upper Arlington, OH	Newark, OH	LL Bean Trail Hikers	8.0
Donna	VA, WVA, MD	1951	Upper Arlington, OH	Arlington, VA	ASICS Trainer	4.0
Dan G	CT, NY	1947	Havertown, PA	Boston, MA	New Balance	3.0
Art	ME	1946	Washington, MO	Charlotte, NC	Redbud Boots	7.0
Julie	ME	1958	Dayton, OH	Charlotte, NC	Vasque	7.0
Average		1951				5.8

## Hotel Reviews

**Dan:** Most of our nights were spent in Hampton Inns, Holiday Inns, and Quality Inns where “the best surprise is no surprise at all.” The best hotel was the Fontana Village Resort, NC, and the worst hotel was America’s Best Value Inn in Central Valley, NY. Of course, the biggest disappointment was the Big Moose Inn near Baxter State Park, ME with its outdoor bathrooms. Needless to say, the most enjoyable accommodations were at Chez O’Donnell in Webster, NH.

**Gerry:** I am amazed at how fortunate we were to stay in the nation’s best rated Baymont Inn at Cherokee, NC. What a treat (about equal to a fair Hampton)! The Big Moose Inn in Maine was not as bad as Dan has portrayed. However, it certainly was over priced. Also, their dining room had almost the best crab cakes in the USA!

## Take-Aways

**Dan:** This has dreamed about adventure for decades; I’m glad I did it; and I’m glad I can remember it so fondly. As the conservationists say: “Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but memories!” For sure, I’ve taken more than my share of memories.

The Appalachian Trail is an incredible, volunteer-driven undertaking. It’s a national treasure that we somehow don’t deserve. I truly appreciate the spirit and commitment of the volunteers who made this adventure possible. They never gave me permission; they never asked me for anything; and they never asked me why. I love these guys!

**Gerry:** Dan was unable to have anyone else commit to doing the whole thing with him, so I agreed to the concept and I’m very glad I did. I loved the beauty of the eastern U.S. and the time spent with old and new friends. Hiking with my son Chris at Shuckstack Mountain, NC and Clingman Dome, TN was very special.

## Lessons Learned

**Dan:** I have learned humility. I have been humbled by Mother Nature’s beauty, by the magnificent mountaintop vistas, and by the limitations of age and the vitality of youth. I have been humbled by my friends joining me on this adventure. Their investment of time, energy, and good humor was impressive and appreciated. I have learned that the solitary journey of the fully examined life is not solitary at all. I have learned, once again, that we all have our stories to tell, our lives to struggle with, and our dreams to be reconciled.

I have learned that hiking on trails with friends is a great way to understand my life and my journey through it. The hikes were a welcome and necessary break from



the intellectual world in which I am so comfortable. The hikes were a visceral experience. The mountaintops were spiritual.

I learned that hiking portions of the Appalachian Trail took me to parts of the United States that I have never been to before. The small towns and rural areas are a valuable part of our country that never seems to get the press or attention that it deserves.

I have also learned to trust Gerry's ability to make hotel reservations and to keep track of all of the finances on the trip. Gerry was amazing. Each time a hiker joined us on the trail, Gerry would give him/her a bill for his/her accommodations. He was never wrong. The only hotel that was didn't work out was the Big Moose Inn, and I made that one!

**Gerry:** I too have learned humility. There were many more youngish and middle-aged folks who made us look old and somewhat foolish at times. I was particularly impressed with the hikers at Mount Washington and Mount Katahdin (especially the middle-aged women), with their hiking abilities and their outgoing cheerfulness.

### **Do-Overs**

**Dan:** I would like go back to Mount Greylock and figure out how we missed the easy hike to Mount Fitch. I would also like to go back to Katahdin and hike the Hunt Trail (aka Appalachian Trail) to the summit.

**Gerry:** Count me in for a redo of Mount Katahdin, as well as Mount Greylock. We can improve significantly on both!

### **Last Thoughts**

**Dan:** What's next: Kilimanjaro, Machu Pichu, the Continental Divide Trail, or a Katahdin re-do? I would like to encourage other Boomers to enjoy the Appalachian Trail on their own terms. We can make our own rules. After all it's our lives to live.

**Gerry:** For other baby boomers, I suggest using Dan Miles when measuring hike distances. They won't change reality, but they will make you feel better as you feel worse.



Tom, Laurie, Mike, and Barb:  
Inspired by the BATA, they find their way to the AT

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In their 66th year, old college buddies, Dan and Gerry, share their Boomers Appalachian Trail Adventure with friends and relatives as they hike the Appalachian Trail in every state from Georgia to Maine: 14 states = 14 hikes. This travelogue shows Baby Boomers how childhood dreams can come true by re-casting their visions to accommodate aging physical realities.

