

PATHWAYS



Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

Spring 2005

The Life of a Vagabond

by Susan Andreatta



The life of a vagabond --that has been my life since 2002. Three times now I have worked at Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station on St. John in the Caribbean. For working four hours per day, I am provided with room and board. After that I get to hike, swim, snorkel, and sit on the dock. Chris and Rhonda Bracknell joined me there in March 2004.

Three summers I have worked in Alaska, first as a naturalist on a wildlife tour boat in Juneau, and for the past two summers (May to mid September) in Denali National Park and Preserve as a living history interpreter. This means that I dress up in period clothing (circa 1941) and greet visitors at an old cabin for a trip back in time.

Life in Denali National Park is full of adventures everyday. This photo shows the day that I went out hiking and found a rather cooperative grizzly bear who agreed to take me for a ride.

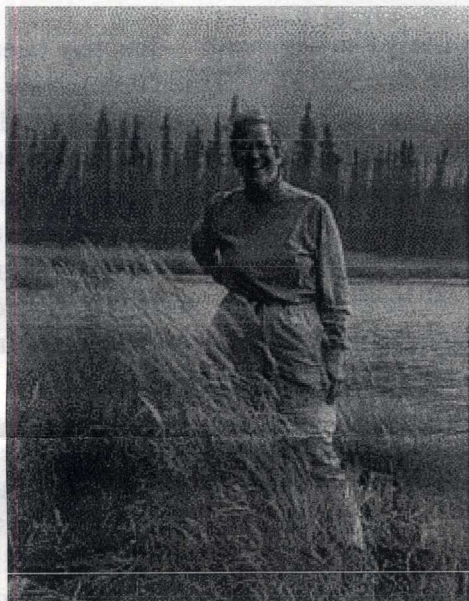
On a clear day in September, I hiked with a friend up Tattler Creek over rocks and tumbling water. We heard footsteps behind us. Thinking that it was another hiker, we turned around. There, just five feet away, was a big bull caribou with a huge rack. A magnificent animal! He kept right on tripping across the rocks and up the hillside. What a treat for us!

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Vagabond...

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On another day, I hiked with friends through tundra up a river drainage, munching on blueberries, crowberries, and cranberries, which we picked along the way. While we stopped to have lunch, a golden eagle flew over, casting his shadow right on us. We watched as he circled and soared. Then, I looked down to the ground and found that he had dropped a feather for us. A gift from the eagle.



The Winter of '94

Some may bless and some may curse the mild winter of 2005, but nobody would want a repeat of the one we had in 1994. For many readers the following may bring up memories only too recently buried, and in truth much of it I cribbed from old PATH newsletters. Newcomers to the club may find the following amusing and instructive.

During the month of February 1994, two violent ice storms wracked southwest Virginia. The great weight of ice tore the tops out of thousands of trees along the Trail. Many large trees also were toppled at the roots, ripping out stretches of trail. PATH's section was effectively blocked for miles. The word quickly passed among PATH

members, and by the end of February crews were on site. Reports indicated a massive effort would be needed to clear the trail, and many people thought it would take years to repair the damage. Within the club there were discussions of temporarily rerouting the trail onto local roads in preparation for the annual spring pilgrimage of through-hikers.

The March 1994 newsletter included a plea for volunteers to come up any and all weekends of the month, stating that "our section of the AT (is) in worse condition than when Hurricane Hugo went through!". The response was tremendous. 55 club members put in 1590 hours of work over the next six weekends, and by the end of the day April 16 the entire trail was open. An idea of the amount of work done is indicated by the following passage from the May 1994 newsletter describing Don Childrey's day on the March Worktrip:

"I went with Ken and Gordon to the trailhead at 610, heading south towards Tilson's Gap. The section had been described as being impassable. As soon as we crossed over the stile from the field there was a blowdown. There were several more in the 150 or so yards up to the next stile. Then we started into the bad stuff. The trees near the foot of the mountain had a lot of vines growing in them...These clumps of tangled vegetation landed right in the middle of the trail when they fell. You had to cut your way into the pile just to get to the tree. Then you had to work your way back out the other side...

"Our crew was fortunate. As we worked, other volunteers showed up to help. What began as a crew of three ended up being a crew of nine. We had three saws going most of the time, four at one point. We tried to spread out along the trail but the damage was so bad that we ended up staying bunched up most of the time. You simply could not move on up the trail without stopping to clear a tree out of your way first...By the end of the day our crew had cleared the trail...a distance of only one mile. With nine

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1994...

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people, four saws, and seven hours of hard work, we could still turn around and see our vehicles at the trailhead. The other crews reportedly faced similar challenges on the sections they cleared."

The ice storm cleanup of 1994 remains one of the finest efforts ever made by PATH.

--Paul Clayton

ATC Gets Name Change

The ATC Board of Managers has voted to change the name of the organization from Appalachian Trail Conference to Appalachian Trail Conservancy, effective July 4, 2005. The following excerpts on the name change came from Brian T. Fitzgerald, chair, ATC, in the ATC website.

"This historic decision was not made lightly. The vote was overwhelming: 23 to 1, with 1 abstention. And, in fact, this decision has been years in the making. Simply put, our new name-scheduled to take effect as we celebrate ATC's 80th anniversary at our biennial meeting on July 4, 2005-is a much better fit for our responsibility to protect and promote one of the most biologically and culturally diverse units of the national park system.

"Not only have we outgrown the name 'conference,' which originated in 1925 when the organization was primarily a coordinator of clubs, we've earned the right to proudly declare that we-all of us who work tirelessly to maintain the Trail's pristine 2,174 miles from Maine to Georgia-are focused on preserving America's premier hiking experience for the next 80 years.

"Personally, I have never been more excited about the Trail's future. I've been privileged to be an A.T. volunteer since 1980, and this year is my fourteenth on the Board of Managers. So, I'm very

familiar, and comfortable, with ATC: its name, how it's organized, and how it works. I do sympathize with members who might resist the name change. But, to achieve our vision of an enduring, protected special place that rings with the affection of those who maintain it, we must blaze this new chapter of the organization's strong history together."

On The Move

PATH members have kept busy since last October. Below are some of the adventures they have had -- and lived to tell about it.

Tom Dillon, Winston-Salem, N.C.: "I celebrated the end of warm weather by having my prostate gland taken out. It did enable me to see ALL of the Boston Red Sox victories in the playoffs and the World Series. I also got to read Michener's 'Alaska' at last and wrote some stuff about Lewis and Clark, whose trail we followed across western Montana and Idaho last summer. I'm pretty much healed and ready for the trail again, though I do have to take a ski trip before the snow melts."

Bill Sadler: "The 2004 Cycle North Carolina bike ride from Sparta in the mountains to Oriental on the coast is over, and what a ride it was! I, along with several members of the New Bern Outdoor Adventure Club, rode the course. Highlights included the Blue Ridge Mountains, several of North Carolina's scenic rivers and lakes, five beautiful North Carolina state parks, two wineries, two historic sites, the state's oldest incorporated town and church, the 'Sailing Capital of the Southeast,' a 25-minute ferry ride, several charming small communities, and much more."

Susan Andreatta, Raleigh, NC: "Trying to become a respectable member of society after three years as a vagabond. I have sold my house in Sanford and bought a house in Raleigh--moved in at the end of January. Still surrounded by boxes."

Karl Kunkel, High Point, NC: "On Feb. 13, I
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Staci, Marie and Katie relax after monitoring trail on the March 2004 worktrip

Book Review

"Star Trails - Navajo" by Don Childrey, illustrated by Nickola Dudley.

DTC Publishing. paperback. 117 pages.

PATH members have a unique opportunity to study the stars during their work trips and recreational hiking forays. PATH member and author Don Childrey has penned a useful book on the constellations that should be brought along on those hikes.

His book offers stargazers a chance to look at the night sky through Native American eyes. This volume describes the star figures that the Navajo see when they look at the heavens. Each chapter is devoted to particular stars and constellations that a hiker might see in the night sky. The Navajo "North Fire" star, for example, is also known to us as "Polaris" or the "North Star." Each chapter contains a wealth of information on Navajo legends and stories that relate to the particular star. The slim volume doesn't take up much space in a backpack. A volume on star trails of the Pawnee is also in the planning stages.

The book is dedicated to Bill Medlin, a beloved PATH member that died unexpectedly during the September 2002 work trip. Don wrote a very moving remembrance of how Bill got him involved in studying astronomy during their many backpacking trips together.

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Book Review

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"We would lie back on the ground and watch the stars begin to pop out of the darkening sky above," Don wrote. "Many times he and I would outlast everyone else and stay out until the sky was ablaze with twinkling lights."

The book lists for \$14.99, but Don is offering PATH members a \$12-all-inclusive deal. He will mail them a signed copy of the book and cover the shipping and taxes himself.

Don can be reached at 111 Durlington Place, Cary, NC 27511 (don@childrey.com)

reviewed by Karl Kunkel

Who Were Those People ?

Last month we ran a photograph from the Gordon Burgess archives and invited you to send in your guesses as to who they were. John Hartpence was the first to correctly identify these people as former Forest Service District Ranger Lou Brossey and his family. Lou was a true conservationist and great friend to PATH during his tenure at the Forest Service.

On the Move...

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did a same-day, up-and-back trip to NYC's Central Park to check out artist Christo's newest creation, "The Gates": 7,500 bright orange arches throughout 23 miles of asphalt pathways in the park, 16 feet high, with saffron-colored nylon fabric hanging from them. Great urban hiking experience for me!"

John Hartpence, Salisbury, NC: "The big thing that we did was to go on a building mission to Costa Rica from Jan. 14-23. We 'destroyed' St. Philip and St. James' Episcopal Church in San Jose. It will now be the third-largest Episcopal

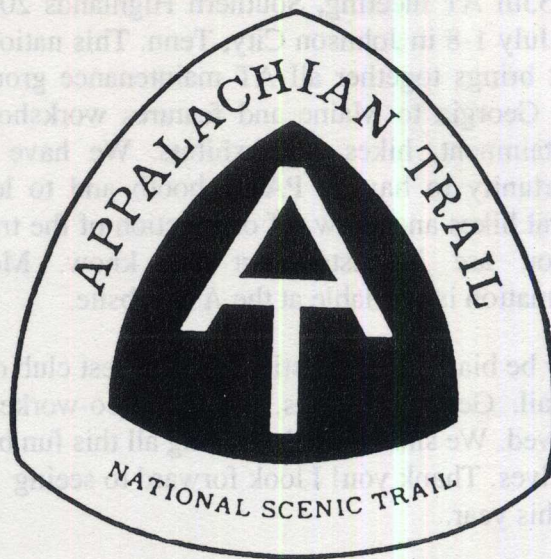
Church in the Diocese on Costa Rico. We also redid the school. It now can hold 120 children through 5th grade."

Bill Boudman, Raleigh, NC: "Watching the parking lot on Hwy. 70 during the one-inch snow/ice storm and thinking of charging for illegal parking. Second: Praying for the day I finish stripping, sanding, removing window panes and glazing 100-year-old windows in the COLD!!!"

Don Childrey, Cary, NC: "For me this is a toss up. My team completed the 82-hour, 246-mile adventure race in Utah in early October. Our team of four biked, hiked, paddled, and rappelled as we used map and compass to navigate our way to the 30-plus checkpoints on the course. We paddled through canyons on the Colorado River, hiked over snowy passes at 13,500 feet, rode across the desert, rappelled 260 feet down into a canyon and in general had a fantastic adventure. Over the course of 82 hours, we stopped three times for a total of about 10 hours of shut-eye. Check out my website when you get a chance -

<http://www.childrey.com/Adventurers/racing.html>. Also, check out the recent publication of my second book: 'Star Trails - Navajo, A Different Way To Look At The Night Sky.'"

Michelle Pruitt, Winston Salem NC: "Skiing, hiking, biking and kayaking this winter."



Message from the President

I hope we have all enjoyed the extended fall or Indian summer. I made my first trip to the trail in mid-January to do some re-con work. It seemed to coincide with the beginning of the real winter. On the way, I passed flooding near the North Carolina border, high winds going over the I-77 pass and, of course, rain which turned to snow as I made my way up the hill to the Mt. Rogers office.

It felt good to be outside and hiking with all that going on. We are putting the finishing touches on the schedule for the 2005 work year. Bill Boudman is looking for all section leaders to get their requests in now if there is work to be done.

Mark your calendars for the third weekend of the month beginning in March with the typical fun in June for Summerfest, July with the Konnarock crew and August Dawg Days with Marcia Cope.

We are also making strides in getting involved in more community events along the trail. Any suggestions or opportunities you may have will be appreciated. Make as many trips as your schedule will allow, but please get involved with the club.

If you do not like digging in the dirt there are several AT events this year.

The Regional Partnership Committee(RPC) meets April 1 near Blacksburg, Va., to discuss strategy. The 35th AT meeting, Southern Highlands 2005, runs July 1-8 in Johnson City, Tenn. This national event brings together all AT maintenance groups from Georgia to Maine and features workshops, entertainment, hikes and exhibits. We have an opportunity to have a PATH booth and to lead several hikes and show off our section of the trail. If you are interested, let me know. More information is available at the AT website.

I may be biased, but we still have the best club on the trail. Get your friends, family and co-workers involved. We should not be having all this fun by ourselves. Thank you! I look forward to seeing you this year.

-- Paul Haag

Schedule

March 19 - First worktrip of the season. Sugar Grove, Va., meeting site. Meetings with ATC, MRNRA and New River Valley district on Friday. Hope to lay foundation and build our storage area at Sugar Grove work facility. Walk all of our trail and assess winter damage.

April 16- Worktrip. Sugar Grove meeting site.

April 22-24 - The 10th annual Trailfest in Hot Springs, N.C. "You all are invited to join us in the festivities and visit with the latest crop of thru-hikers, alumni, tourists, hikers of all sorts, and local folks," said Jack Dalton, spokesman. Website is: <http://www.trailfest.net/> or contact Jack Dalton, 749 D&G Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743. Phone 828-622-3704

May 21- Worktrip. Stony Fork, Va., meeting site. Possible Trail Neighbors Picnic at Settlers Museum or Local Volunteer Fire Dept. Cook out.

June 16-20 - Summerfest Festival. Walker Gap (Burke's Garden) meeting site. Work on rock cribbing and trail rehab on the northern end of trail. "A whole week of life in the woods and lots of grubbiness," Bill Boudman said. "This is PATH'S own unofficial Konnarock. Lots of hooch and fine cuisine."

July 1-8 - Southern Highlands 2005 national ATC meeting. Johnson City, Tenn.

July 14-18 -Worktrip. Poor Valley, Va., meeting site. A week with Konnarock in the wild. Water bar and trail rehab on the rim of that fabulous Chestnut Ridge.

August 5 - Dawg Days - meeting site is Marcia's villa overlooking the I-77 tunnel. Hopefully they will be working on the High Water Trail, blue blaze, north of 615. If not, then the trail behind O'lystery Picnic Shelter.

August 20 - Worktrip. Stony Fork meeting site.

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Schedule...

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September 17 - Worktrip. Stony Fork. Trail Neighbors Picnic with Volunteer Fire Dept. at Olystery Picnic shelter.

October 15 -Worktip.. Sugar Grove. Meetings on Friday in Camp with ATC, MRNRA and New River Valley District.

November 19 or 20 - Year-end meeting and family potluck in Greensboro, N.C. for the entire club and supporters.



June 7, 1986 - Gordon Burgess Photo

News Flash

Paul Haag, Winston-Salem, NC: "Since October I have gotten engaged to Renee (PATH's treasurer), sold my house and moved in with Renee, sold her house and bought a new home on 1.5 acres in Davidson county. Wedding plans have fluctuated between an Elvis wedding in Las Vegas to a small ceremony at home."

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July 18, 1993 - Gordon Burgess Photo

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