

PATH WAYS

PIEDMONT APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKERS

CLUB NEWSLETTER • NOVEMBER 1997

A Look Back at '97 From the President

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It has been a busy summer. I didn't realize there was so much to write about.

Art and Ruby Cushing, our campground hosts at Stony Fork, retired as hosts this summer, so they can spend more time visiting their children and traveling. They said to tell PATH members good-bye, and that they will miss us very much. We will miss them, too.

Don't forget the PATH business meeting Sunday, Nov. 16, near Mt. Gilead. See details below.

The U.S. Forest Service has undergone another budget cut. One very personal effect that has on us is the loss of Mike Antalosky as our primary contact in the Wythe/Blacksburg District. Getting only two days' notice, Mike was assigned to the Blacksburg office, where he will take on the responsibility of overseeing wilderness and other backcountry areas. It has been wonderful to work with him during the past two

years, and we will miss him, too. We don't know yet who will become our primary contact, but it will be someone in the Blacksburg office.

Marvin Kirkland has donated to PATH a two-part video on chainsaw operations. The video was produced by the American Pulpwood Association in 1996 and comes with a manual. This will be useful for groups of PATH members who would like to get together informally to review the techniques of chainsaw operations. Anyone who would like to borrow it, please call me at (919) 967-4449. Rental is free. Popcorn not included.

Marcia Cope and Paul Clayton did another outstanding job of preparing a wonderful meal for the Trail Neighbors Picnic following the September worktrip. The picnic was held at the O'Lystery picnic shelter. Attending were 11 of our AT neighbors and 25 PATH members.

Vaughn Thomas, a long-time PATH member, was elected to the Appalachian Trail Conference Board of Managers at the ATC biennial meeting in Bethal, Maine, this summer.

Bob William, administrator for the Trust for Appalachian Trail Lands (TATL), recently wrote us that the TATL will hire a trust coordinator for the AT in the southern part of Virginia. He added that the initial focus of the work will be on Burke's Garden. This is wonderful news for everyone, and we will look forward to working with the TATL in helping protect Burke's Garden and other areas along our trail section. There has been some concern that a land developer could easily change the whole rural character of Burke's Garden just by introducing an apartment complex. The TATL is an ATC program that works to identify and protect from development any land that, if developed, would adversely affect the trail experience. Until now, we have not heard much about TATL in the South because it has worked mostly along the mid-Atlantic and northern sections of the AT.

—Parthena Martin

November Business Luncheon

PATH will hold its November Business Meeting and potluck lunch on Sunday, Nov. 16 at 2 p.m. at the clubhouse of Don Childrey's subdivision near Mt. Gilead, the same place as last year's meeting. Bring some vittles and a good appetite.

Directions:

- (from Winston-Salem): Take NC 109 to Troy. Turn right at the tiny community of Uwharrie (Mullinix Grocery) onto River Road. Stay on River Road for 8 miles. Turn right into Woodrun Subdivision. Ask for the community center.
- (From Raleigh): Take US 1 to Sanford; branch off to US 15/501 and stay on that road to NC 24/27. Follow road through Carthage, Biscoe and Troy. Turn right at River Road (landmark: Uwharrie Sportsman on left). Go ½ mile. Look for Woodrun Subdivision on left. Turn there and ask for the community center.
- (from Greensboro): Take US 220 south to NC 24/27. Go through Biscoe to Troy. Turn right on River Road (11 miles from Troy courthouse). Landmark for River Road intersection is Uwharrie Sportsman on left. Go ½ mile and turn left at Woodrun Subdivision. Ask for the community center.

PATH Agrees To Maintain Extra Miles

PATH has agreed to maintain an additional 7.8 miles of the AT near Burke's Garden on a temporary basis until a new maintenance club can be established to handle this stretch.

The Kanawha Trail Club was officially relieved of a 20.2-mile section during the ATC board meeting in April. During the Multi-Club assembly in late August, representatives from PATH, the Outing Club of Virginia Tech (OCVT), the Roanoke AT Club (RATC), and Mike Dawson from ATC met to discuss who would take responsibility of that section. The groups discussed their respective trail sections and how best to divide the extra mileage among the three clubs. The groups also discussed the possibility of helping establish, train, and nurture an AT maintenance club composed of residents of the Wytheville/Radford area, since they would have easy access to this 20.2-mile stretch of the AT.

The groups agreed on the following

plan:

- PATH will maintain the 7.8-mile stretch from Route 615 north to Route 612 until the new group is established.
- OCVT will maintain the section from Route 623 on Garden Mountain (the dirt road to Burke's Garden) north to Route 615. OCVT will also maintain the section from the Route 460 bridge across the New River, north to the Pine Swamp Shelter. This will be a permanent assignment. On a temporary basis, OCVT will also maintain the section from Route 621, north to Route 611 (8.1 miles).
- RATC will temporarily maintain 4.3 miles of the AT from Route 611 north to Route 608.

The plan must still be approved by the ATC Board later this year.

AEP Power Line: Part Two

As many of you recall, the Appalachian Power Company, now American Electric Power (AEP), proposed building, in southwest Virginia, one of the largest

power lines in North America. The line would have crossed, or run parallel to, approximately 100 miles of the AT from Cloverdale to Dismal Creek, south of Pearisburg, VA. Several sections of the power line would have been in the Jefferson National Forest. Bill Damon, supervisor of the Jefferson National Forest, announced official support for the "No Action" alternative of the draft environmental impact statement last June, effectively supporting the position that the power line could not be built across the Jefferson National Forest.

AEP has revised the route of the power line and now plans to run it across the AT south of Pearisburg. Several members of the Roanoke AT Club are getting maps and information about the exact location, so they can decide what impact it will have and what they need to do. Updates on this issue will appear in the newsletter as information becomes available.

PATH Enjoys Neighborly Cookout

RURAL RETREAT, VA —PATH member Willie Hall and his family opened their doors Oct. 18 and invited PATH trail crews to a post-worktrip cookout. The hosts, Willie and Barbara Hall, own a dairy farm within shouting distance of the fairgrounds where many of the Multi-Club events over the Labor Day Weekend took place. The Halls had been instrumental in getting the fairgrounds opened for PATH's use.

The picnic was held in a meadow on the farm Saturday evening. The Halls had a bonfire going for warmth and cooking hot dogs and a large buffet table filled with homemade dishes of macaroni salad, sandwich fixings, desserts, and drinks.

Most of the PATH members attending rolled into the event directly from their work assignments that day. Major projects that day were side-hilling, bridge building, and blaze painting. The fire and the vittles were a welcome treat for the cold and hungry hikers. PATH sent the Halls a thank-you card after the event.

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PATH has an electronic mail list for publicizing impromptu outings and making announcements. To join, send an enote to PATH's email coordinator Clint Kawanishi (cnp@mindspring.com). If you have a message of general interest, Clint will forward it to the email list. PATH also has a Web Page at <http://www.editorialservice.com/path>. The page links to other organizations and to current and past PATH newsletters.

Work progresses on the new shelter near the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area visitor center. From left are Vaughn Thomas, William Branham, and John Mitchell, all of PATH, along with Lew Purcell (USFS) and Mike Dawson (ATC).



New Shelter at Mt. Rogers a Cooperative Effort

By the time this newsletter is out, the new shelter at the Mt. Rogers Visitors Center will be completed. The design is similar to that of the Thomas Knob Shelter, but it is bigger and will have a shower and laundry sink. The shelter will easily hold 16 people. It is already beginning to get a reputation among hikers, who came by to look at it while members of PATH, the Forest Service, and the ATC worked on it over the summer.

PATH volunteers provided most of the labor, but Mike Dawson of the ATC served as the primary crew leader. He and Don McDougal, ATC, worked with PATH each weekend, along with Paul Dore, Lew Purcell, and other USFS people. Some of the funding came from the Baldwin family of York, PA, in honor of Thomas Baldwin, a hiker who had an interest in the southwest Virginia section of the AT. He died about two

years ago. Members of the Baldwin family helped one weekend, and during the Multi-Club meeting over Labor Day weekend, members of six different clubs helped on Sunday afternoon.

One weekend, two AT hikers from Florida stopped to help lift the roof beam into place. Theresa Duffy, of the Old Dominion AT Club, and several members of the Mt. Rogers AT Club also helped work on the shelter. The shelter has come to symbolize the accomplishments that can be done when AT volunteers, the ATC, agency partners, and private donors all work together.

The dedication ceremony, to be held in memory of Thomas Baldwin, will be next June on National Trails Day. The new shelter will be known as the "Partnership Shelter" in honor of all the agencies and individuals who cooperated to get it built.

PATH's 1997 Thru-hikers Summit Mt. Katahdin in Early October

PATH's 1997 thru-hikers, Robert (Rhymin' Worm) Rubin and Rachel (Solophile) DuBois both completed their hikes in early October on the summit of Mt. Katahdin.

Robert describes his trail experience as "amazing," and he reports that during his 6-month, 11-day trek, he lost more than 70 pounds.

Robert has a contract to write a book

about his experiences, so one day we'll be able to read about his hike in detail. In the meantime, however, the short version of his hike is recounted in The Ballad of Rhymin' Worm, which is available in full on the PATH Web site at address <http://www.editorialservice.com/path/ballad.html>.

Rachel, who kept us posted on her progress via an email version of her jour-

nal, endured a season of ups and downs on her hike—and we're not just talking about the mountains. The courage with which Rachel faced the mental strain of her hike and the way she turned drudgery into enjoyment in the waning days make's interesting reading.

If you haven't seen Rachel's journals, you can find copies on the web at <http://www.webcom.com/markham/at-hike/>.

Trail Notes

- Volunteers maintaining the Appalachian Trail garnered some well-deserved attention in *Backpacker* magazine (Oct. 97). The magazine related the trail-work manpower figures compiled for 1996 by the ATC, a total of 173,837 hours, up 15 percent from 1995. The Konnarock (Va.) crew placed second behind the Maine AT Club.
- Two lovers of the AT, composers Rick Sowash and Gary Remal Malkin, have created some music to hike by, according to *Backpacker*. The 35-minute classical work, "Appalachian Trail Suite," composed by Sowash, was performed this summer at the Avignon Music Festival in France. He dedicated the suite to "all who maintain, protect, and cherish the Appalachian Trail." The article did not mention whether the suite was available in recorded form. But "The Music of the Great Smoky Mountains," composed by Malkin, is available on CD on the Real Music label. The 69-minute album incorporates the fiddle, Native American drums, and the piano. A portion of the proceeds benefits resource protection efforts in Smoky Mountain National Park. Cost: \$15.98 for CD or \$9.98 for cassette, plus shipping. Call (800) 398-7325.
- Two PATH members, Wayne Johnson and Karl Kunkel, were published in the Sept/Oct 97 issue of *Appalachian Trailway News*, the official magazine of the ATC. Both articles appeared in the "Reflections" section, which deals with personal accounts of trail experiences. Johnson's article, "Ice Storm at Little Wolf Creek," was a



Hikers: A Wild Bunch

(Knight-Ridder News Service)

Here are some actual comments left last year on U.S. Forest Service registration sheets and comment cards by backpackers completing wilderness camping trips:

- "A small deer came into my camp and stole my bag of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call."
- "Found a smoldering cigarette left by a horse."
- "Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."
- "Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests."
- "Please pave the trails so they can be plowed of snow in the winter."
- "Chair lifts need to be in some places so that we can get to the wonderful views without having to hike to them."
- "Instead of a permit system of regulation, the Forest Service needs to reduce worldwide population growth to limit the number of visitors to wilderness."
- "The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals."
- "Reflectors need to be placed on trees every 50 feet so people can hike at night with flashlights."
- "Need more signs to keep area pristine."
- "Ban walking sticks in wilderness. Hikers that used walking sticks are more likely to chase animals."
- "A McDonald's would be nice at trail head."
- "The places where trails do not exist are not well-marked."
- "Too many rocks in the mountains."

scary account of a backpacking trip along the AT that turns dangerous when he is caught in an ice storm. With trees and limbs crashing to the ground, weighted down by ice, Johnson inches his way back to civilization. His advice to backpackers: watch the weather and don't get caught in an ice storm; and don't walk while trees and limbs are falling. Kunkel's account, "Gentlemen, Start your Engines," depicted an experience in Georgia in which he was hiking to Springer Mountain, southern terminus of the AT, and he met a middle-aged man who was preparing to start a thru-hike to Maine.

- PATH member Dave Emrey urges everyone to exercise caution when parking their vehicles at trailheads along the AT. This June, Emrey parked his car along VA 623, the dirt road going over Garden Mountain into Burke's Garden to do some camping

with his son. He returned three days later only to find that the vehicle had been heavily vandalized. PATH members are urged to contact the U.S. Forest Service and law enforcement authorities immediately, should these things happen.

- PATH member Barry Hester was able to finish up the needed mileage this fall to complete his AT thru-hike. He started the trek last year. Congratulations, Barry!
- Bargain Hunter Alert: Look for some good deals soon from One Sport Inc., a producer of hiking boots. The company is changing its name to Montrail Inc. and will want to unload the inventory under the One Sport label fast.

PATH to the Wind River

by Clint Kawanishi

Are we having fun yet?"

That familiar refrain was heard recently in the Wind River Range of Wyoming. This beautiful range of mountains, through which the Continental Divide meanders, is an outdoorsman's dream --located about an hour southeast of Jackson Hole, WY, and the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

These mountains harbor clear lakes, trout-filled streams, coyotes, mountain lions, and—in early September this year—a few grizzled hikers from PATH: Dave Brunson; Gene "Old Log" Greer; Kevin Mar; Bill "Sweet William" Medlin; and me. And from the Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club, there was Sally Wassom, Pete Tansell, and Dave Hale.

We reached the signature peaks of the range, the "Cirque of the Towers," well-known to rock climbers, after an arduous hike over 10,400 foot-high Jackass Pass with equipment, warm clothes and nine days worth of food on our backs. Luckily, the views were more "breath-taking" than the hike over the pass.

After taking a vote, we decided to continue over 11,600-foot-high snowy Texas Pass that day. The axiom, "nature provides," rang true that evening. Sweet William Medlin fetched the lake water for us. It needed only boiling to make soup because it was pre-flavored with the essence of fish.

In the drizzly morning, the ODATC contingent and I parted ways with the remaining PATH members who hiked two days to the Big Sandy Trailhead, where we had started. The remainder of the hike was a bland ho-hum experience of "those damn blue skies," as Gene calls them, and easy bushwhacking through lake-studded spruce-fir forests, open plains, and beautiful valleys. The hike ended, as many do, with greasy foods, showers, and beds in Pinedale, WY.

[Editor's Note: This is a highly chopped and condensed version of Clint's very descriptive account of a recent trip to Wyoming. Sorry, Clint!]

Multi-Club Meeting Gets Kudos

by Parthena Martin

PATH and the Outing Club of Virginia Tech hosted the annual ATC Multi-Club Meeting this year. One hundred and sixteen people from Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia came to hike and have fun together. As many of you know, we planned to hold Multi-Club at Stony Fork Campground but had to change the location at the last minute because of bridge repairs at Stony Fork.

Fortunately, we were able to get almost enough tent sites and RV sites at the Rural Retreat Lake Campground in Rural Retreat, but we still didn't have an adequate place for a cookout or a group meeting. Then, a miracle happened in the form of Willie Hall, who arranged for us to use the Rural Retreat Fairgrounds for the cookout and for our meetings and overflow tent sites. Thank you, Willie!

Thanks also go to Marcia Cope for having the courage and ability to organize a cookout for more than 100 people—and to Maria Schroeder, Brent Forbis, David Emrey and Martha Winkquist, who assisted. Bill Boudman, John Hartpence and Don Childrey grilled the chicken. They proved themselves to be superb grill chefs. The dinner was delicious and got a lot of compliments. Thanks also go to Clint Kawanishi for organizing an outstanding hike schedule, and to hike leaders Betsy Truscott, Vaughn Thomas, John Lynham, Bill Boudman, Karl Kunkel, Karen Worthington, Graham Buchanan, Brent Forbis, and Sherman Bamford. Thanks, too, to Chris Bracknell, who lead a bike ride. All the leaders brought back the same number of people they started with, and several brought back cookies and bread from the Amish Bakery.

Tony Roberts is also to be thanked for the Multi-Club souvenirs he made. The laminated tags featured photos of Chestnut Knob and Mt. Rogers, and people fastened them to their hats and daypacks as a unique conversation piece. Thanks go to Harrison Marks, Vaughn Thomas, and William Branham, a new PATH member, for handling the registration and keeping track of people, tent sites, and meals. They did an excellent job.

Finally, a big thanks to our co-hosts, the volunteers of the Outing Club of Virginia, who arranged the entertainment and also led hikes. All of us who enjoyed the entertainment of folk singer and guitarist Curly Ennis after the Saturday night cookout may have the opportunity to see and hear him again during the 1999 ATC Biennial Meeting in Radford, VA. Two years ago, Curly performed on Michael Feldman's "Whaddya Know?", a show that was broadcast live nationwide from Roanoke on National Public Radio.



Marcia Cope took on major cooking projects for PATH this summer.

AT People Mover Announced

PRESS RELEASE
FEBRUARY 22, 2172

In commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Benton Mackaye establishing the Appalachian Trail, President Susan Williamston, of the United States, along with Vice-President Misha Ptrakov, Ishmael Hassam, Director of the U.S. Forest Service, Hector Garcia, Director of the National Park Service; and Anna Morningstar, Chair of the Appalachian Trail Conference, announced today at the Harpers Ferry, West Virginia headquarters of the Appalachia Trail Conference, funding for the beginning of the construction of the new Appalachia Trail People Moving System, or ATPMS. Construction of the ATPMS will commence simultaneously in the north at the climate-controlled dome which covers Mount Katahdin and Baxter State Park in Maine, as well as in the south at the climate-controlled dome that covers Springer Mountain in Georgia. The construction of the ATPMS is expected to take over 10 years to complete at a cost of over 150 billion dollars.

The ATPMS will be constructed of an environmentally-controlled, photosensitive, plexiglas half-dome 30 feet wide, with 2 "People Moving Systems," or "PMS's" each 6-feet wide with a 6-foot strip of space for plant-life between the dome and the PMS. The plant-life in the dome area will be indigenous to the various enclosed regional areas.

One PMS will be moving north to south, while the other will move south to north. Scenic viewing points will be located at certain places of major interest, with cinema screens showing those areas before today's level of global warming so seriously affected the environment. Also, at each of these points will be chambers to artificially simulate the appropriate seasonal environmental conditions of the area. Locations will even exist where travelers on the PMS will be allowed to camp in simulated conditions of the naturally existing original regions. These areas will be maintained by volunteers of the AT trail maintenance crews assigned that area, under the direction of the Forest Service. Access to the ATPMS will be from the existing covered PMS and VMS (Vehicle Moving Systems) in place throughout the country.

In 1987 the United States and 22 other countries first agreed to limit the production and use of CFC's with the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The protocol initially required a 50 percent reduction in CFC production worldwide by the year 2000. In 1992 over 90 nations signed the Protocol to require a virtual phaseout of CFC production by January 1, 1996. However, due to the continued use of ozone-depleting materials and the ongoing burning of fossil fuels, the protective ozone layer continued to deteriorate to its present condition, causing great harm to the environment and people exposed to the direct rays of the sun. The federal government, in trying to save the remaining environment, began the installation of domes over populated areas, building the PMS and VMS to connect the domed areas. This has brought about some recovery of the environment by artificial climate control.

The announcement made today was a major step forward in trying to bring the public some protection as set out by the National Trails Systems as it was enacted in 1968.

Could this happen in the future? Yes, it could. However, we hope that this dire scenario will never come to pass, and that we, as people who spend much of our time protecting and maintaining the AT, will also protect the rest of our environment so that our children and grandchildren will be able to use the open spaces as we do.

—By Morgan and Gene Greer

A Short History of PATH

By John Hartpence

The history of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH) began with the vision of Greensboro, NC, area conservationists. The idea of forming a regional club with responsibility of maintaining a section of the Appalachian Trail originated in the mid-1960s, and volunteers interested in hiking and backpacking were recruited for the club from communities in north-central North Carolina.

The new club's goals contributed to the selection of the new club's name—Piedmont, for the section of North Carolina represented; Appalachian Trail, for the club's aim to become a trail maintaining organization; and hikers, for the club's major interest. The acronym "PATH" seemed particularly appropriate.

Among the principals in the club's founding were Louise Meroney Chatfield, who knew the Appalachian Trail well from her many regional travels, and who believed that hikers should be good citizens of the pathway; Mrs. Coleman Gentry, who designed the club's footprint logo; and Charles Adams, a librarian at the University of North Carolina. Greensboro was designated as the site of the club's headquarters. The club's by-laws were modeled upon those of the Carolina Mountain Club, an AT maintaining organization located in Asheville, NC. The club's first officers were: Charles M. Adams, president; Coleman Gentry, vice president; Patricia Glidewell, secretary; and Harriet Austin, treasurer. Charter board members were: Walter L. Hannah, Mrs. Don Chatfield, John Huffman, and Helen D. Bedon.

PATH was organized in 1965 with the assistance of Tom Campbell, an AT Conference member and a member of the Roanoke AT Club. The Roanoke Club relinquished 27 miles of the AT from Highway 21/52 at Walker Mountain to VA 16 to PATH. In 1966 PATH was assigned an additional 11 miles from Groseclose to VA Highway 16 at Mount Rogers NRA Headquarters, formerly maintained by the Reverend A.J. Shumate of Rural Retreat, VA, and a troop of Boy Scouts from

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PATH History

From Page 6

Grace Lutheran Church that he supervised.

The club began its close and productive relationship with the Jefferson National Forest in 1968 after Congressional approval of the National Scenic Trails Act. Soon thereafter, a relocation of the trail was routed to bypass the Mountain Empire Airport and Interstate 81. Scouting trail relocations, blazing and painting over old blazes gave the club a rapid introduction to trail maintenance.

By far the most significant relocation involving PATH occurred in the late 1970s, when the Appalachian Trail and several shelters were removed from the lengthy ridge summit of Big Walker Mountain, a 25-mile route that afforded good views but little or no source of water. The new route of the trail incorporated the grassy summit of Chestnut High Knob and the garden rim of the unique and beautiful high basin known as Burke's Garden. This relocation added 13 miles with PATH's northern terminus at VA Route 623 atop Garden Mountain, which encircles picturesque Burke's Garden.

In 1987, Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club relinquished to PATH 8 miles of the AT from VA Highway 16 to VA Route 670 at the South Fork of the Holston River.

PATH has experienced steady growth and has maintained a steadfast commitment to the Appalachian Trail. Currently the club has 243 members of all ages and walks of life. Recently the club has undertaken and completed substantial relocations near Nebo and Groseclose. These projects have been made possible by the purchase of tracts by the National Park Service to create a protected corridor for the Appalachian Trail, ensuring that the footpath retains a rural and forested character. In April 1986, Glade Mountain Shelter, constructed by the club and the Forest Service, was dedicated the Chatfield Shelter in honor of Louise Chatfield and her work. Louise Chatfield, ill and near the end of her life, was borne to the top of the mountain and the site of the ceremony by club members to be present for the dedication in her honor.

1997 Membership Form

Please clip out this form and mail it with your check to the address at the bottom of the page.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email address _____

New ☐ Renewal ☐

1997 Membership Dues:

Individual—\$15 \$ _____

Family—\$17.50 \$ _____

Student—\$10 \$ _____

*Optional—ATC Dues \$18 \$ _____

Donations \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

PATH is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

Member Information (optional)

Are you interested in :

☐ Backpacking ☐ Day hikes

☐ Trail Maintenance ☐ Other _____

How did you first learn about PATH? _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Occupation _____

Are you an Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) member? _____

** ATC dues are normally \$25 per year. However, members of trail maintaining clubs, such as PATH, can join the ATC for \$18 per year. If you are paying ATC dues, please include a separate check made out to "ATC."*

Send this form with your payment to:

PATH Treasurer
2595 Griffith Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27103

PATH Members Present at ATC Biennial Meeting

By Karl Kunkel

More 1,300 backpackers, trail maintainers and AT supporters converged on Bethel, ME, the first week in August for the biennial meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference. Several PATH members made the trip, including Vaughn Thomas (a member of the ATC board of directors), Susan Andreatta, William Branham, Eva Lively, Harry and Janet Rolison, and John Lynham.

For many attendees, the week was filled with workshops, seminars, hikes, and other outings. But a large number of people were left out in the cold. Space on many of the more popular hikes was filled several weeks, even months, before the event, leaving several attendees to fend for themselves. John Lynham, for example, was not able to sign up for two of the three hikes he had hoped to do. Because of the crowding, he and many others in the same boat ended up getting together and doing their own hikes.

Many topics regarding the AT were brought up during the course of the meeting, including discussions on the protection of the trail for future generations, relations with private landowners, encroachment by development, and use of the trail. One thru-hiker, who has become disabled but still wants to enjoy the AT, recommended at an open-mike general

meeting that some hikers be allowed to bring a pack animal other than a dog, i.e., a llama or a mule. During the discussion, people were sympathetic to his problem, but they shot the suggestion down, saying that accommodating these large animals would create problems, taxing the volunteers who would have to do relocations and more maintenance to repair the added wear and tear.

The next biennial meeting will be in July 1999, in Radford, VA, hosted by several of the southern ATC clubs. Several host members have already begun discussions on how to avoid events and hikes getting booked up, to the exclusion of so many attendees.

Some Canadians had a well-received display in which they were trying to drum up support for extending the AT north from Katahdin into Canada. That recommendation has been gaining in strength for several years. Proponents argue that making the trail international in nature would help relations between the U.S. and Canada. Other displays were set up by various ATC clubs, with pictures and examples of their work on the AT.

Lynham, on his hikes, was impressed with how different the AT in Maine is from stretches in Virginia and North Carolina.

"It was extremely rough, with few

switchbacks," he said. "Lots of rocks and roots. It's just about as rugged as anything I've done."

He was also impressed with the scenery. He made it to the top of many balds from which he could do a 360-degree scan of the horizon. East Bald Pate was one of his favorites. Old Speck, a mountain along the AT, was one of his biggest challenges, due to the rough terrain.

"It was a real eye-opener," he said.

Lynham heard a funny joke during the meeting regarding the rough, steep up-and-down, switchback-less nature of the Maine trails: "When Maine ATC hikers were doing a southern stretch of the AT, they read signs saying, 'Don't (short) cut the switchbacks.' So when they got back to Maine, they remembered the signs and didn't cut any switchbacks when doing relocations."

Lynham also noted the two distinctive ways of pronouncing "Appalachian" were evident throughout the week-long meeting. One person at the microphone, usually from the south, would call it "App-a-Latch-ian" (as in 'latch the door') while the very next speaker would pronounce it "App-a-laach-ian" (rhymes with 'rachel'). The cut-off point, a gray area at best, seems to be somewhere along the AT in mid-Virginia.



PIEDMONT

APPALACHIAN

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