

Towards the end of the school year 1981, I finished gathering the items necessary for my trip to the Appalachian Trail. I ordered some guide books early in the year as part of my preparations. I bought my boots, backpack, stove and cook-kit, and thought I was ready to go.

I was not home for more than a few days after finishing finals when it was time to be driven down to Georgia to begin the "Adventure of a Lifetime". My brother Carl drove me down in what appears to be our grey Oldsmobile. I believe it was the first brand new vehicle that my mom had ever owned (other than the van dad bought for the business). This was the first time I had really gone backpacking, I did not really count the trips around Carbondale picking up aluminum cans, or those taken with the Shawnee Mountaineers climbing club. I don't really know what my folks thought about the undertaking, but mom had become quite involved with it since she would be the one who would be sending me whatever I needed. Dad never did say much.

Date 5/20/81

ALAN STRACKELMANN      Order # \_\_\_\_\_  
 414 LAUREL  
 HIGHLAND, IL. 62249

**TO: Appalachian Trail Conference, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 236  
 Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

Qty.	Item #	Description		Amount
1	101	MAINE GUIDE	9.27	9.27
1	102	N.H.-VT.		12.71
1	103	MASD.-CONN.		5.02
1	104	N.T.-N.J.		4.21
1	1-5	PA.		10.12
1	105	SO.PA.-NO.VA.		10.54
1	107	SHEN.WATL.VA.		9.27
1	108	SO.VA.		10.15
1	109	TH.-N.C.(NEW EDITION)		9.30
1	110	N.C.-GA.		
1	504	DATA BOOK		3.80
			TOTAL	88.39
			P/H	4.00
			TOTAL	88.39
			LESS CRED#144	79.81
			AMOUNT DUE	8.58



We arrived at Amicalola Falls State Park in Georgia, where the approach trail begins, on May 16. The approach trail is the trail that leads you to the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) which begins on the summit of Springer Mountain. I unloaded what little I had from the trunk of the car, which amounted to my backpack and the contents therein. Over the next few months that would be all that I had - or really needed. For a short time we explored the ranger station, signed the register, took a few photos, and then after saying our goodbyes, I trudged off up the approach

trail with my sister until we reached the top of the Falls. After this point I would be traveling alone, or so I thought anyway. I set off carrying way too much weight, but thinking this was normal. I also wore boots that even though I had them for over a year, were apparently not totally broken



*Introductory sign about the A.T.*



*Getting ready to leave the ranger's station.*

in yet. (In those days boots were made of very thick leather and took a long time to break in.) What I did have was determination and desire, but would that be enough?



*Having my last lunch with my sister and two brothers the morning of May 16, 1981.*



*My sister and I at the top of Amicalola Falls.*



*Looking down toward the ranger's station.*



I began my hike at 1:56pm.

When I began the Approach trail, it was overcast, and a cool 56 – 60 up?

Very quiet out here. I walked by myself for a couple miles and then caught up to Bill, another hiker we had met in the parking lot from California. He was with another guy, also named Bill, and the three of us hiked together for the rest of the day, and decided to camp atop Frosty Mountain. We think we are about 3.5 miles from Springer. Starting to drizzle - 4:56pm, the time we arrived on Frosty, but it quit soon after just a few drops. Had an apple and the Little Casserole that Amy (A fellow Zoology student and my girlfriend Connie's old roommate) gave me. I have



*Camp on Frosty Mountain.*





*Bill, known as William, from the parking lot.*

developed a little bit of a blister problem on the back of my ankles as I had expected, but seem to be ok otherwise. I had my doubts about the walk when I walked away from Carl, Julie, and Jay, but I think now that everything will be just fine. I might take it easy these first few days until I get adjusted. Took pictures of the plaque at Amicalola Falls as well as the falls and one of each of the Bills. There is a spring a little ways from Frosty Mountain where we



*Our camp on Frosty Mountain.*

will take water. Approximately 50 degrees at 6:16 pm. I miss everyone and wish they could be here. I would like to stay with Bill and Bill, but unfortunately they plan on traveling a little bit slower. I may stay with them for the next couple of days though.

May 17

Up this morning about 6:30. Had 2 bags of apple & cinnamon oatmeal. It rained a little last night, and I was a little scared at times very early in the morning. I don't know why, perhaps the fear of going on a journey by myself. The temperature at wakeup call, approximately 51 degrees. Looks like it will be a nice day after all. I made it to Springer at approx. 10:15 am. Already my heels are sore. I signed the register enclosed in a mailbox nailed to a large oak tree on the summit, and took pictures of both Bills and myself near the summit sign. I have been seeing many wildflowers, Solomons seals, False SS, Painted Trillium, White Trillium, Jack in the Pulpit, etc. It is very peaceful out here. There was water at the south, bottom (base) of

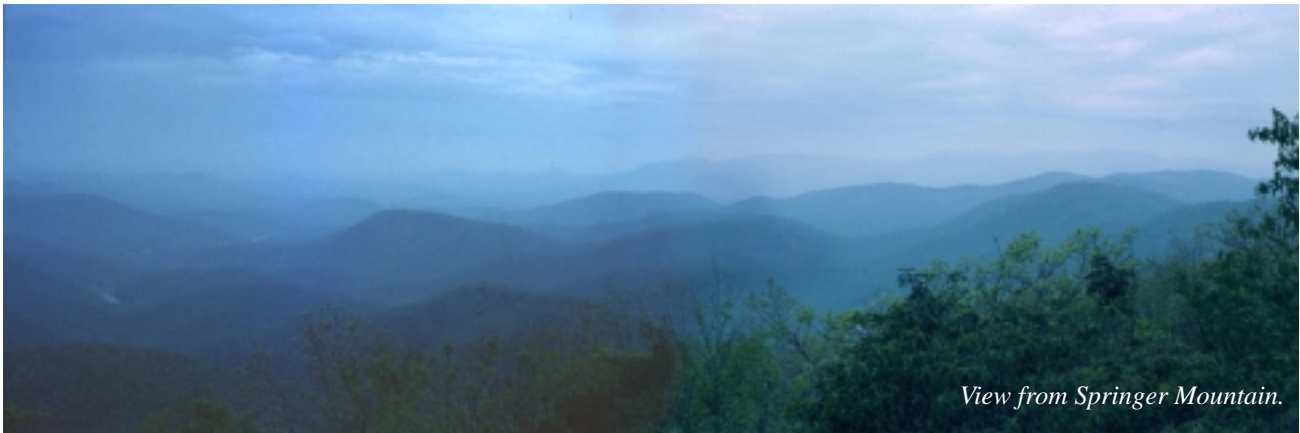


*The older Bill.*



Springer. Now that we have reached the summit, we follow the white blazes of the Appalachian Trail northward.

Had lunch of two instant chicken noodle cup-a-soups at Cross Trails lean to at approx. 12:30pm. A couple other hikers stopped just as we were finishing, and said they were going to Maine, but wanted to eventually go 20 or so miles a day. I wasn't ready for that, but soon after we began hiking



*View from Springer Mountain.*



*We all signed the register on Springer Mountain.*

again, I realized that I should have gone with them anyway. So I said goodbye to Bill and Bill and took off screaming to catch up. Saw two yellow lady slipper orchids and about three deer. Also some wild iris – never saw any wild ones before – they were much smaller (approx. 2 inches diameter). I reached Hawk Mountain lean-to at 3:54 pm, just after stopping a bit earlier, eating a little summer sausage and wondering if I had taken the wrong route even though there were white blazes along the trail. I had Macaroni and Cheese tonight. There was water approximately 50 – 75 yards from the trail and sign pointing to it. I did catch up with the other hikers, but both Bills showed up at the shelter as well. I went to



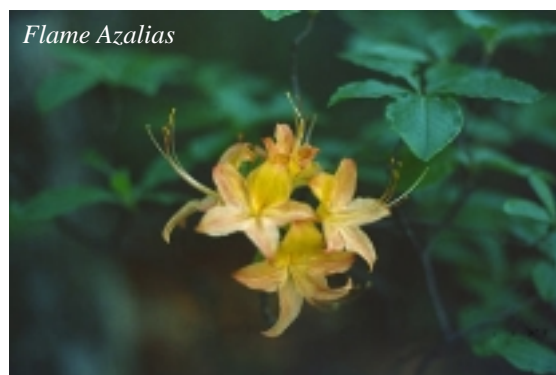
*Hawk Mountain Shelter: a typical trail shelter - a floor, three walls and a roof.*



sleep with my pack leaning against the inside of the shelter just beside me.

May 18

I woke at approximately 2:00am as the older Bill quietly called me and said he thought he heard something chewing on my pack. He told me to kick my pack. I did, and then sat up and listened. I heard a little gnawing, and decided to check it out. I found no mouse, but something was there sometime as I noticed part of my toilet paper was shredded. I closed up my pack and tried to get back to sleep, but couldn't keep from thinking about a mouse chewing a hole in my pack (Later I decided that leaving the zippers partway open would at least keep the mice from chewing a hole in the actual pack, and to this day I do not have any holes in my pack from vermin). Bill & I eventually decided to get up and hang our food bags since the register at the lean-to mentioned that someone had seen a bear somewhere between the shelter and Springer. A wide area I know, but who knows...



We hiked about 14 miles today according to the guides. Sometimes I wonder about the accuracy of the guides. We spent two hours at Justice Creek. I bathed my upper body and ate chicken noodle soup. Mike and a friend of his, whom I was going to hike

with on the spur of the moment yesterday, caught up with us at the creek. We bullshitted with them for a while. William and I are hiking together, and later Bill catches up. We (William and I) made it to Gooch Gap before everyone else, left a note and walked 2.5 miles to Suches for supplies. I felt as though I was short on supplies. (Now that I think about it, if we hiked 2.5 miles to Suches and 2.5 miles back, that is five miles that we should add on to the 14 that we supposedly hiked on the trail that day for a total of 19!) Had a Dr. Pepper, a Pepsie, 2 candy bars, and a pint

of strawberry ice cream. Sent off two post cards & called my sister, Julie, collect.



*Hiking in bluejeans?  
What a mistake!*



(I sent a Postcard of Brasstown Bald Mountain to my family which survived these thirty years and gives a glimpse of how I was really feeling and how I had already given up).

The text on it reads:

“Mom, Dad, Julie, Jay and everyone else, This doesn’t have anything to do with where I am at (Brasstown Bald view), but it is a way to get in touch. I am now at Suches, a very small town and just bought some groceries & ate some strawberry ice cream. Have been and will be hiking with two guys both named Bill. We are taking it as easy as can be and I don’t plan on making it to Maine. We have gone about 30 miles as of Monday – today. It’s lovely out here but very hard work. I sometimes want to come home because it is easier there, but I am trying to stick it out. Got some blisters bothering me, but I hope they will heal soon. See you later, Love, Alan”

I don’t know who I sent the second post card, but I would imagine it was my girlfriend, Constance.

It was nice to talk to someone familiar. Apparently I had given up after only three days in the woods – actually, only two days on the actual Appalachian Trail. Familiarity, it is something nice, but in this case it had caused me to become



homesick in just a few days, but was also making me hang out with William and Bill because they were “comfortable” to be with, and I felt I needed to be with someone rather than just hiking my own hike.

We walked back to Gooch Gap, only to find Bill, Mike and his friend, as well as two other guys. Eventually, another hiker showed up at the shelter as well. Feeling there was not enough room at the shelter for everyone, William and I picked up our gear and walked down to a nice area below the shelter and proceeded to eat the 1.5 lb can of chicken and dumplings (MMM!) I bought, and drank some cold tea (instant) he had bought. We pitched our tents and made a nice fire. William spent the evening waterproofing his shoes. At the store in Suches, he got rid of several articles of clothing plus a couple of pots to make his pack weigh less - besides he didn’t need the stuff. I spend \$17 and some change at the store, but it feels good to have the sweets, the dumplings, and other stuff ready for the next few days. We have decided that we will probably travel about 5 miles a day now and enjoy ourselves. Time will tell if we can really stand this low mileage. With these blisters it may be just right, although they feel pretty good except when going uphill.

Tuesday, May 19 1981

During the night, a tremendous storm blew in quickly catching us (young Bill and I ) camped below Gooch Gap Lean-to. The tent stayed dry inside except for a little dribble. Didn’t get up until around



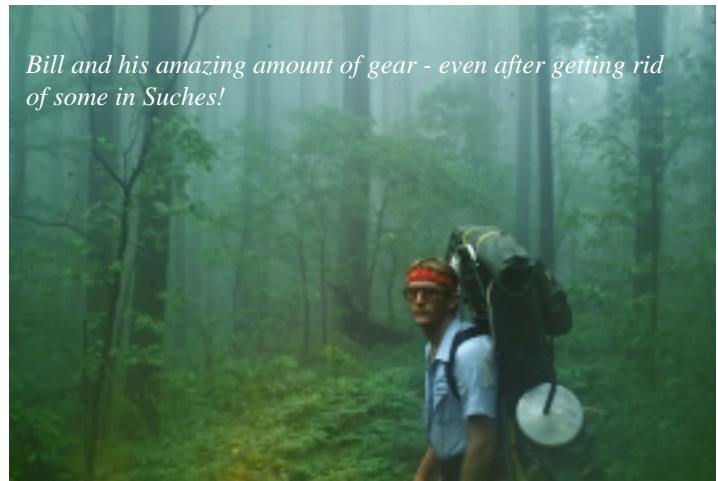




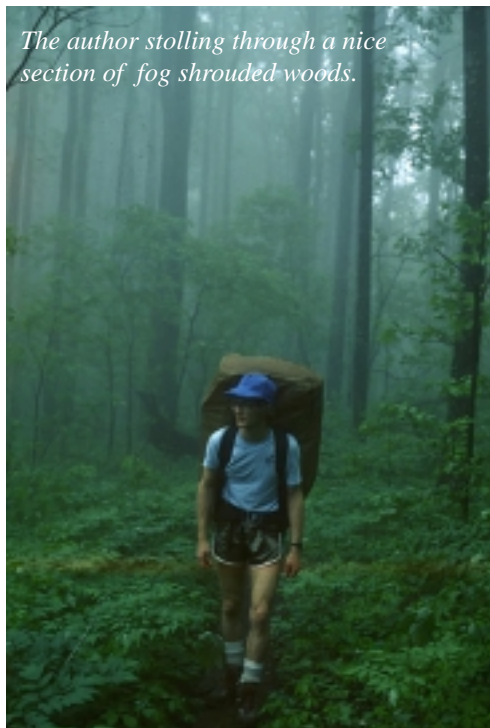
10:00 and got going late. Older Bill decided to hang it up, and went to Suches to get a ride home. Now down to just one Bill and me.

We walked approximately 14 miles to Neel's Gap (so much for our 5 miles per day). We had made it to Neel's gap and are very glad, especially since there was a large supply store, and boarding with one room left. We grabbed it for \$15 (\$7.50 a piece). We plan on sleeping late and going only 5 miles or so tomorrow. I

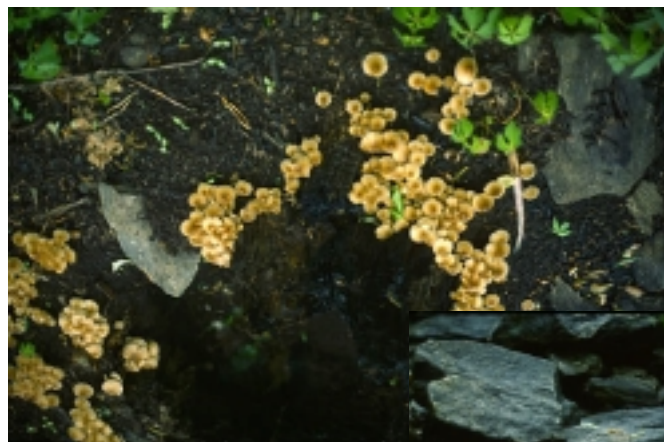
had to learn to walk a new way to keep my blister from getting worse. I think they may even be getting better. The fog today was great, but views were limited until the top of Blood Mountain. Took a lot of scenic shots. I possibly saw a bear cub while on the way down from Blood Mountain. Something caught my eye, but not sure what it was. I had a hot shower this evening at the Walasii Inn, and washed my shirt and socks in the basin. Saw another orchid and this time took a picture of it. We won't get to another supply store for about 100 miles so we have to pack a lot of food.



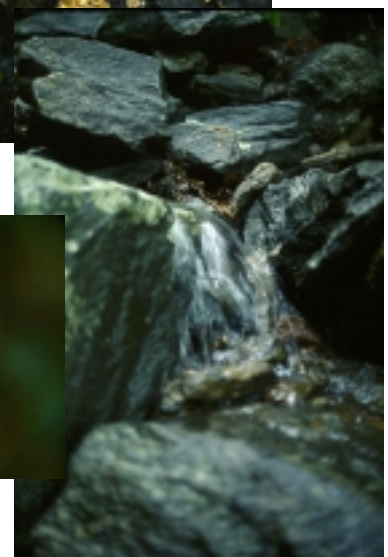
*Bill and his amazing amount of gear - even after getting rid of some in Suches!*



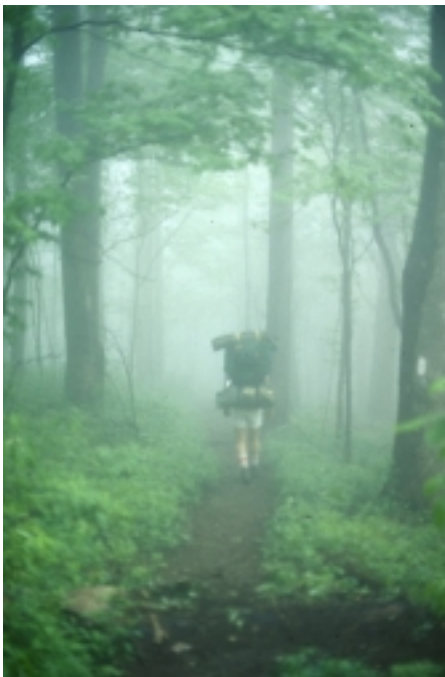
*The author strolling through a nice section of fog shrouded woods.*



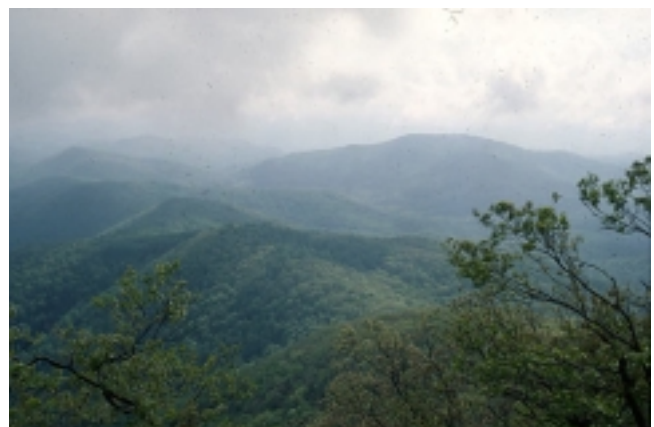
*Yellow Lady's slipper Orchid.*



*A possible water source.*



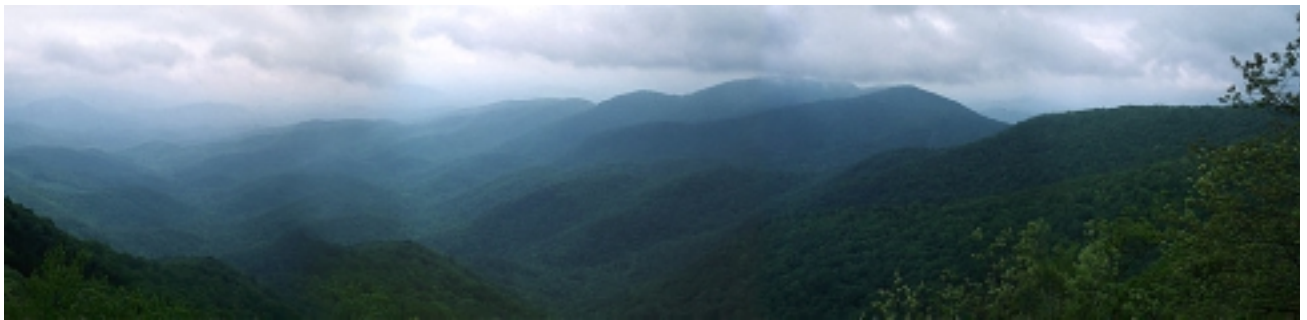
*A little Red Eft - the land phase of a newt. Brightly colored to warn predators not to eat it*







*Views from  
Blood Mountain Summit  
and the old Firewardens  
cabin shelter located  
there.*



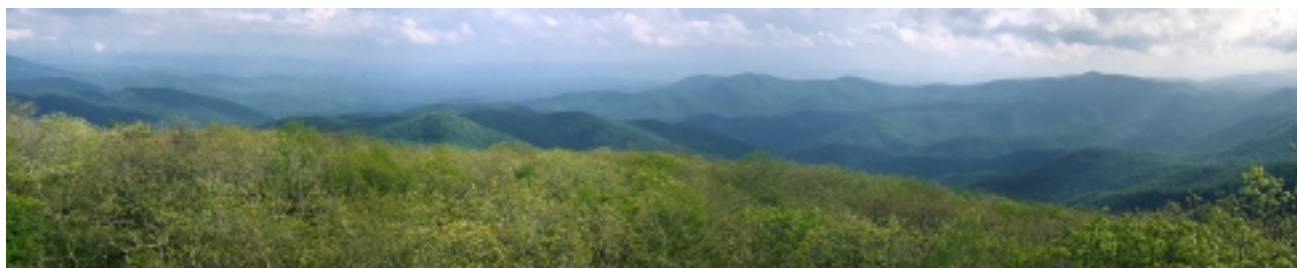
(Although we did not know anything about this yet, on this date: May 19, 1981 Appalachian Trail hikers Susan Ramsay and Robert Mountford Jr., both 27-year-old social workers from Maine, were last seen at a Bland County, Virginia store, about 500 miles north of us.)

Wednesday, May 20, 1981

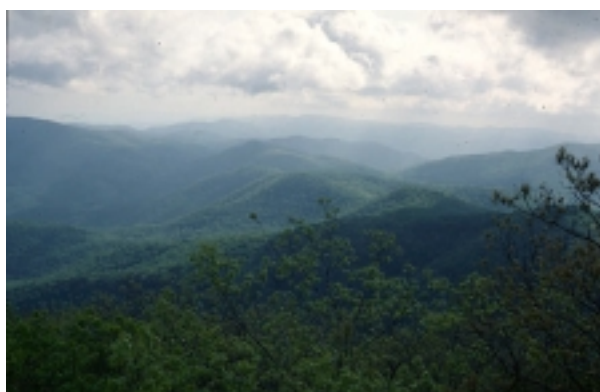
I got up from a good night's rest at the Walasii Inn. We had slept in as long as we could, but it seems we always tend to get up early. Had breakfast of one bag of Brown sugar & cinnamon oatmeal. Went to the store and mailed 5 post cards and bought a Pepsi, freeze dried lasagna, poly tubes, honey, crackers, raisins and a few candy bars (remember, only 24 hours before I had purchased \$17 worth of supplies – we must have been packing over 50 pounds of gear and food! Lesson 1 - don't carry so much food, unless you are not carrying much of anything else). Called home this morning and just caught Mom before taking Jay to Springfield. Nice to talk to her again.

It was foggy again this morning. No views today. We could tell that we would have had some if it were not so foggy. Nice temperature to hike in, but drizzling a little most of the day. The guide book says we went 11 miles today. Dreary day. At least we are at a shelter tonight (Low Gap Shelter). I Had mac & cheese again tonight, but this time it was good – 1.5 packets of cheese - .5 left over from last night when we had chili & noodles from the mac & cheese. Bill made some instant lemon pudding and gave me a cup. Not bad. Bill and I have both been trying to look at all the things people take for granted, like water, which we have to find and drink from a mountain spring - and things like toilets, fast transportation, food, etc. We are sharing the shelter with Joel and John, I think from Indianapolis. Joel seems to really know about backpacking, and he sure eats well. He has back-packed all over and has been telling us a lot of things. We learned about using moleskin band-aids to help relieve blister problems and to help prevent them as well. Unfortunately, we did not have any. I hope we can stay with them for a few days to learn more, but that probably means 14 mile days. If we start early maybe we can do it. It looks like tomorrow we will shoot for a 15 miler – I hope I can make it. I also hope it stops raining and clears up.

Thursday May 21, 1981

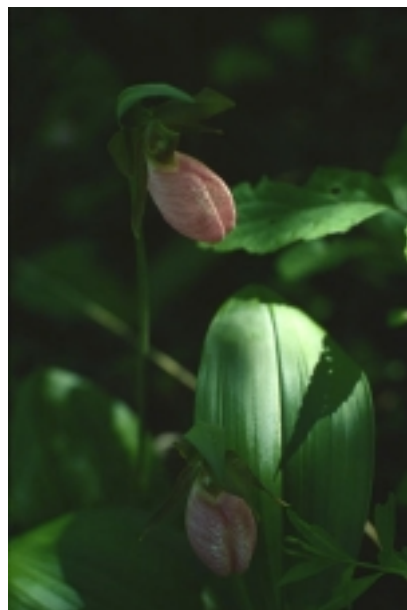


Today we hiked 15.4 miles. Finally had a nice sunny day! There were tremendous views most of the way when they were available, like the extraordinary view from Tray Mountain, almost 360 degrees. We (Bill & I) need some moleskin band-aids. We thought we would have to wait about 10 days until we got to Wesser, but fortunately we ran into Curt again and he gave us three. Luck shined on us again when we met Mr. & Mrs. Richard Deakin who had hiked the



entire Appalachian Trail in 1977-78, they gave us a stack about ½ inch thick. We were very thankful. Had a lunch of 2 packs of saltines with peanut butter & honey & a pack of pop tarts. Let

boots air out a while & socks dry. Felt pretty good afterwards. Some nerd in a trans am pulled up at lunch while we were at lunch at Unicoi gap, took out the sunroof in order to allow him to take out and leave a box of trash right by the road – all with us watch-

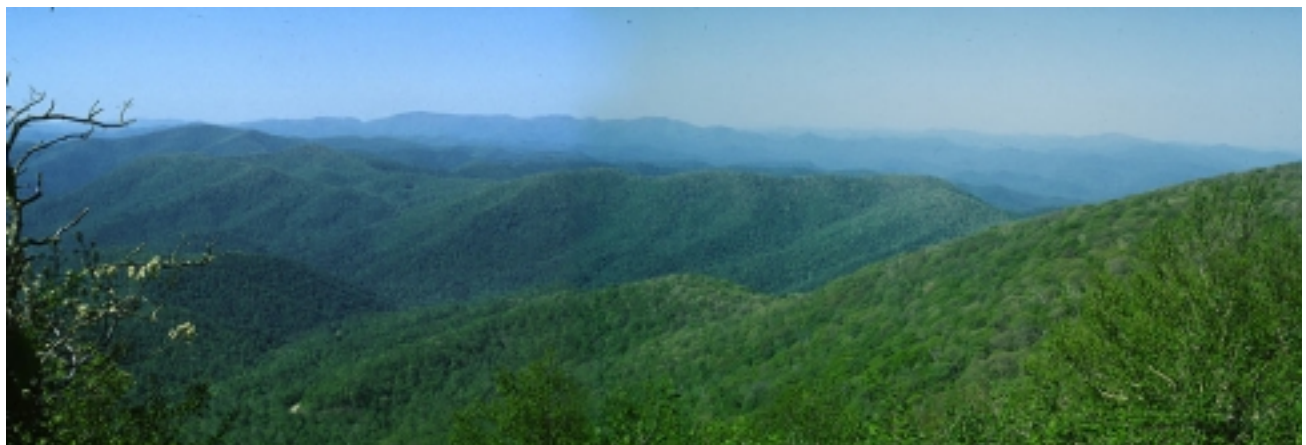




ing! I guess we were just so shocked we did not try to stop him. Along the trail today we saw some pink Lady's Slipper Orchids and took pictures. Took some photos from off the top of Tray Mountain. We spent the night at Tray Mountain lean-to sharing stories with the Deakins, while having Lipton



*John (left) and Joel (right) gave us valuable information. Joel was an Eagle Scout.*



Chicken soup (instant) with Minute Rice which tasted pretty good. Beautiful sunset. Gets cool at night here in the mountains. Going to sit by the campfire with Stan, Curt, Joel, and John.

Friday May 22

Today was supposed to be an easy day as Bill and I were originally planning on staying at Addis Gap shelter only six miles from Tray Mountain Shelter. Instead, we stopped there for lunch and decided to go on to Dick's Creek Gap and possibly get a ride into town. We got there after a long downhill descent to find Joel & John, and a new potential friend, John Smart, who sported red hair and beard. Soon after they left to reach Plumb Orchard, 4 miles away. Bill decided he wanted to go to Hiawasse so I headed up the trail as he walked off, trying to hitch a ride to town. We had arranged that I would wait for him at Plumb Orchard shelter until noon the next day, and if he didn't show, he would catch up later. I hated to split up for fear of not getting together again since I knew I couldn't keep up with Joel and John. So I stayed at Plumb Orchard Gap lean to, which made 15 or so miles again for today. Had a nice evening at the shelter with the three; and had a supper consisting of a can of chicken mixed with Lipton Noodle dinner (chicken flavor) a little rice and a little garlic thrown in. Have to look for some butter buds and Knox orange flavored drinking gelatin. John Smart played flute and

harmonica and also made TV Time popcorn and let us sample his pudding and dinner. He was a real nice guy from Pennsylvania. We were serenaded by his flute and harmonica while I drifted off to sleep.

Saturday May 23

Had a packet of apple & cinnamon instant oatmeal with dried apples & honey thrown in, and hot chocolate. John Smart told us that last night while we were all asleep, he awoke and saw a procession of what he called “glow worms” marching on the ground in front of the shelter. I wished I had seen that.

John, John, and Joel left the shelter, and I sit here waiting for Bill, hoping that he will come by 12 and also hoping he didn't try to make it last night, but passed the shelter - which is off the trail and the marking was a little obscure. While waiting around, I brushed my teeth and took a sponge bath near the spring a little ways down by the trail. Refreshing. I finally gave up on Bill and continued up the trail. The trail was tough going at Bly gap till Muskrat shelter. Up a long way! Very steep. Stopped around 3:00 on the trail and ate my last two Pop-Tarts with honey and a bag of M&M's.



*John Smart at Plumborchard Gap.*



*Bruce Gurnstein and Mike Block.*

Walked a total of about 7 miles to Muskrat Creek shelter. Bill hadn't shown up there yet either. I believe I will wait all day tomorrow here for him. Maybe it will do my blister good. I can hear the drumming of a grouse somewhere in the forest surrounding the shelter. Muskrat shelter is a large A-frame shelter that appears fairly new. Mike & Gurnstein caught up to us this evening and are both staying at the shelter. Bruce told about how he was a merchant marine and seemed to be the windbag of the two. Mike, his friend, was kind of like his second in command and followed everywhere. Fixed chicken noodle soup & rice again

tonight with tea, cool aid & instant banana cream pudding. There were two other older men at shelter tonight, Bob, with multiple sclerosis from Virginia, and Ed from New York, both heading south. Ed has hiked about 1600 miles of AT at different times and places.

May 24, 1981 Sunday

This morning I had another breakfast consisting of oatmeal & honey with dried apples. Bob Barker and Ed left early and Bruce (G) and Mike Block left afterwards heading for Deep Gap. They decided they would implement my suggestion to detour part of the trail from the fire road at Deep Gap to Interstate 64. This route skipped 22 miles of trail. I think that I found this route when I noticed that we would be hiking south instead of north, and thought how stupid is that, we should be headed north toward Katahdin. Thought I would wait all day for Bill, but when a runner came by and said he hadn't seen Bill, I decided to go on to Deep Gap and take the detour myself and make it to Wesser a little quicker maybe. I never saw Bill again.



To my surprise, Mike & Gurnstein were still at Deep Gap when I arrived, and had secured a ride from a couple with a Toyota. I wondered if I might convince the couple to give me a ride also. But before the couple came back, another couple came down the mountain who owned a nearby truck. We asked where they were going and they told us Gatlinburg. We asked if that was on the way to Wallace Gap on I-64 and they said yes. When we asked if we could hitch a ride, he said yes so we climbed in. Hated to leave Bill, but I didn't know where he was, or what he was doing.

I'm now at Siler Bald lean-to – a terrible shelter. Some floor boards are missing as well as some on the back and sides, and the roof probably leaks. This did not hinder us from having a good time there. Bruce and Mike were a riot as they joked about just about everything. Had mac & cheese, and grits from a guy and his father who also gave us a little sugar.

We now plan to bounce up the trail, skipping a little here and there and enjoying ourselves. Tomorrow we are going to try to get to Nantahala Lake and go for a swim and then on to Wesser. (Lesson 2: if you are out to hike the Appalachian Trail, then hike the trail, don't look for short-cuts. With less than ten days on the Appalachian Trail, I had successfully managed to make sure that I could not

officially call myself an end to ender even if I did make it to the end in Maine. Earlier in the trip I had hinted at the fact that life was hard on the trail and thought of going home because it was easier. Now it appeared as though having blister problems might have begun to enter into the decision to do some yellow-blazing (following the road) since it did not involve aggravating my blisters with actually hiking. Notice how the decisions come about quickly, sometimes within a matter of minutes. Had Mike and Bruce gotten a ride before I arrived at Deep Gap, or had hiked on and not been so enthusiastic after hearing my idea concerning the detour, I might not have skipped that 22 mile section. Remember to always take time to think before acting). I think I'll make some pudding for us to eat.



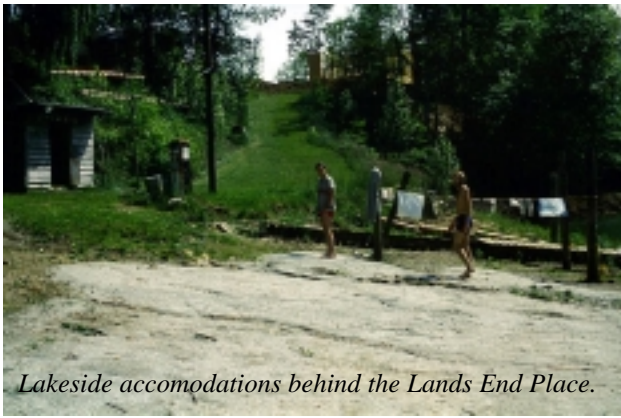
*Bruce has fun with his stove at Siler Bald lean-to while Mike prepares to kick Bruce's ass.*

Monday May 25, 1981

Today we hiked from Silar Bald lean-to about 3-3.5 miles to Wayah Gap where we met a motorcyclist who stopped and chatted for a few minutes. He was going the same way we were (on our new



plan to take the road near Lake Nantahala) and agreed to go down and see whether there was any food by the lake. Shortly afterwards, we got a ride from a nice couple in a small Toyota pickup. We were cruising along for a while when suddenly the motorcyclist went by again, returning to where we had originated. He saw us in the truck, turned around, and caught up to the truck. He tried to throw us three Pepsis, but failed. One spewed out on the road, the other two just got battered a bit. Our driver stopped, we picked up the pop, and cruised to the Lake



*Lakeside accomodations behind the Lands End Place.*

Ends Place, a small store, bar & grill and ate a greasy cheese burger & fries and a cup of strawberry ice cream. Ohh that burger was heavenly! It was one of the best burgers I had ever eaten, probably since I had not had any real food in about a week. We bought a bunch of candy, cookies, etc. and spent the remainder of the day eating and lying on the beach. Griff, the owner of the café, said we could pitch our tent in the back after dark. Called home and talked for approx 20 minutes. Bathed in the lake and had a good time.

I

fixed noodles & chilli for supper. Ate too much! Nice view by the lake. My right heal is beginning to be infected I believe. Played fish, and washed some of our clothes in the lake. Rained for about 5-10 minutes in the afternoon, but the rest of the day was excellent, in the 70's or so.

Tuesday, May 26, 1981

Everyone (Mike Block, Bruce Gernstein & I) slept in Mike's dome tent and put our packs in mine. Got up this morning and had the traditional oatmeal with apples & raisins, honey & a cup of hot cocoa – which I bought 12 packs for \$1.90 I believe, at Giff's. I later found some at Wesser for \$1.19. We walked a couple miles from Lakes End before getting a hitch, and then got picked up by a VW van driven by a guy and his son who were from Memphis & were cousins of Beth Betch, my pastors family, and knew where Highland, my home town was and had been there. They drove us between 15 – 17 miles to Wesser, and dropped us off at the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC). I cashed a traveler's check and bought a pair of running shorts, oatmeal variety pack, and some pudding & instant milk. Hopefully these days off will help my blisters heal.



Paid \$3.64 for the room (hostel) and plan on eating at the restaurant tonight. It's cooling off – I think it is going to rain. It rained most, if not all of the evening. I am sharing the hostel with two guys and a gal (Chuck, Charlie, & Pat) as well as Bruce and Mike. Had a shower & cooked lunch on the range(stove) in the room.

For dinner I ate a Wesserburger, a loaf of homemade bread with some cheese, one scoop of chocolate ice cream, and one scoop of butter pecan ice cream. All was very good. Total cost \$4.40. \$2.15 for the burgers –too much! It wasn't really very large (and definitely not as good as a Giff burger!). Later on I reorganized my pack and threw out an old pair of jeans. (Lesson 3: Jeans should never be taken on a hiking trip anyway – once wet, they never dry out.)

I have too much food for now considering the next food supplies are only two days away. Looks like we will be hiking in wet weather tomorrow. Forecast from paper Chuck brought back says highs 75 – 80 lows in the 50's. 50% chance of rain. Chuck & Charlie hitched to town earlier and got beer for the crew. Sent 5 post cards today.





Wednesday May 27, 1981

Had traditional breakfast again this morning except no honey, and oatmeal was 3 bags of plain flavor. I find it tough to eat regular, but the variety pack includes a few plain along with the flavored. At the restaurant, I had a little bit of Bruce's waffle after he was full.

Was raining a bit this morning when we woke up and it took us a long time to get up, and also a long time to decide what we were going to do after having eaten. We finally decided to hike and see what the weather would

do. Naturally it rained on and off; however, the skies opened up and it poured during our lunch soon after reaching Sassafras Gap shelter. Joel and John, who also happened to be at the shelter, decided to move on to the next shelter 14 miles away. We all wanted to keep going if it would stop raining, but it didn't seem to look like it would quit. We decided we wanted to keep our stuff dry so we chose to stay at the shelter even though we had only traveled about 6 miles. Had a meat bar for lunch that was given to me by Stan and Curt. Wasn't bad, but it wasn't really good. Good thing I was pretty full already. Bruce started a fire close to the shelter (which has an outhouse nearby and a good spring) that at times would smoke us all out. Kind of cool now toward evening. Everyone wishes they could have gone on today, but we're all glad we are dry. Bruce, Mike, Chuck, Charlie, Pat and I stayed in the shelter. Some of the group want to try to go all the way to Fontana tomorrow. It's a long way – about 22 miles – maybe I can make it too. It all depends on the weather as to where we stop I guess. Hopefully the rain will blow over tonight. I cooked minute rice with chicken soup and butterscotch pudding this evening and sit here, being bored with nothing really to do. I was sure glad to hear I got all A's on my report card when I talked with Mom on the phone at NOC. Can't decide how long I want to stay on the trail. It's kind of neat as long as you have company, but I don't like having to push all the time. (I don't really know what I was referring to "having to push all the time". In the last few days I had only hiked a handful of miles, skipped a bunch, and rode quite a few. Today we only hiked six.)

The guide says we would have had some real nice views today, but the fog covered everything. Tomorrow we climb Cheoah Bald which supposedly has fantastic views, but I believe we will probably miss it due to fog as well. I spotted some pink lady's slipper orchids, some red efts and a new type of trillium with red leaves – impressive. It's nice to hike in the fog as the sun doesn't beat down and fry you, but I like to see views also. Bruce & Mike are really characters, they keep coming up with all kind of stories and keep the conversation moving. They get rather crude at times. I wish I contributed more.

Thursday May 28, 1981

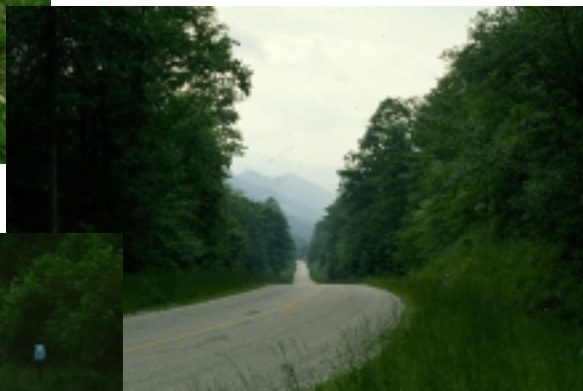
Got up to an ugly day today. Wet, dripping and cold. The temperature got warmer & the sun broke about 2:30 pm. Walked around 14 miles or so today. It was rough! Particularly after lunch, hiking the one or two miles after Stekoa proved really tough! Saw a lot of





*Chuck also became part of our group in Wesser.*

wildlife today – a large toad, a Scarlet Tanager, and many kinds of Trilliums. Some with yellow petals, and my favorite – the ones with large leaves and a flower nodding with large red petals. Really pretty. I must say my Gorp tastes real good. Made from M&M's, raisins, Planter's peanuts



*A road crossing somewhere in North Carolina.*

from a can (expensive), and sunflower seeds. Had a Snickers bar around 3 pm along with a short break close to a spring. The terrain was up and down, rocky at times and occasionally real nice. Sometimes it looked like a medieval forest. Had a spaghetti mug-o-lunch for lunch & mac & cheese for supper. 8 miles to Fontana Dam tomorrow.

Friday May 29, 1981

We were entertained all night, and early this morning by mice at Cable Gap shelter. The shelter was a four man deal with 2 bunks above and two on the bottom. Even though we had our packs hung, we were amazed as we watched an acrobatic mouse just run up and down the cord. I got up and beat the pocket where a mouse was eating on my peanut butter again (packed inside a plastic Gerry tube). I hit it a couple good ones and it ran out of the pocket, and up the pack. I hit him again and gave it a good jolt. He got away, but I think he got the message. I then took the tube of peanut butter that had been chewed on before and stuffed it





in a hole where the mouse had been running in and out. I guess I figured I would stuff it down their throats in a way.

Alarm went off at 6:00 am this morning but didn't get up until 6:30. Made oatmeal & hot chocolate, and hit the trail soon afterwards clad in my tennis shoes. My feet had been killing me and I had to see how it would go wearing them. It didn't seem to help too much. My white gym socks have been wet and didn't dry overnight. I eventually switched to my boots without the gym socks. Feet a little loose as a result. Lesson 3: wear proper socks and hiking boots, and make sure they are broken in before you start.

The trail went up and down for a couple of miles then it was pretty much all downhill for the rest of the day. Made it to N.C. Highway 28 at about 9:30 then pushed on to the dam.

When I arrived at the dam, I utilized the pay phone near the visitors center to call the Marine Locker back in Illinois and talked to Mom, Dad, and Carl. I also took a nice hot shower at the dam since a nice shower room was available, and best of all – free! John appeared and used the phone to call home, and then Bruce, Chuck and Mike finally showed up. We hung around there for a while before getting a ride from a nice couple in an Oldsmobile on their way to Fontana Village. Somehow we were able to stuff our 4 packs in the trunk. I sat up front because I had taken a shower. We took a room at the Village for \$31 split four ways. Which turned out to be a nice little cabin. We washed clothes, and then bought some stuff to make a pizza – mix, cheese & mushrooms. The oven heated up, but didn't get hot enough to bake the pizza so we had to borrow the oven of another group from Florida. The crust never did work exactly right but wasn't bad. Had chocolate ice cream also. There is a square dance exposition here, TV, pool, golf, everything! Nice place. Plan to get supplies tomorrow. Watch TV, etc tonight. Will sleep on a rollaway couch bed.

Saturday May 30, 1981

Excellent sleep last night! No waking up with sore joints, rear end, or heels from resting on hard surfaces. My 3/8 inch thick Ensolite pad just does not give me the padding that I need in the shelters. Didn't wake up at all until morning when Bruce's watch alarm went off – must have been around 6 or 7, but I left it ring and then slept some more until about eight o'clock. Got up and ate Raisin Bran I bought many miles back at Suches (Most Raisin Bran comes in 20 oz boxes. Did I carry that weight all this time? No wonder I was having problems!). Started cleaning everything up and packing my pack. Chuck and I took the keys back to the office and checked out; then we went to the laundromat and washed a few clothes. Went into the grocery store and bought \$30 worth of goods. A lot of the cost was tied up in materials for gorp: 1 lb M&M's plain & 1 lb peanut, 1/2 lb Reese bits, big box of raisins, large can of cocktail peanuts. Other items included a few dinners, lunches, pudding desserts, and 12 snickers candy bars. Pack is definitely heavy now! (I guess so with at least 4 pounds tied up in gorp!) Back of my right ankle is very tender and sore today. I hope this day of not hiking will do it good. Chuck and I would like to take about 8 days thru the Smokies, but it appears



that the maximum limit is seven. Maybe we can talk the ranger into giving us an extra day. We would like to take our time and enjoy this much celebrated wonderful park because we are under the impression that this is one of the most beautiful parts of the Appalachians and afterwards in later days we will be running into towns quite often, and will not feel as if we are in the wild. Therefore we want to enjoy the wilderness while we can.

Taking a lazy afternoon. Chuck is writing an article for a newspaper about his experience on the AT. Bruce & Mike went to the shelter and are going to go swimming. Wanted to mail a few things home to Mom – especially two rolls of film, but we waited too long and the PO closed at 12:00. Now I'll have to carry them – more weight! Since the PO was closed, I bought some stamps from Chuck to send my five post cards. I had to get them sent so people would know where to send things to me at the next post office. I never asked for anything but letters, but hope for cookies or anything else. A pint of butter pecan ice cream beckoned me to purchase it, and I also bought a lighter to light my stove, then loaded up into the Fontanabus and got taken close enough to walk to the TVA shelter near the lake. Didn't get our permits today. We might be out of luck as far as getting spaces in the same shelters. Bruce, Chuck, and I took a little skinny dip in Fontana lake behind the shelter. We were standing around when a boat started coming close. We all dove in real quick and had a good laugh. We joked about watching out for the pecker fish! Nice swim. (I do not know where Pat was while all this was happening, I am sure I would have remembered her skinny dipping, and probably would not have done it if there was a woman around at the time. I also notice that there have not been any direct references in previous journal entries, other than to say she was there, even though I know she was present and she shows up in some of my photos. I remember her telling me that she had been a Bunny at one of the Playboy clubs at one time. Perhaps that, along with the fact that I had a girlfriend back home, and that Bruce seemed to be hovering around her a good portion of the time, kept my hormones in check. She was a very nice looking, well endowed woman.)

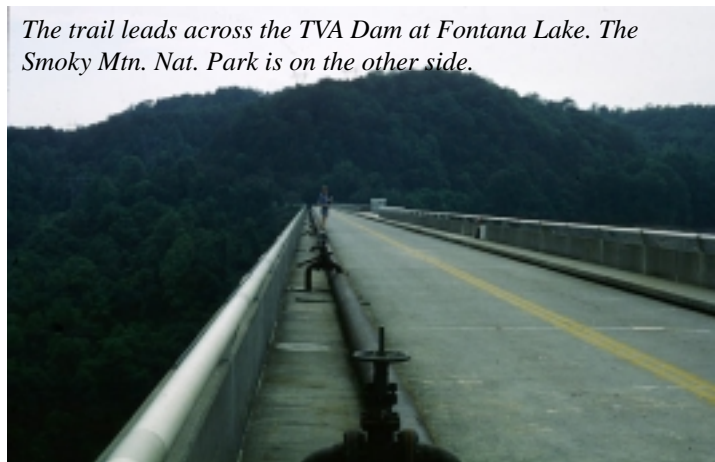
Had rice, flavored with beef and mushroom soup, with a slice of cheese and a little sardine juice thrown in. Now just sitting around getting things organized. Seems as though I am missing a group of Pop-Tarts – thought for sure I bought 2 boxes? I met a guy at the TVA shelter named Larry who also goes to school at Carbondale SIU, majoring in communications or something like that. He works with the SPC Student Programming Council). He plans on hiking until August, then go back to school. John Smart showed up at the shelter with a dog he had picked up along the way. This presented a problem for him. He had to figure out what to do with it since dogs are not allowed in the Smokies. A nice shower developed in the evening.

(We have not heard, but on this date, May 30-31, 1981 Ramsay's and Mountford's bodies were found buried near an A.T. shelter near the Giles-Bland county line. It was the first double homicide on the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail.)

Sunday May 31, 1981

Nice morning. A little overcast, but it eventually cleared up. Chuck and I had to get up to wait for the ranger to arrive so we could get our backcountry permits before entering the park. Although free, they are necessary to monitor who goes in and out of the park and ensure everyone a spot in a shelter if they want one. Bruce and Mike were already at the Visitor center, but

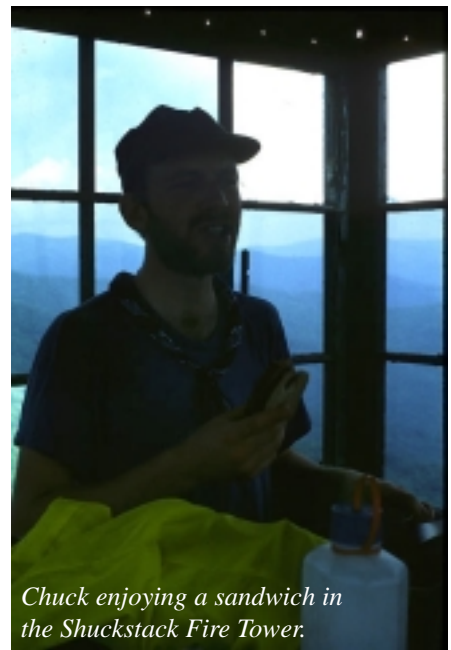
*The trail leads across the TVA Dam at Fontana Lake. The Smoky Mtn. Nat. Park is on the other side.*





hadn't hit the trail yet because Mike wanted to catch someone there to mail his post cards. The TVA employee/ranger wouldn't do it – said it was against orders to give rides or take mail. He had already been at the center and had left before we had arrived. Tired of waiting, Mike eventually walked back to the shelter to give John Smart the mail to take into town. After he got back, Mike and Bruce walked off over the dam. Upon getting about half way across, Chuck and I yelled a good L-L-L-L—ick Me! that echoed around the lake and dam area for a second or two. “Lick me “ had become a phrase that was commonly used by Bruce and Mike, and began to creep into our vocabularies as well. They turned around as the echo subsided and returned the “greeting”.

We waited there for the ranger who seemed to never get there. I decided to call home while we waited and as I was talking – she finally arrived. We got our permits – every shelter the same as the other guys except for the first shelter. They got Mollies, we got Birch Springs Gap. We started off slowly after taking a snack and drinking a Mr. Pibb at the Visitors center. Our packs seemed a bit heavier – mine wasn't so much of a change I don't think, it was always heavy! Hiked on as the sun shone brightly in the sky, and just before the firetower on Shuckstack Mountain, I spotted a huge rattler lying on a rock in the middle of the trail. I stopped just in time, and told Chuck about it. We threw some rocks at it in hopes it would move, but it just got pissed and tense. I threw a large rock at it and it really got mad. We should have killed and eaten it but instead decided to go around the snake - off the trail. We ate lunch on top of the firetower – 2 Pop-Tarts and some gorp. The view was spectacular. Took a shot of Chuck and one of Fontana Lake. The rest I figured would be boring, and later I wouldn't know what it was anyway. Made it to Birch Springs shelter and relieved myself in the woods. When I came back I found Chuck talking to a man who said his party of eight who were supposed to stay at Mollies had decided to continue on and exit the park and hike on to the dam. We decided that since their spots were now open at Mollies Ridge shelter we would take a chance on moving on to the next shelter and getting caught and being fined for being in the wrong shelter. We packed up and pushed on to Mollies -4.5 miles up the trail.



*Chuck enjoying a sandwich in the Shuckstack Fire Tower.*



*Deer seem very tame in the Smokies.*

We really picked the pace up, and made it to the shelter just before a cloudburst. Bruce began looking for his expensive Gore-tex rain parka and concluded that he left it where he had eaten his lunch - six miles down the trail. He decided to try to retrieve it. Borrowing Mike's jacket, he ran back to find it.

Two deer appeared near the shelter as we sat there eating. They don't seem to be too afraid of humans. I had fixed minute rice flavored with chicken soup, a little butter, mashed potatoes, and a little

cheese sause from a macaroni and cheese dinner. Dessert was a bit of pistachio pudding and a Fig Newton donated to me from Chuck's cookie supply which had been sent by his mother. After some hours, Bruce finally came running back - without finding his jacket. It was almost 8:45 pm or so and night was beginning to creep in. He yelled "stay back!" as he approached because a bear was supposedly paralleling him just off the trail. Mike said he, himself, had seen it earlier when he had gone out a couple of miles to leave Bruce a Snickers and a canteen along the trail. Both hikers had come back soaked from a short hard rain. Mike claimed he had seen the bear ten feet in front of him and said he started clacking two rocks together. The result was that the bear ran down the trail toward the direction where Bruce would be coming on his return. Bruce said he had also encountered a wart hog, and had just finished running away from it when the bear appeared twenty feet in front of him. He was bushed from all the running and started yelling to scare the bear off. He also had gotten out his buck knife. He made it back in one piece, but was mad because he didn't find his jacket. He also said he saw an eight to ten point buck. The rain had quit before Bruce got back - a hard, short term rain. We made hot tea, cocoa and coffee for Mike and Bruce, the wettened beasties, to warm them up.

June 1, 1981 Monday

Got up with the aid of my alarm at seven because Chuck said he wanted to get started early. He failed to get himself up until later though, so I just fixed my breakfast of plain oatmeal with some dried peaches and gorp thrown in. A little cinnamon flavoring and sugar, and it wasn't too bad. A cup of hot chocolate and I was ready to go. Had a lot of time to spend so I wrote in my record. After a while the others began to get up. Some people said they heard a hog last night, but Mike said it was probably him snoring. I heard Mike snoring a few times last night, but was not awakened by a warthog.



Mike kept telling Bruce to get out some oatmeal. All of a sudden Bruce ran out the door while chasing Mike and threw a rock at him. Apparently Mike had unfolded his sleeping bag last night and found Bruce's jacket in the bottom. No one knew how the jacket had gotten there, but Mike must have found it late last night and put it in their food bag for Bruce to discover this morning. His running trip earlier did not have to happen.



Charlie was the first to leave this



morning, about an hour or forty-five minutes before everyone else. Chuck and I pulled out about nine or nine-thirty. We had nice hiking all morning and reached Spence Field shelter about 11:30am. We decided to eat lunch at the shelter as it began to sprinkle about the time we arrived.

After lunch, we ascended to the top of Rocky Top and had a little bit of a nice view. I pushed on and scared up what I thought was a bear. I

don't know exactly what it was since I didn't see it, but I believe it was a bear. During our next ascent, it started pouring just about the time we reached the summit of Thunderhead, and didn't stop completely until we finally reached Derrick Knob Shelter. We, or should I say I, thought we were on an old AT route when I noticed a sign which read "relocated in 1971" – but it didn't say whether the trail was the relocated one or the old one. It seemed funny to me that there were very few white



*One of the many downpours while at the shelter.*

(Lesson 4: you only need one t-shirt and one town shirt. An extra t-shirt is extra weight). An older man and his son were already at the shelter along with Larry. When discussing my blister problems and hearing about how I was having problems with the moleskin not sticking very well in these damp conditions, the man, John, told me to get some Tincture of Benzoin to smear on my skin before applying the moleskin to help it stick better. When it dries, it leaves a very sticky residue that helps the dressings stick better. Mike stayed up a little later than normal this evening trying to get some of his socks and boots dry by the fire. I was woke up several times during the night by John's son Jack as he tossed and turned every few minutes. I had generally been sleeping good, but it seems the bunks in the Smokies play terrible tricks on my back muscles and joints.



*A bit of sunshine allowed some drying out of our wet equipment.*

blazes after Thunderhead. This did not help in providing any confidence that we were on the right path. It seemed like we went for miles before we came to the next shelter. My hip began bothering me after lunch. It was just sore where the belt touched. Going uphill was ok on it though.

My boots are now soaked, but I'm in the shelter - dry. The sun popped out every now and then as we sat around the remainder of the afternoon. I fixed freeze-dried pork chops for supper. The juice used to soak the chops in was flavored, so I boiled it, added rice, potatoes and butter. Not bad. Both of my T-shirts are now wet – have to get one dry, perhaps both, somehow.

Tuesday June 2, 1981

Alarm went off at 7 o'clock – I don't know why, I thought I had turned it off. I turned it off and went back to sleep. It is raining again!! What a morning. We all (our little group) have seven miles to go today so no one is in too much of a hurry to get out of their bags. Larry has 14 to go; he is up and getting ready to go, as is John and Jack. Even at 8:30am no one is getting up. Who knows when we will get started.

Mike was disgusted with Bruce, who had been cussing all afternoon yesterday, so when Mike couldn't get the stove going, he decided to "leave this fuckin' weather, walk to Clingman's Dome, hitch a ride to Gatlinburg, and later meet us at Davenport Gap". He packed up and left the shelter, as did Charlie. Chuck and I started hiking about 11:12am, I believe, and after a couple of hours made it to Siler Bald shelter. I quickly found a spot to relieve myself, ate lunch and then a young guy from Raleigh N.C. came in from the north and set up a clothes line to dry his tent - the sun was now out! He had been along a creek on one of the side trails and was trout fishing. He relieved himself of some weight by giving Chuck some rice, and me some oatmeal and spun honey. We took a long lunch today – one hour and seven minutes, left Siler Bald shelter and arrived at Double Springs shelter after about 45 minutes. Mike and Charlie were already there. Mike said his leg was bothering him and as a result he didn't go on to Clingman's and Gatlinburg as he had earlier planned. Chuck and Charlie are now talking about going into Gatlinburg also. The rainy weather seems to be getting on everyone's nerves. It was sunny for a few hours today, but began clouding up about 3:30 pm. A torrential downpour began around 5:30pm or so. Pat arrived just before the rain – Bruce came in about 10 – 15 minutes later – now totally soaked again. Cleared up, or in other words quit raining after an hour or so.

Had Beef noodles for supper and also mooched some gorp from Mike and a spoonful of chocolate pudding from Chuck. Five scouts came rambling in around 7:15. They started their stove and just started heating water when Mike's pack fell and spilled their water after the old string he had hung it from broke under the tension. It started pouring again around 7:35 pm. How sickening - it is nice to be in the shelter though. Thoughts of death lingered in the air since this is supposedly the shelter that two honeymooners were killed in as lightening struck them sometime last year. It feels pretty crowded in this shelter now, and it's still one person from total capacity.

Well, now it looks like everyone wants to go to Gatlinburg. I think I will stay on the trail and get out of the Smokie's as soon as possible on our schedule. Pat doesn't want to go to Gatlinburg either, so we plan on getting up at 6:00 am tomorrow morning since we have to go fourteen miles, and part of that is up Clingman's Dome – almost 7000 feet in altitude, and the highest point on the Appalachian Trail.

Wednesday June 3, 1981

I don't know what happened, other than to say that I gave



*Mike Block, Bruce Gurnstein, and Alan.*





*Sharing gorp near the observation tower on Clingman's Dome.*

up my individuality today. Had Pat and I stuck to our original plans, we would have been together, perhaps gotten to know one another more, and kept from missing the rest of the Smokies.

But, now I'm in Gatlinburg! Everyone decided this morning to go so I did too. We hiked the three miles to Clingman's Dome observatory, but we passed it up by about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile due to heavy fog. Once we began descending, I began to question if we had passed by without noticing it, and sure enough we had. We all turned around and went back, meeting at the parking lot a short

distance from the tower.

Since there were six of us, we split up into parties of two to hitch to Gatlinburg. We ran across a young guy (age 25) named Bob, and his girlfriend from Michigan. We got a ride for all six of us in his silver truck, which was something like a 1957 UPS truck. He drove the twenty two miles pretty slow on the up and down grades, but got us there safely. Bob was a real nifty guy – long hair and a beard. They had been hiking and had just come back from Florida. He took us right into town where we looked for a room. The best



*Waiting for a ride at the parking lot near the observation tower.*



*Back in the "civilized world" with Charlie, Bruce, Pat, and Alan.*

deal we could find was renting a house for \$60 - split 6 ways.

Got a little settled in, took a shower, put on my jeans, and took my laundry uptown to find a laundry mat. Of course I got rained on while I looked, so after washing I threw part of what I had on into the dryer with the rest. Once that was done, I got on a bus, stopped to buy some post cards then went in search of groceries. Bought a few at a small place then caught



*Bruce takes time to check out his fuel delivery system.*



*Luxury accomodations in Gatlinbur, Tennessee.*

the bus out to “Battles” food store – a good place with a good selection of food suitable for hiker trail consumption, and fairly cheap. Spent almost \$20 on food again – mostly gorp material.

I returned to the house after several hours and found Chuck and Mike mostly drunk and ready to go back. Mike borrowed my jeans and went with Bruce, Chuck, and Charlie to get drunk somewhere in town. Just so happens Bruce left his jacket at one of the places and had to run back to get it – lucky again!!

Pat, slightly inebriated, wanted to do her laundry. She did not know where the laundry was so I accompanied her to the laundry mat late at night. While there she pretty much began hanging on me and as much as propositioned me right there next to the dryers. I did not want to take advantage of her in her condition, plus I was pretty sure Bruce had been sleeping with her recently and as crude as he seemed, I was not sure I wanted to visit anywhere he had been. We got back around 1:00 am. And I went to sleep alone in my own bed.

Bruce talked to his stepmother on the phone earlier today and was told that some hikers had been murdered in Virginia. Spooky. (Their bodies were discovered about three days previous, just as we entered the Smokies and left contact with the outside world. Not much was known about the murderer yet. We did not even know if they had been caught or not)

Thursday June 4, 1981

Got up around 8:30 am and wrote seven post cards, and boxed up a package to send home. I ate some of the oatmeal with spun honey and jelly I had received a couple of days ago. It's raining again, of course. Upon leaving Gatlinburg, I will only have about \$20, so the mail better come thru in Hot Springs, NC with my travelers cheques. I am going to have to cut down. Stop buying so much gorp material. Now we're going to spend another night here. I wish I hadn't gone off the trail – NO MORE! Especially like this time – too expensive. Nice Place but the way I feel because of it: Llllliiiccckk mmmeeeee!



I went to the post office and sent a package to Mom for 92 cents, plus seven post cards to various people. While out on the town, I tried to get permits to walk thru the rest of the Smoky Mountains, but as I suspected the day before, none were available. We were no longer considered thru-hikers in the park, so getting permits for anything other than that was almost impossible. I figured it would be hard for five people to get permits, but I couldn't get one even if I was traveling by myself. In other words, there were no openings. Too many schools letting out! I walked around the town and found a place that takes those "Old Time Photos" where you can dress up in costumes like a cowboy and have your picture taken. I thought it would be a cool thing to have my picture taken dressed as a cowboy and have Pat dress up like the busty saloon girl at my side. It was a nice fantasy, but I did not have enough money to make it happen.

Upon returning to the house, I talked to a guy who lives above us on the second floor about our problem, and he said he would give us a ride to Cosby the next morning at 7 am– 18 miles. I checked the map, and it looked like a good idea. I think we'll take it and then hike the road to Davenport Gap, find the trail there, and then stay at our originally planned shelter for the 5th - Davenport Gap shelter. Then continue on to Hot Springs and hopefully never stop in another town except for supplies. (Lesson 5: don't linger in towns – no matter how fun it may seem). Went out to eat at Ogle's buffet restaurant this evening, and ate too much once again. But not so much to prevent me from making popcorn tonight. Cost \$7.45 or so.

Upon further conversation with Danny, I found out he had been drafted and stationed in Germany during the Vietnam War. Real nice guy.

Looking at my food supply, I believe I shouldn't have to buy supplies for another two weeks or so (That is just too much food! Lesson 6: Do not carry any more than seven days or less if you can help it). My pack should be very heavy tomorrow with my four pounds of gorp etc.

Bruce found a Gideon's bible in the dresser in his room. He burned it in the fireplace since there was no wood, and also because he was not religious and thought he should not have to be exposed to it, I think.

Friday June 5, 1981

Everyone got up at 6:00 am so we could be taken to Cosby by Danny in his truck before he went to work. We loaded up at seven and were on the road. Took highway 73 to the intersection of/with 32. The clock showed around seven thirty when we arrived, and since Chuck had just gotten up ten minutes before we left, he wanted to eat and also get a cup of coffee. Cosby Restaurant just happened to be right there where we were left off, so we trucked in, left our packs outside, and sat down at a table. Chuck was dumbfounded when he looked at the menu and saw "biscuits and gravy". He didn't know what it was. Was it one big biscuit? The waitress thought it was funny. Everyone ordered something except me. I had too much to eat yesterday, and didn't want to buy breakfast due to dwindling funds anyway. Like Chuck, not knowing what biscuits and gravy were, I also learned a new word from Chuck today. He referred to "hummin" once and I did not catch the meaning. Apparently, when someone smells, or has BO such as most thru-hikers, they are what people from Connecticut call hummin'.

I found out exactly which road to take from a man who runs a shuttle service for hikers who just



*These trucks had plenty of room for us and all of our equipment.*

happened to be in the area, packed up and hit the road. Chuck lagged back to hitch-hike. Supposedly we had about 11 or 12 miles of road walking to Davenport Gap. Chuck got picked up, but about a mile down the road - there he was again. The driver asked if we wanted to take some trail, I think it was Cosby trail, but we decided to take the road anyway.

We had probably walked three or more miles when we ran into a group of road workers. We got some water from them and talked for a while about what we were doing and where we were headed. We started walking again when

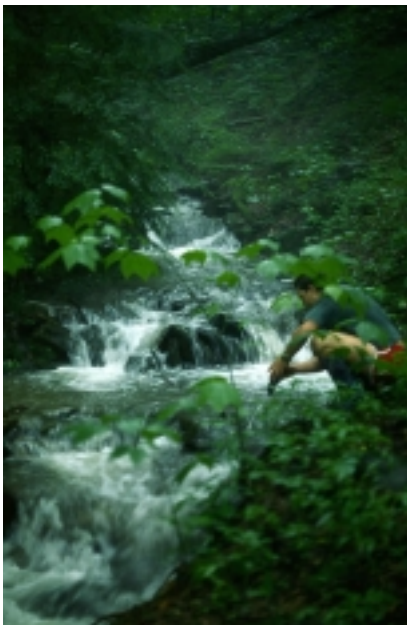
they suddenly pulled around us in their two ton trucks and told us to load up; they would take us to the state line. Had a nice ride high on top of the truck for almost an hour it seemed, and the state line just happened to be Davenport Gap. They let us off, took a picture, and hit the trail South to Davenport Gap shelter.

Reached there quickly and met two boy scouts that we had seen on Clingman's Dome. There were new bunks installed in Davenport shelter, the place seemed fairly nice. We all miss Mike and his humour, who left the trail as he had said he would. He supposedly is sending or bringing a gun to Bruce at Erwin, Tennessee in response to the news about the thru hikers who were murdered just six days earlier. We had heard rumours that the killer was still not caught and that they were on the trail heading south - right toward us! We arrived at the shelter at about 11:15 am, so now we have a lot of time to spend. Amazing - it hasn't even rained yet! Sunny mostly, but overcast also. The weather seems to change very rapidly. Well now it is pouring once again! (around 4:50pm it started). Someone just began walking toward the shelter about 4:25pm and we could tell that John and Joel were here flabbergasted at our sudden appearance ahead of them once again. They had just left for the store at Davenport when it started raining. (I must have gone to the store as well as I) Had five hot

dogs, lemon pudding & gorp for dinner. My thru-hiker appetite has set in and I can't stop nibbling! But I must! And I will, even if it means I have to stop buying it. Thunder and lightening! I believe the tincture of benzoin recommended will work just great - it seems to help the bandaids stick very good. Bruce & Chuck playing fish. Bruce & Mike's favorite game. Talked about crime and punishment this afternoon, I guess brought on by the recent slayings.

Saturday June 6, 1981

Didn't leave camp until almost 10:15 or 10:30am. Pouring again! Oatmeal for breakfast, and cocoa. I left the shelter walking with Bruce, and walked down to the road leading to Davenport Gap for the second time. Past that, the section between the road and Big Pigeon River was superb. Very scenic. The best part of the trail so far. Cascade waterfalls that we had to cross several times and



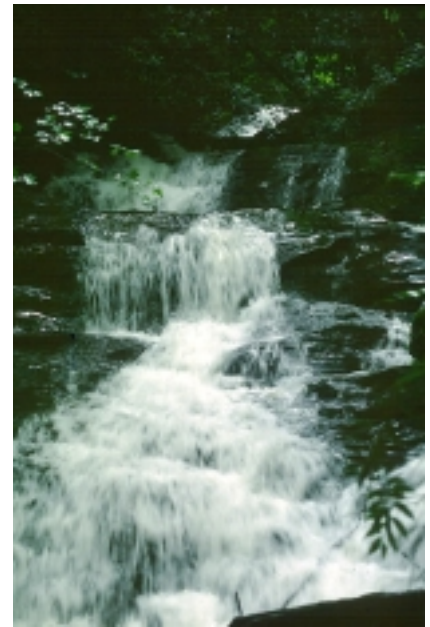


parallel for a mile and a half. Bruce lost his scarf in the brook, but I recovered it a ways downstream; accidentally running across it hung up on a limb in the flow. Some of the crossings were precarious, but I managed to keep my feet quite dry. Pat drenched her feet, as did Chuck. Chuck stopped for lunch at noon near interstate 40, but I pushed on with Bruce and Pat. I outdistanced them and ate lunch on what I thought was the road before Groundhog Creek shelter. I never found the campsite .5 miles afterwards that I thought would indicate exactly where I was. Had Pop-Tarts and a Snickers again. Afterwards I pushed on, and at 3:30pm got to a sign that says Deep Gap shelter -!? I didn't have the next guide book and did not believe I had passed Groundhog Creek shelter, so I decided to sit here and wait for someone else to stroll by. If I have to, I can camp here. I'm almost sure though, that I have not

*Big Pigeon River*



passed it, unless there was no sign.

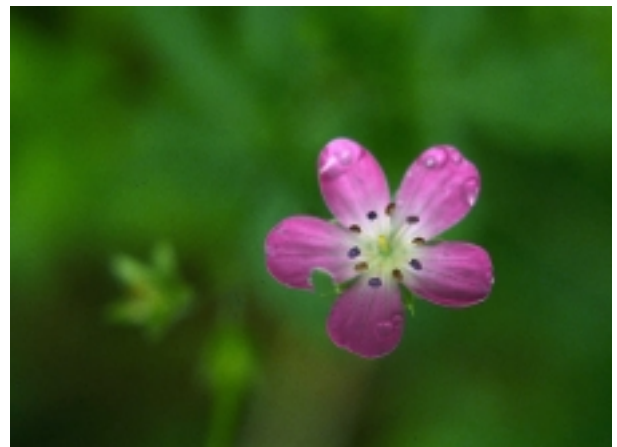


Nice cool temperature & partly sunny and breezy. Hiked since lunch with my t-shirt off – It was soaked. Feels pretty good. Had problems earlier with fogging glasses, but after I slowed up, the problem subsided. I was being super-hooshier for a while and hiking my ass off. Doing that is very tiring, but I did cover a lot of ground quickly. That's why I am sitting here by myself now.

I decided to leave a note and go on. I left one note and traveled down the trail a few yards when I came across a blue blazed trail. I followed the trail and found a shelter. I didn't know if it was Ground-



hog shelter or not. Went back up and changed the note, telling all to come down and join me at the shelter. Worked on a fire at the shelter



for a while then decided to yell for some unknown reason. Someone yelled back! They were finally here. They came down, we looked at the guidebook and found out Deep Gap shelter and Groundhog shelter are one-in-the-same. They were glad I had left the note.

I saw two land turtles today, a few salamanders, heard many birds, and saw a multitude of mushrooms of varying colours. At 6:00 it tried to

rain. Probably will rain later. It did - a little while later. Had chicken flavored noodles and mixed in cheese sauce, butter buds, and instant potatoes. We played fish and I managed to wipe out Bruce and Chuck a few times. The cards were falling just right for me. Went to bed thinking about the possibility of getting wet from water dripping from a leaky roof as it poured outside. Three weeks out today!

Sunday June 7, 1981

Thank God I and the rest are alive! What a night. About one thirty we all suddenly awoke, everyone screaming and thrashing about. I still had my flashlight in my hand from when I went to bed. I had begun to sleep with it nearby just in case I needed it during the night. The light shown all over in every direction almost like a strobe light as I tried to keep Chuck from beating me to death with his air pillow. I thought there was a bear outside or something, and the some of us thought that the killer was attacking. Fortunately that was not the case. We found out after the commotion subsided that Bruce claimed some relatively large "beast" dropped on his head and terrified him. He started the screaming, but Chuck couldn't stop. I noticed that Pat was scrambling her way under the shelter because she thought it was a rapist. I wonder what the poor critter that fell on Bruce thought when we made all that racket. It took a while, but everyone calmed down eventually, and had a good laugh. We decided that if this sort of thing happened again - say a mouse ran over your face, you would be obliged to yell "mouse on face!" or something like that so we all would know what was going on. We must have talked and laughed about it for ten minutes or more and then tried to get back to sleep. A few minutes later as I lie there waiting to fall asleep, I heard Charlie in a soft voice as he calmly said "mouse on face!" I don't really know if it was a joke, or if it had really paraded across his head. Eventually we fell asleep.

Then about four a.m. it almost happened again! Everyone heard something running thru the woods. Someone started to scream, but Bruce yelled, "let's not start that again!" We all calmed down and had a slight chuckle, but nothing like the laughter that followed the first incident.

The alarm went off at 7:00am, I got up and fixed oatmeal with jelly and spun honey, also a cup of hot cocoa. We only have to do about ten miles today, then twelve tomorrow to arrive in Hot Springs to get mail. We started out hiking together, but I pulled ahead as usual. I didn't want to be ahead so I waited for the rest to catch up and I positioned myself into the group at the rear. I knew I had to stay behind someone or else I would get too far ahead.

Nice trail today, sunny most of the time until the afternoon when it clouded up. Ate lunch along Max Patch Road, eating Pop-Tarts with spun honey. A Snickers candy bar was next. Charlie never caught up even though we were there for at least 45 minutes. The trail followed a gravel road for about four miles after that. Along the way we ran into a group of southerners getting ready to party. They gave a beer to Bruce and Chuck after they hinted that they didn't have any water. In the meantime, they told us that another person was murdered on the A.T. near where the others were killed. Said they had heard it on the news last night. The group decided we had to stick together all the time, and even thought about having guard shifts all night. The party group said they (the authorities) were trying to get the word out, and coax people not to hike until they caught the guy. We are headed toward the killer and at the same time he seems to be heading in our direction. We're getting guns and I may have my knife sent to me.

There is a mile climb from Lemon Gap, where the road walking stops, to the shelter. The trail



paralleled a nice babbling, cascading stream where we had to take water. Chuck and I walked back 1.2 mile to the stream because the spring at the shelter was supposedly stagnant. Ate some wild strawberries today! They were small, but tasted like strawberries. Not many ripe yet. Given a couple of days to a week, and wow! Strawberry City! I arrived at the shelter about 3:00 pm. Ate my seven minute wonder consisting of lasagna with a little oregano thrown in complements of Charlie's spice supply. We played fish for a while, then went to bed. We did not hold watches yet because we thought we were far enough away from where the killer might be. The one thing disturbing everyone was that there is a road 1.2 miles south of the shelter. Chuck and Bruce tended a fire until almost midnight, then all were in bed but not necessarily asleep. I drifted in and out of sleep, and my back was killing me in the morning for the last few hours. That 3/8 inch thick ensolite pad just is not enough padding. Bruce couldn't sleep either, but when it came time to get up at 5:30 am. I was the only one to get up and eat.

Monday June 8, 1981

Got up at 5:30 am, and had 3 packets of oatmeal. Maybe the last that I have – hope there is some at Hot Springs. It has been almost forty-five minutes since the alarm went off and still no one else is up. What a bunch of wimps! It happens every time: “What time do you want to get up?” “About .....” “OK”, but do they get up? Never once yet! It does give me time to write, but is frustrating having to sit around wondering when they will get up.

Almost twenty-four hours now and no rain to speak of. Pretty amazing! Hope it doesn't rain today either. That would be nice. Arriving in Hot Springs today, and will try to get the full scoop of these murderers so we can either quit or be prepared. It's terrible that a person can't even sleep at night being afraid someone may assault and kill you.

Now we're in Hot Springs after a day of fast downhill walking. There was some good uphill climbing, but the majority was downhill. It's five dollars per night to stay at the hostel, but you can stay for free if you work two hours. Received a package at the PO, but didn't get the envelope with my travelers checks. Got letters from Connie, Amy, and Linda Benz. Chuck treated me to a piece of pie that I ate with a pint of butter pecan ice cream I purchased. 95 cents for the ice cream. Bruce and Pat were given a free package of rations from the post master, but split it between themselves and Chuck. I guess someone did not pick it up and it had been sitting around the office for too long. I talked to Dad at work from a phone in The Hiker's Inn, and called Mom at home later from an old ladies house. I believe Cody Washer was her name. I may not eat anything else tonight. Did laundry and had a shower. Went with Chuck down to the Inn where Pat and Bruce spent the night for \$12. It was getting late so I left and walked back to the hostel, and went to bed.

Tuesday June 9, 1981

Got up about seven thirty, ate oatmeal, and prepared to work on the rock pile. Charlie and I were to work on the pile, moving rocks from one spot to another behind the monk's house, but we were first instructed to pull weeds, honeysuckle, etc off the hillside. I was supposed to work four hours to pay for my two nights, but ended up quitting about a half hour before. It was awfully hot, plus it was really boring work.

Had a spaghetti mug-o-lunch for lunch, after which I went to see if my money had come in. No it

hadn't. Decided to call Mom but forgot she wasn't going to be at work and ended up talking to my brother Carl instead. Later, I bought a few select groceries and then went to the Trail Café. I had a few dollars left and I ate a trail burger with everything (\$1.95) and two large pieces of pie for \$.55 each and topped it off with a scoop of butter pecan ice cream. That left me with about four dollars. Went back to the grocery store and bought a few more things – after all, what good is four dollars where we're going? Now only one dollar and ten cents left.

John Smart arrived at the hostel this afternoon and later in the afternoon he fixed Quiche and gave me some. MMMMM! Great stuff. (How to make? Pie shells browned. Eggs & milk, cheese, mushrooms, greens, 450 degree oven for approx 15 minutes, 350 degrees for another half hour.) I also went wading in a cold stream a little ways from the hostel. Later on after I had gone to bed, everyone else went to the abandoned Hot Springs and snuck in thru a hole in the roof. I lent Sandy my watch to get up.

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Wednesday June 10, 1981

Got awakened by Chuck about seven, so I got up, ate, and got ready to go to the PO to find out if my letter came. Of course, the post office was late opening, but after opening I found out my letter had not arrived. I called Mom and talked to her at home. She will try to wire me some bucks to Erwin while I have the letter forwarded to Elk Park. Went to the café with Charlie, and had plans of blowing the rest of my money on another piece of pie, but they didn't have any, so I didn't get anything. We all left at about 10 am, and the first five miles to Lanyard gap went very fast and was nice. After that point to the shelter it was extremely hot, but fortunately there was a nice breeze. We stopped at the firetower at Rich Mt. and I shot an 18 – 20 picture panoramic scan from the platform. (Unfortunately, it seems that somehow the roll of film shot between Hot Springs and Vandeventer shelter was lost either along the trail or in the mail) Arrived at our destination shelter about 4:11pm (Spring Mt. Shelter). Ate rice with tomato soup, and a cup of chocolate pudding. We put six people in a five man shelter with Charlie sleeping on the ground below. Another couple came afterwards and had to pitch a tent. Their first camping experience – of course it rained. The shelter roof developed a leak directly above me so I covered myself with plastic. It only leaked for a while, then quit. Charlie gave me a heated Pop-Tart this evening.

Thursday June 11, 1981

Bruce's alarm went off at 5:30, mine at 5:45 am, but we didn't get up until around seven or so. Grits with cinnamon, sugar and jelly was fairly good. Made it to Allen's gap fairly quickly and walked down the road a little while (.1m) to the state line gas station where we took a break, and I had a pint of butter pecan ice cream. Now I have 12 cents to my name. Talked to some folks at the station for a while and they said they lived about twenty minutes up the trail, and to stop when we arrived there. We found their trailer with their name on a sign, The Cutshall's, and shot the breeze with them for almost one and a half hours. Part of the conversation was about God, and they showed us the small chapel that they had built on their property. Another item discussed was the Plott dog breed. Plott dogs are bear hunting dogs and some purebreds sell for \$3000 each.

From the Cutshall's, I walked about three miles in about an hour to the Little Laurel shelter, and stopped to wait for the group. They had decided to stop at Little Laurel shelter instead of pushing on



to Jerry's cabin shelter only seven miles away. Then, the following day, travel 22 miles. I felt like I would rather walk the seven miles today and finish with thirteen tomorrow, but I also like to stay with the group. My need for company and security won out.

Along the trail I saw an Indian Pipe plant today.

Friday June 12, 1981

Got up at 5:30am – not quite light yet. For once, everyone else got up also, except Charlie. Charlie decided to not hike 22 miles with us today.

Well, we are not hiking 22 miles today either. We only went about 13 or fourteen. Rained when we first started this morning. I left before Chuck & Bruce and passed Pat a little ways up the trail. First we stopped at Jerry's Cabin shelter for a break before pushing on to Locust Ridge shelter. Only took me about two hours and 17 minutes to make it to Jerry's cabin seven miles away. Those miles are shorter than Georgia miles it seems, but we walked on jeep road for several miles. Road walking on dirt is very nice. Went a little overboard and had two snickers and two pop tarts today and also peanut buttered crackers. Sat and waited at Jerry's (a nice place) for the rest to show. At that point we had to decide whether to go on or not. We had decided against it, and just as we did it started to sprinkle, but it quit in a few minutes.

Somehow we decided to continue on to the next shelter. Waded through some tall plants today during the rain, and got my upper legs wet as well as my feet. Feet were not totally soaked though. Rained on and off all afternoon; however, not very hard at any time. Locust Ridge shelter was kind of grungy, but not a whole lot different than the rest. Got there about twelve forty-five. At two forty-one it is sunny, but thunder is heard in the distance. Will it ever make up it's mind? Locust Ridge was supposed to be in need of repair according to trail register notes at Jerry's Cabin shelter, but I believe they have already been done. Seems fairly watertight, and the top/roof of the outhouse is on, contrary to the notes. No door though, but a terrific view. Bruce and Chuck took showers again using the springwater. Had a Lipton noodle dinner – beef flavor for dinner. Everyone slept a bit in the afternoon except me because I have been having problems sleeping at night, and especially in the morning due to back pains, so I did not sleep in the afternoon. Slept fairly well that night until awakened by some sort of growling noise outside of the shelter around two a.m. or so. Then later a dog woke us up, and scared us by dragging part of a chain he had broken loose from, resulting in rustling noises as it passed amongst the leaves.

Saturday June 13, 1981

Got up by alarm at 5:30 am, expecting to do another fifteen mile day, but everyone said let us sleep another hour. I did, but then still no one got up for about another half hour. No one really felt like hiking so we decided to hike one and a half miles to Devils Fork Gap to US 23? then from that point hitch or walk to Erwin, Tennessee. Hitching proved difficult, so we walked on the road for several miles. Along the way we saw a man plowing a field using an old time plow drawn with a horse. Eventually, we got picked up by a guy in a black pickup truck, and Bruce talked him into taking us to the Erwin post office. We arrived there in time for Pat to get her packages. I called Mom, but my brother, Jay, was the only one home. He told me my money (\$100) was at Erwin National Bank and all I had to do was pick it up. I went to the bank and found out that it was closed on Saturdays. What

a disappointment. Now I'll have to borrow from Chuck.

We walked across the street to a joint called "Bantams" to have dinner (lunch). I got out my trail food to eat while everyone else got real food by order. Talked to a couple next to our table who were from Michigan, I believe, and began talking about the trail. I told them I was eating the trail food because I ran out of money and my bad luck of banks being closed on Saturdays. The rest of the gang received their food, and I began eating just as the couple started to leave. Out of the blue and totally unexpected, the lady handed me some money and said "have a hamburger on us". Great! How nice of those folks. Three dollars she gave me. I bought a hamburger and fries, and still had a dollar left! Packed up and went in search of a motel in town to stay. Apparently there were only two. Just as we arrived at Morgan's Motel, there was the Australian hiker about to inquire about a room. Chuck and I had met him at Fontana. He was trying to get a room also, but no one would answer the door. Finally an old lady hobbled to the door and said there were no rooms. We knew that there were rooms, but have heard that they don't like hikers for some reason and would not give us a room. Piss on 'em!

Went by hitch to Nolicucky Expeditions and was welcomed warmly by Mike, the cook. \$4 a night and about \$2.50 per meal (supper). After getting settled in, Chuck and I went back into town, taken by another Nolicucky employee, Clarence, in a truck. Got groceries and washed a load of laundry. Before returning to Nolicucky, we stopped in a bar on Union Street near the PO while Chuck had a few beers and I a coke. Took us a while to get a hitch from there but by using the pleading technique, Chuck got us a ride which took us right there, totally out of his way. Part of the deal was that we had to wait to eat supper with the guides. A minor inconvenience, but we had spinach lasagna, baked potatoes, bread, salad, and a slice of watermelon. Stuffed myself! Plenty of food for \$2.50. So much that I layed around the rest of the evening 'cause I was so full. Slept in a bunk with a mattress tonight. Failed to call Mom back this evening.



Sunday June 14, 1981

I woke up this morning, and even with mattress, I had a backache. It's really getting me down. I feel good the rest of the day, but terrible early in the morning. Almost like a nerve being pinched maybe. Ate grits and passed up a real deal on pancakes, bacon & juice for \$1.50. I'm kind of sorry I hadn't chosen to eat, but it's because of the money situation. Plan on going to town, call Mom and discuss the back problem. I don't want to quit, but I don't want to permanently damage my back either. I hate being bugged in my sleep as I have been.

Turns out there was a fairly large stack of pancakes left over after everyone was done. They were going to throw them to the dogs, but I spoke up and got a free breakfast of nut pancakes & syrup – good! Went to town again, not much open. Chuck visited the VFW and bought some beer again. I don't know how he can spend so much money on beer!

For dinner I had chili, corn on the cob, salad, and great blueberry cake with cool whip. Delicious!



Monday June 15, 1981

Got up to eat breakfast, and noticed I still had a little back problem. Had hash browns, cheese omlet, and OJ. We waited for the bus to go part way into town. Chuck, Charlie, and I went in again. Chuck convinced us to stop at the Elms Restaurant so he could take a whiz, but he ended up ordering breakfast too. I told the waitress I didn't want anything because I had no money, but she told me to order anyway. I got a free order of biscuits and a glass of milk. Very nice gesture. While we were sitting there, she told us the authorities had captured the killers of the two people. (This was not exactly true, but in fact a note had been discovered that lead to the identification of the killer as Randall Lee Smith. The incriminating note was found in his abandoned pickup truck in Myrtle Beach South Carolina on June 11, 1981. He was still at large, but now we were somewhat relieved since we thought he had been caught)

A new idea had entered into my brain – we went to the shopping center where White's supermarket was located and I bought some tape, string and rings to make a hammock. If I could not find a hammock, I was going to make one. We also stopped at the bank, and I reimbursed Chuck for what I had borrowed after I got my \$100. We had lunch at the local Pizza Hut, where I consumed a great amount of food at their lunch buffet. Later we stopped at BJ's for a beer for Chuck, and while drinking, played a pinball game that was like the 10 cent money winning game I had seen back in Albers, Illinois at the Diamond. Chuck won 8 games (80 cent equivalent), but used them up. Upon leaving for Nolichucky, we walked for a while, found some shade and started hitching. A cab slowed to stop and we thought he was going to ask us to get in and pay, but he asked us where the AT was because the two people in the car behind him were headed there. We approached the car behind and told the two people that if they took us along we could show them right where to park and everything. They took us directly there. (Apparently, knowledge about the A.T. was not common during this era -even in a trail side town.)

Had so much to eat at Pizza Hut while we waited for our laundry that I didn't even eat supper except for 2 slices of summer sausage. Paid for my room tonight and took a shower. While at the post office this afternoon, I sent a package home, and a letter to Constance that covered three days. During much of the afternoon, I began to construct the hammock, but the string was not strong enough and broke upon my first attempt at lounging. I found myself sprawled out on the ground, and just had to laugh. Guess I'll just have to rough it. All in all I spent about \$34 at Erwin. Really quite a lot, but it was fun and good food. Got a coke from John Smart. Bruce and Pat decided to move on today to the next shelter just up the trail a bit. I probably should have gone too. It would have saved me some money, but the draw of another night of sleep on a mattress was very inviting. But in reality, three days in a town is just too long if you want to get to Maine.

Tuesday June 16, 1981

Finally had a decent night of sleep, but awoke sometime during the night to the sound of clanking bottles and a person fumbling around nearby. Quickly fell back asleep though. A night without back pains! Enjoyable.

Had grits with blackberries and all the rest of the normal things. Was up at 5:30 am, but couldn't get Chuck going. Started hiking in cool temperatures at 6:10 heading for the first shelter where Bruce,

Pat, plus Bill & Jean from NJ were at. The trail from Nolichucky to the shelter had several blow downs and was like an obstacle course. Made it to the shelter in about an hour or more and all were in bed or just getting up. I waited around and left with them later, just as Chuck was arriving. He took a break at the shelter.

Headed for "Beauty Spot" for "lunch", but stopped at Indian Grave Gap for a break. Chuck caught up to us at Beauty Spot. I took a couple of pictures at this spot. Decided to move on because the mountain looked steep, but still was able to make about 3 miles in 1 hour and 10 minutes. I then took a relaxing break near the benchmark in a pine forest on Unaka Mountain. Pushed on to the shelter and got there in about 1 hour. Cherry Gap shelter was the place. I arrived around 3:00 with about 15 or 16 miles for the day. Looks like a nice shelter. Today as I hiked, there were thousands of grasshoppers jumping out of the way with every step I took - to avoid getting stepped on. It was a hot day, but enjoyed the nice break with good views on Beauty Spot.

Rice with onion soup tonight and vanilla pudding . Didn't need anything more than that after all the food I ate in Erwin. Chuck talked about eating a large dinner, but was having a lot of gas and belching like my brother Carl sometimes does, and didn't even finish his first main dish. Bruce and Pat fixed some beans they just got in the Hot Springs freebee care package. A campfire was hard to get started, there was hardly any wind. Pat was pissed about how I always take up space when I choose a spot to sit. I said I was there first and could sit anywhere I please then flipped her off. She bugs me at times. Started off as a nice clear night with the full moon rising.

Wednesday June 17, 1981

Rained a little in the early morning before we woke up. I was awake at 5:30 am, and as usual, no one but me managed to get up. It was still foggy and dark at that time. Waited 'till 6:40 to leave; when it was light enough. I arrived at Iron Mountain Gap in about an hour. but kept going and ran into a group of four campers eating breakfast in the middle of the trail. They offered me an English muffin with peanut butter, raisins, and honey. I accepted of course. MMM pretty good. I needed that. Met three other hikers (from VA) just at the turn off to Clyde Smith Shelter. Always curious to see the shelters, I checked it out, read the register, and had some gorp before moving on to eat lunch at Hugh's Gap. This would leave a climb to Roan Mt. for the afternoon.

I arrived at Hugh's Gap at about 11:05, and ate Summer sausage, PB, Pop-Tarts, and later a Snickers. Stocked up on water from down the road about 200 steps. I took off my boots, socks, and shirt to allow them to air out a bit, and had a nice pleasant break before: Dick-in-the-face! - A great uphill climb. Well, it is only about 3 miles till camp from Hugh's Gap, and all afternoon to do it in. Bruce came up with the term "Dick in the Face" to refer to any steep climb, I guess with the idea that it was "straight up" and long. Would have had spectacular views just up (south) of Hugh's Gap, but the sky was too cloudy or foggy. It looked like shear drop offs, but with the fog we could not tell how far down it really was.

Concluding my long lunch break, I started off again about 12:45pm, after almost two hours of not hiking. Made it to the top of Beartown Mt. the first section of uphill. What a climb! Then a gap and then another GOOD climb. Finally made it to the top where there was a parking lot, water fountain and a few campsites. I believe the place was called "Cloudland". Apparently one could drive a vehicle up to the top of the mountain. I snapped off a few pictures, and then thought I might look hot

enough for someone in their RV to give me a coke or something. No such luck. Later, a man named Fred Lester, from VA gave me the Roan Knob shelter register he had picked up and accidentally carried away. I talked with him for a while and he said the murderer had been identified and the chase was on. (It had only taken a week to get information about the murderer that was actually true.) A buddy of his gave me two nice, fresh, cold bananas that tasted terrific! How nice. Walked on down to Roan Knob shelter to return the register, left my stuff there and went back to Cloudland to see if the rest of the group had arrived. They had not; however, Bill and Jean just showed up and said they hadn't seen them. I don't know what happened to them. It's seven o'clock now and they still haven't arrived. Had rice with cream of chicken soup (instant) good, but not too filling; ate 2 Pop-Tarts and the rest of one of my strawberry fruit leathers left from lunch. I convinced Bill and Jean to stay the night. Now I don't have to be here by myself. It's about 12 miles to the road which leads into Elk Park. I think I'll walk with them tomorrow. They are very nice.

Thursday June 18, 1981

Woke up at 5:30 to have an early start and get into Elk Park early. After descending from the shelter down Roan or Cloudland (whichever, if they are not the same) reached Carver's Gap and began the traverse over several balds. Very nice walking on the balds. Made good time until I met a couple camped directly on the trail, more or less blocking the way up the mountain. They asked me if I was going to hike up Grassy Bald. I thought it was mentioned in the guide, but actually the trail skirted around it. He let me go on up and I noticed a shortage of white blazes, actually a total lack of them. After reaching the summit and descending a while, I stopped to read the guidebook as I began to think this was not the correct trail. After reading, I decided this wasn't the trail. I walked back down and he said he was sorry. The trail actually turned off to the left, right at their campsite. A very ambiguous turn – no double blaze that I saw to indicate a turn. I started booking (hiking fast) once again, and went thru some tall weeds that were wet. My feet got soaked even though I had gaiters on. The moisture wicked right down my socks. Hiked up Yellow Mountain and met two people we had run into at Nolichucky from Pennsylvania. – the ATC life member, and his son. Harry F. Hart R.D.1 Box 210 Hummelstown, PA 17036. Curator of Raush Gap Shelter. They were on their way to Nolichucky, hiking southbound. I also met four other day-hikers after Hump Mountain. Had a Pop-Tart on top of Hump, but the summit provided no views, being all fog shrouded.

Most of the trail today was down hill, but the uphill parts on Yellow Mountain and Hump Mountain were tough. Reached highway 19E between 12:30 – 1:00pm I believe. I walked down the road to a small store where I had a soda (Spring Wine?) and a pint of Butter Pecan ice cream. From there I hiked into the town of Elk Park, and immediately went about to find the PO, where I picked up a package and a letter from the Kamphoeffner's, including one sent by their daughter Janice. No forwarded package though. Like a kid at Christmas, I sat outside and opened my stuff. Just as I was getting ready to leave, I turn and see Chuck walking toward the PO, and just beyond, Bruce and Pat in a pickup! What a coincidence. Chuck had to check to see if there was a package for him. There wasn't. I hopped into the truck with the rest as the driver, Scotty, took us to Roan Mountain State Park camp area to spend the night. Cost us \$4.77 for two tents – one site. Nice and cheap per person rate. Scotty was to come by in the morning and drive us the 10 or so miles back to the trail. Chuck and I have to go back to the PO in the morning to see if we received anything. (I am still expecting the original shipment of money sent by Mom and then forwarded once it arrived in Hot Springs) We enjoyed a swim for \$1.35 each at a nearby pool, and ate spaghetti, a salad, and a hot fudge sundae desert for \$4.46 each. Bland spaghetti sauce, desert was good, but not enough for the price. Sat around and wrote Connie a letter in the evening, just after 9:00 pm. Tried to call Carl also – no



answer. Slept in Chuck's little 2 man Gimme-Shelter.

Friday June 19, 1981

Up at 6:30. Woke up with a sore hip. Must have laid incorrectly, I suppose. We have to be at the park entrance at 8:00 am to be picked up by Scotty. Grits again. Our ride took us all the way to the PO, and my letter is in! Yahoo! Now I have bucks galore and the two lost letters from Constance. Chuck's package wasn't in, but he talked to his mom and found out she had sent it to Erwin, behind us. Pat and Bruce walked on down the trail. Chuck called the Erwin PO and arranged for the package to be sent to Elk Park (Hampton?) by tomorrow morning. I am going to stay here with Chuck, and looking at the map, we can go to Hampton by US 19e and get a little bit ahead of Bruce tomorrow. Chuck keeps buying beer! I bought some groceries. Chuck owes me \$2.00 for bread and peanut butter. While hanging around, we talked with a guy & gal in a van and they gave Chuck a beer, and offered me one. They gave us a ride a mile down the road to the Times Square Inn. Ate lunch there of a huge hamburger with everything including a thin slice of ham and something like a chilly sauce on it, plus a "coconut cream pie" for desert. Not too bad for frozen pie. After lunch, I was attempting to call Kamphoeffner's and mistakenly called my uncle Delray. Talked to him for a while and then talked to Janis for a while after dialing the right number. Both seemed happy to hear from me. We walked back to the PO and asked if they could think of anywhere we might pitch our tent for the night. The lady suggested the Methodist church where other hikers have been known to camp. We started up that way 'till we saw a Shell gas station with 16 oz cokes for 15 cents - What a deal. Later went up to the church and established ourselves. I believe I will write another letter to Connie and one to Amy. Now Chuck owes me \$4.00 "cause I bet him we were going a certain way on the road tomorrow and I disagreed, I won the bet. He said he would pay on installments. He's mad now 'cause the flies are bugging him. While lounging around, we talked about many things, one of them being my girlfriend, Constance. I showed him the letters I had received from her that mentioned how she would she was always there for me and that she would do anything for me. I missed her, and her writing this made those feelings even stronger. I thought about calling it quits and returning to be with her.

Saturday June 20, 1981

I had a pretty nice sleep last night on the lawn of the church even though many cars go past during the night. Later this morning we found out from a Gomer named Gary that a light was put up in that area because everyone used to go parking there forcing the sheriff to continually have to run up there to break 'em up. Tried something new this morning: grits and oatmeal mixed for breakfast. The tent was quite damp from condensation by the time we got up this morning.

We got everything packed up and went down to 19E and started hitching. A pickup stopped right away but wasn't going far enough. Got a ride from a couple of good ol' boys in an old Comet all the way to the town of Roan. After that we secured a ride in a black pickup with a driver who had the honking fits. He honked at everything and everybody. He drove us into Hampton. We got to the post office just a few minutes too late, but it opened again at 12:00. Tried to call Jim Triplett twice this morning. I figured he was with his folks in Iowa for Father's Day or something. Consumed a hamburger at Lou and Terrisa's diner, and bought a dozen eggs and a hunk of cheese at a nearby grocery store. Now, just sitting around waiting for the PO to open. Obviously the joint is open now. Chuck sent home some surveys that had something to do with his being a stringer for the newspaper, and I

sent off a letter to Jim.

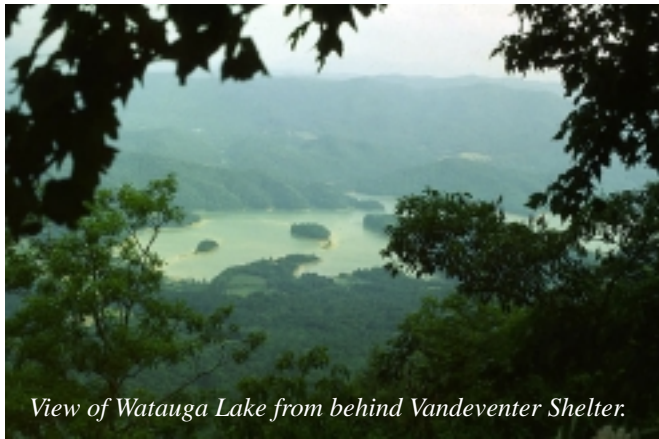
We walked down 321 near Watuga lake, and were resting at the gas station when a red car flew past and we hear someone yell "Chuck!" The vehicle turned around and came back. Inside were Pat and Bruce. They were getting a tour of the area from the driver and said they would come back in a few minutes. It's amazing how we keep getting together each time after being split up. They had hitched a little themselves, and said the relocation just out of Elk Park was a bitch! The guy in the gas/grocery store noticed we were "thruhikers" and asked us if we knew anything about Warren Doyle. We knew he was a record setting ex-marine out to set the record again, but had never met him. Apparently he had left a package there and he was at least a week late in picking it up. We didn't know what happened to him, but the guy should have given us the package since any record setter would have been on time and if after a week he had not shown up, you can pretty much figure he was not coming. Bruce and Pat came back and we hiked to the beach area along the trail. I found a wallet with six dollars, only one ID, and several pictures and passes (faculty?). I gave it to a ranger and told him my address to send the money in case no one claimed the wallet. (I really wanted to keep the money, and figured the ranger would keep it himself, but my conscience told me to turn it in. I never received a thank you, so I figured my original thought about the ranger was correct.) Everyone went for a swim 'cept me. I ate the endings of the granola clusters that Mom had sent me. We walked a couple of miles to the next shelter and fixed supper. Had rice with cream of chicken soup. I also tried to make an omelet with my eggs and cheese. It stuck to the pan and turned out to be scrambled eggs and cheese with summer sausage, but not bad though. Rained this evening pretty good for a while then slacked off. Saw several whitish Indian pipe type plants. Stayed tonight at the brand new Watauga shelter.

Sunday June 21, 1981

Woke up with a little pain in the back. Wish I could just try a hammock to see if it would work. Tried to get Chuck up because he had mentioned that he wanted to write in his journal. Failed again. I knew he couldn't get up. I fixed a very enjoyable breakfast of two fried eggs, grits and oatmeal, and Pop-Tarts. I fried the eggs in the lid of my cook kit. The second egg turned out much better – it had boiling water underneath it first. In a way I sort of double boiled it. I did not have any salt, but they were still good. I used a little "butter" as grease (must have borrowed it from someone). I am left with seven eggs and a good size hunk of cheese for the road. I'm trying to eat most of the food in my pack to make it lighter. No one seems to know where they want to go tonight, or is very active at all.



Chuck wants to go back to the beach and bum some free food or beer. Finally decided to move on. Just before the dam, I spotted some ripe raspberries! Picked a bunch to save to eat with supper. Made it over the first little half mile D.I.T. Face after the dam crossed Watauga lake road. Everyone felt hot, so we decided to drop down to the lake and take a swim, then later move on to the next shelter – Vandeventer - 4.5 or so miles from where we were. Descended down a steep hill to the lake, realizing we would have



*View of Watauga Lake from behind Vandeventer Shelter.*

to go up it later. Washed my hair and took a little dip. While lounging around I began reading "Interview with the Vampire", a paperback that one of the other hikers had finished reading. Had lunch of Pop-Tarts, Snickers, crackers, cheese and summer sausage. Finally hit the trail between 1:30 and 2:00 pm and ran into a terrible overgrowth of raspberries and nettles. Not more than a couple of miles before the shelter I found Bill sitting on the trail waiting for Jean to come back with

water from a spring down the blue blaze trail .3 miles. Nice cold clear water, but very long and difficult to get to and back.

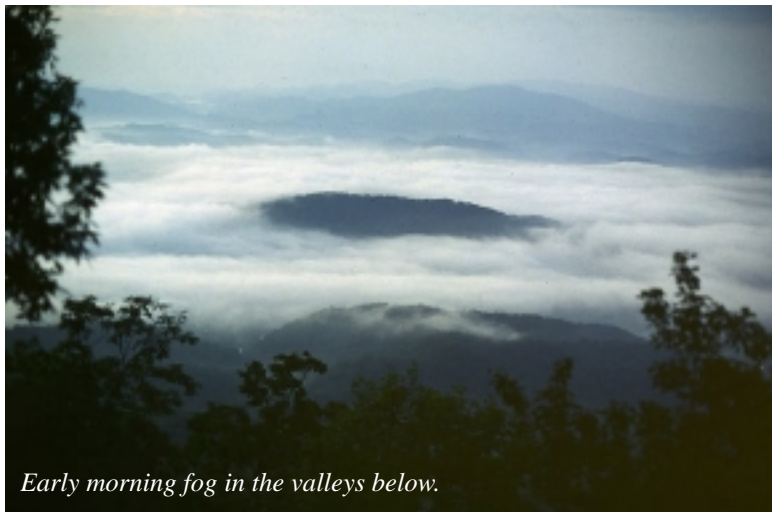
At the shelter we were treated to terrific views of Watauga Lake and a little town next to it from behind the shelter. I noticed there are very many different kinds of fungi on the trail today. I am fascinated by all the different colors and styles.



*Blooming Rhododendron bush.*

Dinner tonight complements of Chuck's foodbag -via freebee care package (Warren Doyle's food?). Some unknown seven minute wonder type freeze dried meal. After we mixed macaroni, rice, butter, cheese flavoring, & chicken flavoring it was really good, but there was so much of it Chuck had to boil water a second time to finish off the package. Straight, or the mixture, either way it was very good. Desert of chocolate pudding also compliments of Chuck. Later, I ate the cup of berries I had picked earlier. MMM! What a treat. I think everyone is trying to feed me so I have to give them some of my summer sausage. They want me to find out how much it will cost to get them a stick. Later in the evening, I sat on the "veranda" (overlooking rock behind shelter) and drank in the view below. As it became dark, the lights of the

town started popping out and appeared very beautiful. Decided to go 15 miles to the next shelter tomorrow - unless the Eastman Tennessee S& M club hasn't cleared the trail again, and if that is true then Chuck and Bruce may hitch at Tenn 91.



*Early morning fog in the valleys below.*

Monday June 22, 1981

Woke several times during the night due to the heat. Had to keep covered though or mosquitoes would keep me up as they fly by my ears. Next time



I'll use some bug repellent and see how that works. Got up between 5:30 & 6:00 am and got everything ready for breakfast, but am holding off to let people sleep. The SVEA 123 stove can make quite a noise. Unfortunately, the sunrise to the east is too much in the trees so I can't really see it. Too bad. Made two eggs, oatmeal and grits, and Pop-Tarts once again. My egg preparation is getting better every day. The rest might hitch to Damascus, so I'm going to travel with Bill and Jean. I found out that their pace is equal or better than mine. Made it to Iron Mountain shelter in a couple of hours – moving very fast. Ate a little and then pushed on to Double Springs shelter, arrived there within a couple of hours, and sat there from about 3:15 – 4:00 pm, when a guy and a young girl came in from the north. Talked to them a little then decided to go down near highway 421 and look for a spot to camp out. This brought our mileage to about 18 for the day! Now I don't have to go so far to Damascus tomorrow. I cruised the last 3.5 miles in one hour and three minute! I think these miles are short. We were moving fast, but...? Bill and Jean sure are nice.

Tuesday June 23, 1981

Not a bad sleep in the tent which I pitched in the middle of the trail. I believe it rained last night a little.

Only one spot of the floor was damp and that was because there is a slash in my ground cloth. Eggs & grits to start the day. Pulled out of camp at about 7:15 am and made very good time. Saw the Nick Grindstaff monument – buried with his dog. The dog that was protecting his dead body when the locals found him. He died around 1923, a hermit, 'cause when he was in California his money was ripped off. So he came back and lived in the mountains as a hermit.

Had two breaks during the hike at about 5m and 10 miles. I crossed into Virginia at 11:34 am and proceeded to Damascus. Good trail today – mostly level with ups and downs. Went directly to the PO and got a package from Mom with banana chips, fruit leather, M & M's, and letters. Thanks Mom!



*My room at "The Place" in Damascus, Va.*



*Bill and Jean at our campsite near rt 421.*

From the PO I proceeded to the hostel, known as "The Place", where we are staying for a small donation of \$1.50 per night. Pat, Bruce, and Chuck were at the hostel when we arrived. Of course they had hitched from Highway 91. The Place is a real nice place – no stove however, but refrigerator, shower, and restrooms. It is right in town behind the Methodist church. Bought a half gallon of \$1.24 fudge swirl ice cream, 2 liter bottle of Dr. Pepper, milk & cereal, and cheese to eat the next day. Received some free

watermelon from a man who frequents the hostel. I mentioned that I was looking for a hammock, and a few hours later he came back and gave me an inexpensive hammock he had found or purchased somewhere.

At “The Gateway” restaurant, I had the special of hamburger casserole and 2 rolls, apple sauce, potato salad, and corn for \$2.50 The casserole was a bit cold. Chuck gave blood at the blood drive at the church. He also worked the after-noon cleaning a cemetery for \$20. Joel was also at the hostel and fried and barbecued chicken late this evening. I used my great detective skills to find out through the telephone operator the phone number for the Field’s in Hannibal, Mo. Got it and called person to person collect and Connie happened to be there. Had a nice chat with her for about 11 minutes during which she wished me “Happy Anniversary” - 2 years as of this month. She asked me about my beard, and I asked her where she had sent letters, etc. Afterwards I called Mom and rapped for too long. She told me that Dad’s Summer sausage sold for \$5-7 a lb. That seems ridiculous! I supposedly have about \$755 dollars left in my bank account. I don’t really know whether any of it has to go for anything else or not, but I hope I can use it all for the trip. Sat around and talked to Joel for a while late this evening when a fellow from England came in. Then we all talked for a while until about 11:30 pm when I decided I should hit the mattress. I hoped I would have a good night’s sleep and be able to sleep in a little longer in the morning.



*The view of the Methodist Church from out my window on the second floor of The Place.*

Wednesday June 24, 1981

I woke up after seven in the morning following a pretty good night’s sleep. Around 7-8 hours! Amazing. I consumed two huge bowls of frosted flakes (generic) for breakfast. Abided to mother nature’s rule after eating such an amount, and a little later began to clean out my pack. I threw away all the letters I had received. Hated to do it, but what will I ever do with them and they are extra weight (Now, as I write these memoirs, I wish that I had them, and some of the letters that I had written to others). I am leaving my belt, sweat shirt, and the ball of twine and wooden rings for the hammock which collapsed.

More hikers came in today. I bought some Pop-Tarts, jelly, peanut butter, oregano, bread etc. (things for lunch and breakfast) and took the remaining three eggs from about four days ago, two slices of American cheese, and with a non-stick pan & spatula from Bill and Jean, I cooked up an omelet. Worked out almost perfectly. How talented a chef I am now. With this hunger, and time to think, I have lately been thinking about becoming a chef when I am through with hiking.

Later this afternoon we decided to have a cookout, and bought chicken, hotdogs, bar-B-Q sauce, and potato chips. I was chef and grilled the birds and dogs. Wrote six post cards and also called collect to my college roommate, James Triplett, and talked for 10-15 minutes. He’s working the summer at bumper to bumper again and still hasn’t sold his cycle. I told him I’d buy it if he still had it when I got back. Two real freaky looking dudes came strolling in after a several month long stay at Virginia Beach. Nice guys though. Ate a lot today, but had to get rid of a few of my food items so that extra weight doesn’t accumulate too much. I have once again another 3 lb. bag of gorp. I think I’m pretty

well set as long as I can manage to carry my pack now. Shouldn't really be that heavy though - remembered that I also threw out my white (now grey and dirty) Shawnee Mountaineers t-shirt. Read part of Rice's Vamp book this afternoon. Would like to hurry and finish the book to get rid of the weight. (I am surprised I was that interested in reading considering my history as pretty much a non-reader most of my life, but I must confess, the book was interesting)

Thursday June 25, 1981

Awakened by alarm at 6:00 am. Felt a little sore in the back, but not too bad. No one else stirring yet. Got up and ate frosted flakes for breakfast - 3 or 4 large bowls full actually. Still a little left, plus some milk too. I'll drink most of the milk before I leave. Packed the rest of my things this morning and am now waiting for eight o'clock, which is when the PO opens. Have to send the post cards I have written, but one I need a zip code for - Alhambra of all places. Quite cool and almost a bit nippy this morning. Looks like a fine day though. Got to the PO a little before it opened and talked to a couple older guys. I asked about rain - one said 40% chance for tomorrow. After the office opened, I looked up the zip code, sent the post cards and letter for Bill, and headed back to the hostel.

Bill and Jean were getting ready to go, and when they did, I went also. They stopped and purchased donuts and milk at a small grocery. We headed down the road, the start of a beautiful, hot day. Laurel Creek was very nice. I hiked parts of the trail by myself today - ahead of Bill and Jean. Along the way I stopped for a break by the creek, and also at a nice little pond full of bullfrogs. I set up my hammock there and ate a little lunch. Just as I was getting ready to leave, Bill and Jean arrived and I ate again. We headed off together thinking of stopping after about 14 miles near a small stream for water. When we arrived at the spot we decided to go farther to another campsite, but right in the middle ...caboom! Thunderstorm! Got soaked to the bone. We kept hiking until we had put in about 17 miles, or right where the AT crosses US 58. Quickly set up camp in the rain and sat it out. It finally quit raining in about an hour or 1.5 hours, after which I ate a cold dinner consisting of peanut butter and jelly on bread, and almost all the German bar mix Mom sent. Nothing else to do so I read about the vampire, hoping to get farther on and possibly finish it so I can get rid of it. I think I'll have a little pudding and that will conclude my supper.

I Just remembered the grouse along the trail that strutted and hissed with his tail spread as we walked by. Also earlier I heard a large group of crows cawing, maybe mobbing something. What a racket!

June 26, Friday 1981

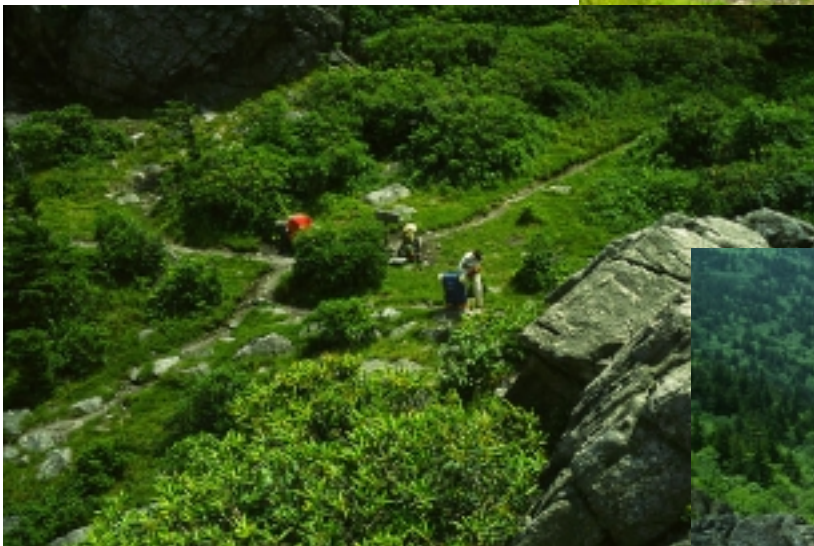
Slept fairly well last night and surprisingly didn't get wet either. Since we had put the tents up in the rain, we did it quite rapidly, and I forgot to put my ground cloth down. Therefore, I just folded it to the size of my bed and put it inside. Tent only leaked a few small puddles. Looked a little bit like rain





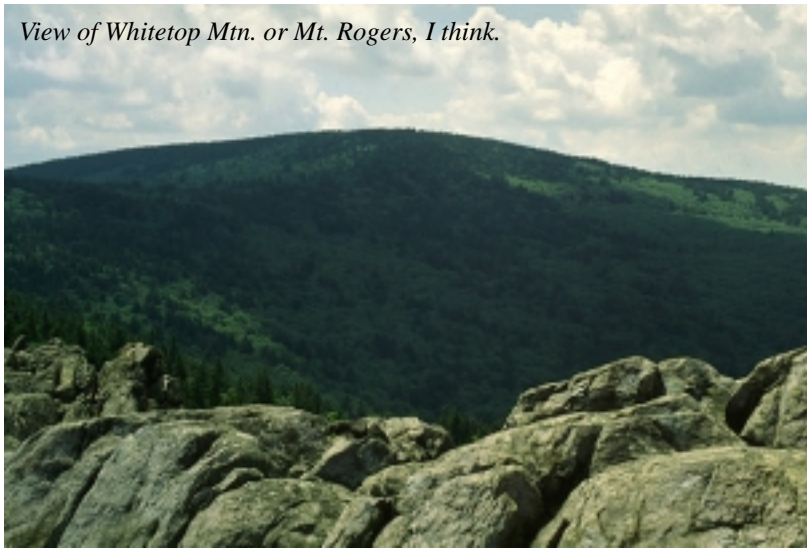


about the time we got up(6:00?), but later it got very nice and sunny. The climb up White Mt. was long, and I seemed to have a lack of energy. The trail was rocky and the switchbacks were very, very long, but it all became worth it when we got to Buzzard Rocks where I took some panoramic view (roll15) photos. Ate lunch and enjoyed the view for an hour and a half. Too long a lunch for the distance we wanted to go today (22m). Travel seemed to be slow, I think because of the rocks. My Achilles tendon began suffering slightly today and yesterday. I spotted a fawn in the woods just off the trail, it ran just a few yards then turned around and looked at us. We watched it for a while. No mother to be seen. Later on at Rhododendron Gap we saw and photographed a doe. Took a couple of shots of Bill and Jean and moved on. Saw



*Rhododendron Gap area with Bill and Jean.*

*View of Whitetop Mtn. or Mt. Rogers, I think.*



three other people at the gap. For part of the afternoon, we walked through cow and horse pastures and over beautiful rocky balds. Nice, but rough on the feet. When we crossed a nice stream later in the afternoon, we were so tired, we decided to pitch camp. About 15.5 miles for the day I believe. Very tiring walking today.

Camped directly between two small streams and went to bed listening to the sounds of the streams, with cows mooing in the distance.



Saturday June 27, 1981 (6th week today)

Nice night's sleep, but very chilly when I awoke at 5:30 am. Consequently, I laid around in the bag (Northface's Cat's Meow) for a while, then got up and fixed breakfast in my tent. My tent was just a cheap pup tent that I bought for about \$19.95. The stove warmed it up a little. The temperature is about 46 degrees F! Hope it gets a little warmer since I left my sweatshirt at the hostel because it was generally warm enough, and I hadn't used it for a few weeks. I had not learned about the wonders of wool sweaters at this point, and just like the white gym socks, I carried a cotton sweatshirt for additional warmth.

Traditional breakfast today. I can hear cows in the background as I sit eating my gruel. As the sun came up the temperature rose within an hour to 56 degrees. We saw a guy pass by before we started. He didn't see us because we were off the trail. I left Bill and Jean because I was ready and trucked off at a fast pace. Almost immediately after leaving I jumped two deer. After hiking a couple of miles, I caught up with the mysterious hiker who had passed us by earlier, Peter Hsia. I decided to walk with him for a while. We walked along and talked. The conversation eventually came upon the topic of where we went to school. Him at Harvard, me at SIU. He said he knew someone at Southern Illinois University majoring in Aviation and I asked who that was. The name he gave me was Ted Trimble! I told Peter that in the dorm where I lived, he was just a door down from me! Real

Amazing! We talked about Ted for a while, including his fascination with building clay model characters. I took a couple breaks, and ate lunch around 2:20 – 3:20 pm at Comer's Creek, and then pushed on. At a trailside register, I found Bruce, Pat, and Chuck's names where they had signed in. They are apparently about 17 miles ahead. They hitched out of Damascus and jumped ahead of me. I'll have to catch them somehow. I have decided to try to hike an old route of the AT beginning at a particular spot coming up in order to bypass the site of the murder, one of the Wapiti shelters, which would also save me about 17 miles. I have a feeling I may be alone in the next few days – especially if I take the cut. Peter was going to stick to the current route.

Rice & onion soup for super. I stayed at Trimpi shelter at the conclusion of 20 miles for the day. The gravel floor was nice, particularly after I dug a little indentation for my rear – felt pretty good.

Sunday June 28, 1981

Woke up around six-ish and made oatmeal & grits, and topped it off with two Pop-Tarts. I took off with Peter. We took only one break, and then pushed on to VA 16 and the visitor's center there. Saw one deer this morning and were "sort of" chased by a few cows in a pasture as we hiked across it. I talked to the attendant at the center who told us about a new relocation, and also an update about Pat, Bruce, and Chuck. Apparently Pat had hitched there from a road near Raccoon Branch shelter, and although Bruce and Chuck showed up later, the three couldn't make up their minds whether to hitch or hike on. While at the visitor's center for lunch, Peter ran down the road a mile or so and picked up a few groceries. He also brought back a half gallon of vanilla ice cream. We all split it.

We talked to three locals just before ascending Glade Mountain. They offered us a beer, which some took, but not me.

Now, as I am here at Glade Mountain lean to, I see there is no entry in the register for them. I assume; therefore, that they are hitching. An earlier note from Chuck said they would be in Pearisburg soon and they would leave a note for me there. I decided to spend the night at Glade Mt. Shelter which has a nice little stream in front, and an outhouse located nearby that even has toilet paper. A respectable 17 miles for the day. Had planned on going 4 more miles to US 11, but didn't think we would find a good place to camp. I plan on eating breakfast at the Village Truck Stop tomorrow morning, where we were planning to go today and maybe eat lunch.

I didn't eat much for dinner this evening, just the rest of the grape-nuts in my gorp, and a grilled cheese sandwich. For dessert I whipped up a French vanilla pudding. During part of the evening we were entertained/annoyed by a stray dog that kept hovering around and polluting the air with noxious silent-but-deadly farts. Everyone kept blaming the others until finally we figured out the real truth - it was the dog!

June 29, Monday 1981

Got up early -5:30 am. Got everything ready, ate only one Pop - Tart, and walked four miles to the Village Truck Stop restaurant. There I ate 3 pancakes for breakfast complemented with two pieces of toast that I scrounged from a nearby table after the occupants had left, but before the waitress took away their plates. My sweet tooth and need for calories led me to confiscate four individual serving tubs of Kraft syrup to pour on my breakfasts of grits. I hung out at the restaurant while Peter and Bob



Stoker went into Atkins. Peter had been having trouble with his Jansport pack frame for several days now, and was expecting a new pack frame sent to him by the company. The side hip belt supports had broken, he called the company and they agreed to send him a new frame to the Atkins Post Office. The frame had not arrived yet so he filled out the card necessary to have it forwarded. He mailed a letter to Connie for me, and also purchased two boxes of Pop-Tarts, some peanut butter, and bread for me at the local grocer. He continued on down the trail, but I stayed waiting for Bob to get back – I was watching his pack while he was gone. When he returned, I decided to eat a hamburger, but Bob pushed on. I quickly finished the burger, and took off myself.

At the third gate, crossing a fence, the trail was obscure as to where it went. Taking a respite for a bit, I heeded mother nature's call and afterwards consulted the guide book. Not long afterwards, I talked to a guy on a tractor in the process of mowing the side of a hill. He told me it was his land we were on, so I thanked him for letting the trail pass thru it. He said another guy had just passed recently. I figured it was Bob. I continued on and when I got to a spot where brown was painted over white blazes, I stopped and read the old guidebook lent to me by Peter. I figured it was the old AT, but (I think it actually was) I pushed on because I had heard it was blue-blazed. I came to an intersection later, only to find Peter washing his socks in the creek. Neither one of us knew where Bob was. He was somewhere in between us, but suddenly gone now. We had reached the point in the trail where I had decided to hike the old AT. Peter took off his way, and I mine. Uphill! Finally the 1st shelter! Big Walker Mt. Shelter. The fire tower was gone and the spring dry. I decided to push on to Monster Rock shelter even though it was already 3:00pm – and supposedly nine miles to get there. The trail was nice ridge walking, but beginning to become over-grown with nettles and berries since no one was actually supposed to be using or maintaining that section any longer. My legs became scratched as I moved quickly through the brush. I managed to reach the shelter at 5:30! Unbelievable! Nine miles in two and a half hours! Inspired with my progress, I decided to go another mile farther to where a restaurant was supposed to be. It was more like a gift shop, but had a small refreshment stand. Had a chilli dog, butter pecan pie and ice cream, and lots of cool water. In the change that I received, I found a penny with a sticker on it that showed an acorn and the words "Big Walker Mountain".

Didn't really know where I wanted to stay, so I waited until 7:00 pm before moving up the road to the Big Bend Picnic area where campers are not allowed. With the extra 3.75 miles, I covered a grand total of 24 miles! New Record. Have not yet found the spring said to be here. I will look in the morning after a hopefully restful sleep. Goodnight. ZZZZ

Tuesday June 30, 1981

I woke up this morning after a very pleasant night. Didn't get rained on last night anyway, and experienced virtually no back problems this morning. Before eating breakfast, I went out in search of the spring. There was supposedly a blue-blazed trail leading to it, - although I hadn't found it last night. Walked all around and finally spotted a blue-blaze. The trail was still hard to find, and after finding the two cisterns I was disappointed to find them not running. I opened one up and there was water, but it smelled a little. I rigged up a bucket, brought some out, and boiled it for a few minutes. Afterwards, poured it into my quart container and dissolved the required amount of iodine tablets in the container. Although it was probably now safe to drink, it still smells a little unpleasant. I decided to use it as my emergency supply since I still had a little from Reed's Creek in my water bag.

Packed up and headed down the road under questionable partly cloudy skies. I saw where the inter-

state passed under Walker Mountain through a tunnel. I arrived at Turkey Gap, where water was supposed to be 300 or so yards down to right. I put down my pack, grabbed my water bag, and took off in search of it only to find a small, barely flowing spring. I finished off the good water in the bag and filled it back up with this apparently OK water. Later on I treated it, and it tastes OK and I haven't got sick yet. Arrived at Turkey Gap Lean-to directly, but passed on quickly toward High Rock shelter. It started raining, then pouring, and my feet got totally soaked. I could feel the water all the way up to my heels sloshing about. I comically thought, "maybe it will wash my socks a bit". My feet were hurting as I pulled into High Rock shelter, plus I also had a nasty gash on my left palm obtained while falling on a large, slanted, slick rock during the rain. The rain subsided as I was at the shelter so I checked out the fire warden's cabin a few hundred feet farther on. The cistern there was working, but the water was a little cloudy. I boiled some, then cooked some grits. I then dumped the quart I was carrying and refilled it with some of the cistern water with the addition of two iodine tabs. Decided to stay there for a while, let my socks and feet dry out and wait to see what the weather was going to do. It got a little sunny for a while, then it came again – rain. I'm glad I stayed, I am spending the night here with the lockable door, wire bunks and carpet floor! I took the opportunity of filling up my cook pots with fresh rainwater that I plan on using for cooking. Read books and laid around this afternoon trying to figure out when I can get to Pearisburg - and if that is all the farther I'll go or not. I believe I will go by bus to Charleston and visit my friend, David for a while after the 4th in Pearisburg. I feel that the trail is nice, but it seems not much different than walking on a trail in Southern Illinois, and there is not that much pleasure. In fact, usually there is physical discomfort.

Wednesday July 1, 1981

Woke up this morning after a long rest for most of the night. Almost 11 hours of sleep. Fixed breakfast and packed up. I began searching for the fire tower and some place called High Rock. I found no fire tower, and there was no view due to low clouds. The trail descended down the mountain, met the road, and then I road-walked for a few miles until I reached the town of Crandon, Virginia. I stopped at the small general store there and bought a pint of ice cream. I walked on up VA 608 until intersecting with the new trail, where just a little farther on the authorities had recommended hikers leave the trail to bypass the murder site. I left a note at this point telling Jeanne, Bill, Peter, and Bob that I would meet them at Pizza Hut in Pearisburg on Friday for the all you can eat buffet.

The murderer had been caught by this time, but I still did not know if I was going to hike the trail or skip the section as I walked down the road (trail). (On June 22, 1981 Randall Lee Smith was arrested after he was found hiding in a wooded area in Myrtle Beach.) A mile or so farther on I came across a farmhouse with some folks sitting around and talking. I stopped to chat for a while, and eventually was talked into skipping the section to Pearisburg. Later, one of the guys drove me to VA 42 where I began hitching. The hitching was tough, and I didn't get a ride right off – walked probably three to four miles when finally two guys stopped, their car already packed with gear. They had been caving down south. They took me to route 100 and a little bit up it before they turned off.

At this point, just where they let me out, there were a bunch of



dumpsters on the other side of the road. I saw an elderly couple dumping, so I hurried over to see if I could get a ride. I asked if they were going to Pearisburg. They said they were going through it and told me to get in. They bragged about their son who was sort of a “professional fisherman” who had won a lot of tournaments. They left me off somewhere in the town of Pearisburg, and I had to ask someone how to get to the hospice. As I walked to it I ran into the Pizza Hut along the way and just could not pass up the buffet. As I ate, Bruce and Joel came in after doing their laundry. After consuming as much as we could eat, I followed them back to the hospice and set my gear down. Once I was there, I didn’t do much the rest of the afternoon other than talk with Joel, and another guy, Larry, who had been there for a week or more ‘cause his funds ran out. Went to the Kroger later with Joel, and watched him spend \$30 for groceries. Hospice is barn shaped and rustic in appearance. Very nice though.



*Joel and his sign for hitching.*

Thursday July 2, 1981

Ate trail food for breakfast. Finished reading “Interview with the Vampire” which took a good chunk of the day. I went to the grocery store with Larry to buy the ingredients to make myself a root beer float, but he snagged the last pint of vanilla ice cream. I found some A&W root beer, and I said to myself that I would make one later. I did too! I bought ½ gallon of ice cream and 3 bottles of A&W, thinking I would share with the rest of the bunch, but no one wanted any! I virtually had to eat the whole thing myself. I talked Cindy into eating some, and then Larry a little also, but I know I must have eaten at least 3/4 of the half gallon. I was full afterwards, and decided that was my supper. Called Mom from the Kroger store, and also bought a Silverstone sauté pan and pancake mix. Can’t decide what to do – keep hiking, or start hitching, or take a bus home. Bob’s mom and dad showed up tonight. They are very involved with their son’s hike, and are going to hike south to meet Bob and then walk back to the hospice with him tomorrow. Joel left today after making a cardboard sign indicating he was hitch hiking to Newport.

Friday July 3, 1981

Tried out my new Silverstone sauté pan this morning by making pancakes . Oiled it up good first as it recommended, then blasted away making pancakes. They were working stupendously! Just let ‘em cook on one side for a while, give the pan a little jiggle and the pancake would unfasten itself from the pan!



*The recreation room as seen from the loft area at the Hopsice.*

I heard that the Post Office closed at noon as the morning was about to become afternoon, so I made a quick trip to check for mail. Sure enough, it was going to, but I made it there in time. I received a post card from Amy in Carbondale. She thought maybe I was homesick, so she sent a post



card of Neely tower with a little bit of Boomer and Trueblood Hall shown on it also. She wrote that she had been to Devils Kitchen last Friday, and that there was a big party planned for the fourth. After the PO, Chuck, (who had arrived with Bruce and Pat) and I stopped at the Virginian Restaurant and a drug store. After a little while there, we headed for the Laundromat where I did my wash, a little of his and a little of Bruce's. On the way back, while passing near the Pizza Hut, I noticed a Bronco with several people standing around it and apparently getting into the vehicle. I ran because I figured it was Bob's parents and I wanted a ride. Actually I didn't know whether they were just getting there, or if they were just leaving. Luckily, they had just finished. We all crammed in and were driven to the hospice. I later walked back down to the bus station to see about a bus out of Pearisburg to Charleston. The cost was about \$80 and 2.5 days via Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. On the return trip to the hospice at about 2:20pm, I stopped at the Pizza Hut and asked if there was any extra Pizza since I had learned that they occasionally give the leftovers to the hikers after the lunch buffet time had expired. I received a whole mushroom, green pepper and onion, T & C (thick and Chewy?) pizza. Even though I usually do not eat green peppers, I ate some and brought the rest to the hospice for anyone else. There were only a few takers, so I filled up for free! Laid around all afternoon until later, when Larry fixed Uncle Bens rice with turkey and invited me to eat with him. Very delicious.

I took a few photos of the mountains behind "the Barn", and once again began debating whether to quit or go on. The things involved in my debate are: keeping up with someone, hiking or not hiking with someone, amount of food eaten, constant thought of food, impatientness to get to the next camp spot, sore back, sore back of heels & side of right foot. My father's vacation is coming up soon and Mom was wondering whether I wanted to be picked up or not. I will let her know. If I'm OK I think I would like to keep going. (This statement seems to put the reason for what was to come upon my physical condition at the time more than any of the other items stated.) I sat around a fire someone had built outside for a while before going to bed.

Saturday July 4, 1981

Pancakes again this morning, but with a new twist - I flipped 'em without a spatula! Super Chef. (Chef hat and American flag drawing in hand written journal)) Aren't I artistic today? I also ate two Pop-Tarts with honey and an huge cheese omelet. Talked with Dan for quite a while and went with him to the store to get a quart of milk. As he ate, I just relaxed and thought. Did that for quite some time. Toward noon I decided to go get groceries and then use the public phone to call some people. I talked to my sister in law, Cheryl, for about 10+ minutes and then called my girlfriend, Connie. She sort of made me realize that part of the problem I was having stemmed from relying on other people to hike with. After this talk I became determined to leave tomorrow - with or without anyone else. I didn't call Mom right away because I thought she would be at the grocers or hair dressers.

Went into Kroger and bought \$20 worth of food which included tonights barb-b-qued fried chicken, applesauce, and peaches. Came back and set up my hammock and laid around observing and listening to Chipping Sparrows. Later, I walked to the 7-Day Market and called Mom. I purposed my idea that their vacation be to the Shenandoah National park where I would meet them there. At that time let them know whether or not I was ready to go home. Ok with mom, but I don't know what Dad will say.

Fried and bar-b-q'ed the chicken, made instant mashed potatoes with chicken gravy and applesauce. All turned out very good, as Larry and I chowed down; him on white meat, me on dark. After we

stuffed ourselves, we let Bruce eat up the rest. Gene helped too. Laid around to get everything settled a little. Larry didn't want to eat the peaches just yet. Later on, I took a walk with Chuck & Bruce, and ended up playing basketball with a guy named Mike for an hour or more 'till we were pooped. He drove us to Kroger where the boys bought some beer and later, some ice. They started drinking, and nightfall came. I made two batches of TV time popcorn to satisfy Larry's craving and he had some A&W root beer to drink. I ate my peaches (29oz) all by myself and a little later went to bed so I could get up in time to get a lift from Bob's folks. I squeezed some junk from my left heel sore that smelled like a dead bird or something! Horrible, almost unbearable. No wonder it hurt so bad with that gunk in it. Hope it gets better. (interesting fact: this same sort of thing happened on my second trip in 1983.)

(I am not sure of the date, but I think on this day I witnessed Bob's eating prowess at the Pizza Hut. He consumed 19 pieces of pizza at the AYCE buffet! I think I was in attendance but the journal does not make mention of it, which I find unusual for such an event as this. Perhaps it happened the day I ran into them leaving Pizza Hut and was only told about the feat. On a side note, he also carried an extra food bag strapped to the outside of his pack while he hiked. The man could definitely eat!

Sunday July 5 1981

Got up at 5:45 and fixed pancakes again. I arose early because I didn't know when Bob was coming by to pick up us hikers. So, I sat around for a while until Bob showed up. He asked if anyone wanted to go out to eat breakfast before he came back to pick all the slack-packers up. He came back in a half hour to pick us up. We started hiking, without packs, at about 9:00 am – Bob's parents are going to take our packs to the “hostel” in Newport, Virginia and leave them for us. Supposed to hike 23.5 miles today. Everything started out smoothly as we walked off. I carried my tennis shoes, Pop-Tarts, some water, and gaiters. My right heel hurt in the beginning, but after about three miles it would hurt only now and then (probably numb from the hiking). Eventually it seemed to stop almost altogether. Seems to help if the laces for at least the top portion of my boots are all together as tight as can be. We hiked fast but took several breaks. Saw a deer, several grouse, and a flying Luna moth. Trail was very rocky and rough at times along the ridge. Trail seemed to make big hairpin turns and at times would “backtrack”. Then there was the one dastardly relocation just before Newport: up – up- up, circle around, and then down – down. Finally the covered bridge and Va 661(?) The day went on and on until at last, around 8:10 pm, we arrived at the Smith house in Newport. Weird place. Some parts clean, some smelly. There was a dog upstairs that had recently given birth, and the puppies had defecated all over the place. There was a demolished room, perhaps under construction? No one was around but the door had been left unlocked. I checked out the rest of the place and found the kitchen to be a mess with dishes needing to be washed laying haphazardly in and around the sink. Since there was a stove, I fried 2 eggs and cooked pancakes for supper. Also ate a granola bar. It rained a little about 10pm as we all took up positions with our sleeping bags on the front porch since we were unsure of how this “hostel” was supposed to work. No one was there to welcome us or check us in. Bill's boot split open today. He was beginning to not have a good time. I took a shower in the bathtub before going to bed for the evening.

I just remembered Joel telling me how he encountered a rattlesnake on the trail and it almost bit him without warning. He pinned it down and broke it's rattles off, but did not kill it. Later, at the tourist trap on Walker Mountain he sold it to a guy for \$25. He also told me how he walked near the Wapitis, near where the murders had taken place, and a dude in a pickup pulled up beside him, put a gun



in his face, and said “say your prayers you son of a bitch”, then laughed and drove off. “ Some people in this world are really sick.

July 6, 1981 Monday

I woke up way too early – I could have slept longer here on the porch. I had a nice evenings rest; however. Looks like rain this morning. Fixed eggs and pancakes again so as to get rid of the heavy things, and things that go bad.

Someone actually does live here! They are in the house right now! ( I think they came in late last night while everyone was laying in their bags on the porch. I vaguely remember waking and seeing them pass in the dark.) Packed everything up, then went to the general store just to see what they had. Pretty nice store. Next, I headed for the post office to get stamps and to mail post cards to Grandparents S, Connie, Amy, and Linda. Managed to get a ride the half mile to the trail where I began walking. The going got tough as the trail steeply ascended to the ridge crest. I began to sweat, and as a result, fogged my glasses, and all around generally pooped me out. Once at the top, the ridge walking wasn't too bad though. The fog allowed no views. I did happen to get some later on, took one picture #30 roll 7 . At one point, the trail dipped down to avoid private property. It took me near a stream and an old cabin where I ate lunch and wrung out my socks because they had become wet. It had rained a bit last night and the undergrowth was still wet from the rain. Of course, having gone down the side of the mountain, I began a steep ascent back up to the ridge crest after lunch. It began to drizzle a little directly after lunch and now and then came down a little harder. On a section of the ridge with slanting slabs of rock that had to be traversed, the going became treacherous. The slabs pointed down to the valley at what seemed to be about a 45 degree angle of attack. With wet Vibram souls, the traction and friction was limited if not null. Very dangerous – at times probably could have fallen far down the hillside. I did fall several times, and almost broke my leg once or twice. To help build my spirits, I stopped and picked a few ripe blueberries to put in my pancakes, but did not save them all. I munched on blueberries and raspberries most of the afternoon as I waded inside my boots (once again moisture from the vegetation ran down my legs despite the use of gaiters). Sometimes the trail ran through thigh deep poison ivy that was wet! If I don't catch it now, I probably won't again. (Fortunately, I never did get poison ivy even though back in Illinois I usually got a good case of it every year) At the end of the day, I descended off ridge and finally made it to Niday Shelter around 3:13 pm – unfortunately, just after another downpour. I lost my sierra cup somewhere along the ridge, probably during one of my falls.

Fixed phase one of supper – French toast with sugar & cinnamon, and syrup. Peter strolled in about 5pm with my cup! Good deal – I can always use it and actually rely upon





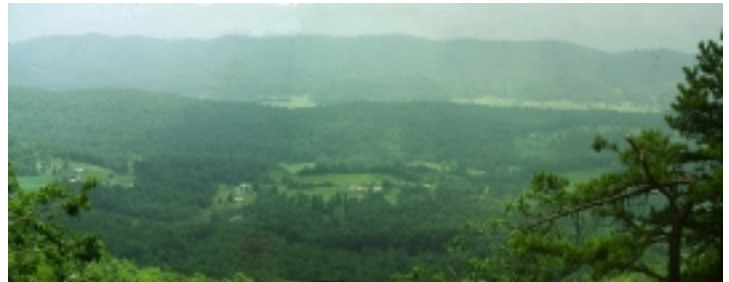


it a lot. Phase two consisted of something ....can't really remember...probably pancakes? Anyway, Bob pulled in around eight and started munching out. Can't believe how much that guy eats and drinks. I tried sleeping in the hammock, but it didn't seem to be working out, so I slept on the shelter floor after all. Pistacio pudding for dessert .

Tuesday July 7, 1981

Prepared blueberry pancakes for breakfast this morning! Pretty good with those fresh

with the blueberries I picked yesterday. Topped that off with Pop-Tarts. Peter started hiking first, but I caught up with him in a few miles and walked behind him for a while. He took a break and I pushed on. Ate a little snack at 10 a.m. where the trail met Trout Creek, but pushed on soon after, hoping to make it four miles to the Dragons Tooth rock by lunch. The trail was rough and rocky and I



ate lunch unknow-

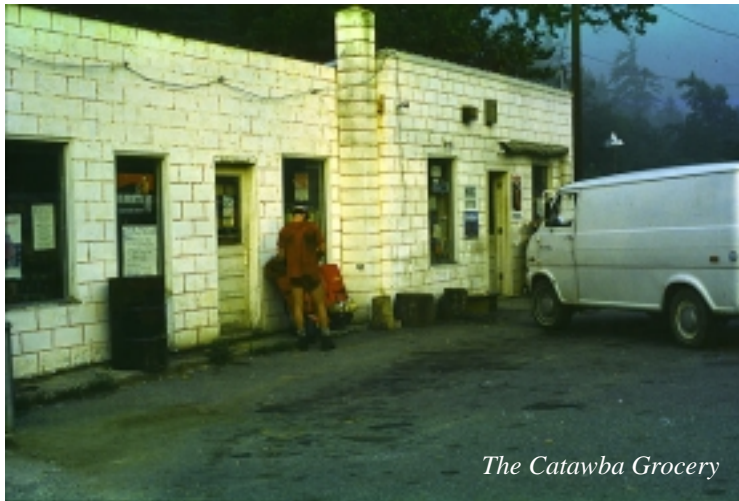
ingly about 15 minutes or more from the Dragons' Tooth. Took some pictures (end of roll 7). On the way down the mountain, I ran into some guys from Roanoke who were very interesting, and knowledgeable of the trail. Hiked down the 3 miles to VA 311 fairly quickly, and hit the Catawba Inn (gas and groceries) and immediately purchased a half gallon of Butter Pecan ice cream. In my mind, I joined the 7/16 gallon club that day – could have finished it, but I know I would have felt bad. Later on I had several sodas. I had arrived at the store at 2:30. Peter at 3 or after, and Bob around 5. Peter pushed on while I called the locker and talked with Dad. He will talk with Mom and I will call later to find out their vacation plans. While

sitting around, I had a can of tuna and granola bars for supper. That evening, I called home and got set to be picked up, and return home this weekend. ( Although I am having fun in general, trouble with infected, smelly blisters, and nightly back pains don't seem to be going away. My feet don't ever seem to be dry, which is a problem for the blister healing, and I figured that even if I continued on, I had skipped so many sections when I was hiking



*Peter Hsia as he prepares to leave the Catawba Grocery.*

with others that I would not have actually completed the trail in total - even if I made it to Maine.) Mom and Dad will leave Friday at 3:00 am and pick me up in Cloverdale, Virginia.



*The Catawba Grocery*



*Bob chats with the store owner.*

Tonight I will sleep on the pavement in front of the Catawba Inn tonight, even though the owner has given us permission to stay in “Bob’s Big Time Barn” just to the left of the store. This little hog barn was a bit run down, but the biggest problem was the fact that to get to it you had to walk through knee deep grass infested with ticks. I made one attempt to reach the place and came back after just a few steps and had to spend a few minutes removing ticks. But thanks anyway Bob! I discovered that evening, at dusk, that the pond on the right of the grocery store supported a healthy population of Bullfrogs. I made a mental note for a future trip where food could be found.

Wednesday July 8, 1981

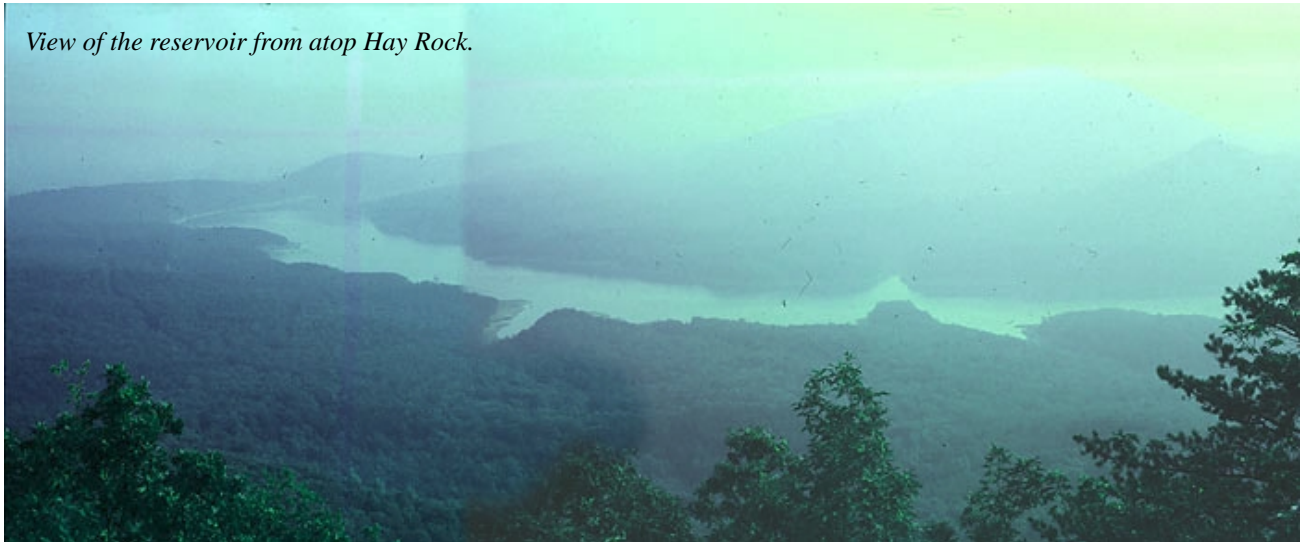
Had a fairly terrible night’s sleep last night because the ground was very hard, and a few people pulled into the lot with their cars at about 10:48 pm.

I ate a big breakfast. Have been pigging out to get rid of weight since I am leaving the trail soon. (Apparently the decision had been made before I actually arrived at Catawba) Had a quart of orange juice, oatmeal, Pop-Tarts and granola bars. I began the ascent of North Mountain after leaving the Catawba Grocery, and once reaching the crest, was on it for about 8-9 miles. I stopped for lunch just before descending. This morning, I saw two or three deer. Descended and crossed a small creek, and then Catawba Creek, which was inviting me in for a swim. The later part of the morning had become intensely hot, so I sat in the cool rapids for a while. The day seemed to have started out cool, but had changed. Not really, but it was probably almost as hot as it got yesterday which was terrible. While there, I had cheese and crackers, and peanut butter.

After cooling off in the creek, I began the ascent of Tinker Mountain. Along the trail I walked through a herd of cows with long curving horns. As far as I was concerned, I was following white blazes, but then they started being puke yellow. I didn’t know whether I was really on the trail or not. The route was ascending steeply and I didn’t want to go up something like that and end up finding out I was not on the trail. I continued anyway since every now and then I saw a white blaze thrown in. They gave me a little relief, but I was still apprehensive. Up – up and hot -hot - hot up what was



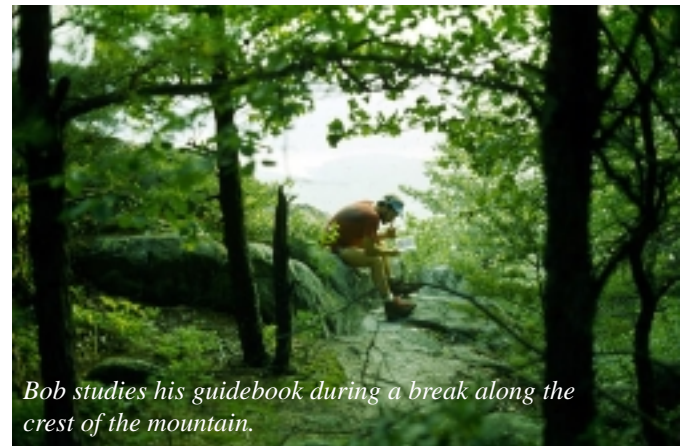
*View of the reservoir from atop Hay Rock.*



called “Scorched Earth Gap”. It sure was scorching heat today! Finally reached the crest and a signpost! There were signs pointing all over. One to Tinker Cliffs, that is supposed to be a very worthwhile side trip I had read about in the guidebook. I passed it up because I was exhausted from the trip up the hill! Only .9 mile to the shelter from there. Made it there (all downhill!) and went to the stream and saw a deer. I waited for Bob. Once he arrived, we decided to sit around for a while before pushing on another five miles to Hay Rock where we would camp out. That would leave only five miles into town tomorrow.

We pushed on – kind of slowly toward the end since Bob’s hip belt was giving him a terrific rash. Finally made it to Hay Rock. The climb to the top was worthwhile and had excellent views of a reservoir and surrounding mountains. Took panoramic pictures and sunset pictures, and later saw the lights of what we presumed to be Roanoke. Very pretty. Hay Rock had a nice overhang forming an intimate campsite for us. I put up my tent so I could lay

out of my bag without worrying about bugs – I discovered today that I already have a trillion bites all over my arms already, presumably from last night on the porch. (I also thought maybe they were fleebites since there were many dogs around the house)



*Bob studies his guidebook during a break along the crest of the mountain.*

I ate Tuna and cheese on top of the rock for supper while we listened to good tunes on 99 FM “the Q” from Roanoke on Bob’s radio. In a lot of ways better than K-SHE.

Thursday July 9, 1981

We woke up early to get into town. Traditional breakfast (oatmeal & grits). We have very little water, since there is no water source at Hay Rock, but only five miles to town. I can make it, but the way Bob loses it through sweating, I don’t know about him. The trail leads us along the ridge of Tinker Mountain and under some big power lines. The last bit of this section was road walking. I took one last picture of me walking this year (but for some unknown reason it did not develop – perhaps it



was a sign that I was not really finished). Once, on one of the more used roads, we were offered a ride to the next shelter by someone in a Brown's Exterminators truck. Bob refused and explained that he had to walk all the way. What an inspiration for my next trip! Besides that, we wanted to stop and eat near the truck stops. We spotted the Pizza Hut from afar, but stopped before that and had a quart of OJ at a gas station along the road and then walked to the truck stop. Bob played a few games of Asteroids Deluxe before we started walking to Cloverdale. No rides offered along the busy highway. On the way saw Bill and Jeanne on their way out to the next shelter. I checked in at the Hollins Motel and then saw Peter off with his new pack frame that had finally arrived. Showered up at the hotel and then hitched back to the truck stop to eat at Pizza Hut if there was a special buffet. There was. Bob had to walk all the way. After lunch I had a pint of Raspberry sherbert while Bob played video games once again. I was just ready to leave when we ran into Bill & Jeanne – they had decided to go home – for a lot of the same reasons as I in my own opinion. Cloverdale seems to be a popular dropout spot.

Room with TV and nice refreshing cool air conditioning for \$16 – one bed for two people – Me and Bob. Took an uplifting dip in the pool, then went across the street to Larry's country store where I bought supper – Raisin Bran and milk, some vanilla wafers, and a free bag of day old donuts . Oh, and some bananas also. Watched Huck Finn on TV in Bill and Jeanne's room until 11:00pm. In the eastern time zone, their movies run 9 – 11. Not what I am used to in the central time zone where they are on from 8 – 10 pm. What a bummer. Once the movie finished, I hit the sack in anticipation of a good night's sleep without any bugs.

Directions to PO 1.5 miles on Rt 11, left on 654 for ½ mile, take right on route 605 a block PO on your left.

Friday July 10, 1981

Bob left early this morning. I was up and saw him off. I tried to take an early swim, but a guy told me to get out - he was cleaning the pool. I ate the rest of the donuts for breakfast along with bananas. I followed the directions given earlier yesterday, and walked to the post office to get my book stamped. While there, I met a girl who wanted to become a lawyer. I told the lady at the PO to tell my parents I was at the Hollins if they showed up some time inquiring about me. As I walked back down the road, I ran into Larry and Cindy in Cindy's car. Ike, her dog, who was normally cream colored is now reddish brick colored after rolling in the red clay in Georgia where she picked up her Subaru Brat. They were heading to the PO so I told them to stop by at the Hollins after they had taken care of all their business.

Larry took a room, and since I had checked out, I sat in the air conditioning of his room for a while. I was driven back to the PO to post a note for Mom and Dad after I became uneasy as the day progressed and they had not arrived. They finally arrived at about six (estimate). Had fish for supper at some restaurant with my parents and then we rented a room at the Hollins since they needed rest before driving back to Illinois. I spent the evening watching "Deadman's Curve", the story of Jan and Dean, in Larry's room, and then told him I would see him in the morning.

Saturday July 11, 1981

Up at 6:30 and off to Montebello. Mom had sent a package there before the decision to quit had

occurred and we hoped to retrieve it. We drove part way there utilizing the Blue Ridge Parkway. We ate pancakes at the little store/PO in Montebello and luckily were able to pick up the package. We made another stop, this time for lunch, in Kenova (State unknown) at a place called the Chatterbox restaurant. We were back home in Illinois at 10:15 pm (CST).

The end had come quick. As far as I can remember, the main reason for quitting was blister problems that would not heal due to constant dampness of my boots and socks. Looking back, I think part of the problem was also the actual socks that I wore. They were white cotton socks, without liners. Sore heels were the main symptom, although nightly back pains definitely factored into it as well. But these were only symptoms, and the real reason for quitting was probably more the fact that if I kept going, I would not have been able to actually claim I had walked the entire Appalachian Trail. Many people do claim completion even though they have done the same thing I had done – skip some sections. All I know is that almost immediately after I had finished, I began to plan for the next trip, where I would use all that I had learned to make sure that I would overcome all the obstacles and become an official 2000 miler. I had not quit because I did not like the trail, but because I liked it so much, I knew I would return and make sure I did not miss any part of it.