

Long Trail Hiking Has its Ups and Downs
by Dana Baron (Trail Name: Little Feat)

For many years I've dreamed of hiking the Long Trail from one end to the other. This past summer, I finally made it happen. On August 30, I set out on the Pine Cobble Trail in Williamstown, MA. Four weeks later, I stepped into the clearing along the Canadian border at Line Post 592. In between, I had a great adventure that I will never forget.

As with any experience, my hike was filled with good times and bad. What surprised me was how quickly one could turn into the other. For example, there was the day I hiked over Mt Mansfield. This day was strangely broken into three parts. The first part was without a doubt the best part of my trip. The last part was among the worst.

I started up from Butler Lodge early on a gorgeous sunny day with a light breeze. I reached the Forehead with not a soul in sight. After enjoying the view and catching my breath, I began my walk across the ridge. At the summit station, there still were no other people. I began to wonder how far I could go on this beautiful fall day before I encountered another person. All the way across the ridge, I was alone. Even as I enjoyed the view from the chin, there was not another soul in sight. I had all of Mt Mansfield to myself.

I moved on down to Taft Lodge: still no one. For 45 minutes, I just sat soaking up the sun. These are the words I wrote in my journal, "I'm sitting on the porch at Taft and there is still no one around. But for the sounds from the valley below, I could almost believe that I'm the only human left alive. Sometimes this would produce a very lonely feeling. Today it feels like a gift. Solitude / loneliness – two sides of the same coin. Today it came up heads."

The second part of this day took place in Smugglers' Notch where I was greeted by about 15 people from work who came with pizza, soda, and cookies and threw me a party. It was great fun. Everyone wanted to hear about my trip. Thankfully, no one talked about work. As we were wrapping up, the Sterling Pond caretaker happened by with a friend. When they were offered our left-over pizza, they were thrilled to accept. When they figured out I was thru-hiking, we connected and started talking trail-talk. My co-workers found this fascinating, especially when I told them my trail name and our visitors said they'd heard about me. The thought of "gossip" spreading up and down the trail seemed quite funny to them.

Then came part three of this long day. Just before I left the party, someone warned me that bad weather was ahead. I made the grueling climb up Elephant's Head, past Sterling Pond and Madonna. As I approached Whiteface Shelter the wind picked up and the clouds rolled in. It was clear I'd be spending the night here alone. I began to worry that I might be in real trouble if it began to rain in the night since Whiteface is so exposed. I also worried about hiking over Whiteface Mountain in the rain the next day. I worked myself up into such frenzy that I got almost no sleep.

Sure enough, the next day was rainy and miserable and turned out to be one of the worst days of my hike. But I stuck it out and four days later I was dancing around Line Post 592. What I found was that long distance hiking is not so much a physical challenge as a mental and emotional challenge. Hiking the Long Trail is truly an experience of ups and downs.

The Results Are In...

By Laura Philipps

Thanks to the 25 of you who responded to the member survey! We'll use your feedback to shape this and future issues of Ridge Lines with the goal of putting together a newsletter that is interesting, informative, and fun.

Responses were nearly evenly split between long-term members (more than 10 years) and newer members. It appears that you want to learn *about* each other: interest in member interviews topped the list. And you want to learn *from* one another: tips from experienced hikers and outdoor adventure stories came in a close second and third. (We're working on an interview for the next issue and, starting with this issue, we'll regularly feature hiking and camping tips from members.) Interest in learning about community resources also scored high, as did hiking etiquette, food for the trail, section history, and safety. Information for new hikers, Leave No Trace ethics and practices, what to wear, and hiking with dogs and kids also picked up some votes.

Several people proposed additional topics: how to support trip leaders, descriptions of new or different hiking trails, a singles column for hikers wanting to meet other hikers, how to deal with back country emergencies, weekday hiking opportunities, and car swap exchanges for point-to-point hikes.

The question, "What would make Ridge Lines more interesting and useful to you?" yielded requests for photography, more trip reports, articles by other people, articles by Mary Lou Recor, publication of who participated in section outings, news of friends, and a different font. (What do you think about the font used in this column?) We were also asked to feature pleas for trail work volunteers.

We'll be asking for submissions from readers, so start thinking now about tips you can offer, adventures to recount, the food you just can't live without on the trail, your favorite piece of hiking clothing, and your pet peeves (i.e., what you wish others knew about hiking etiquette). We look forward to hearing from you.

Ridge Lines

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The Results Are In... cont.

The number in () is the number of responses.

Number of years as a GMC Member

Less than a year (1)

1-5 years (7)

5-10 years (5)

More than 10 years (14)

Subjects of Interest (from highest to lowest vote getters)

Member interviews (23)

Tips from experienced hikers (22)

Outdoor adventure stories (21)

Community resources (outdoor retailers, first aid courses, environmental issues, events, etc.) (19)

Hiking etiquette (15)

History of the Burlington Section (15)

Food for the trail (15)

Backpacking hiking and safety (12)

Information for new hikers (9)

Leave No Trace (8)

What to wear when hiking and where to get it (7)

Hiking with dogs, kids (6)

Organize a Burlington Section Gear Swap? Yes (14)
No (8)

Membership Phone-a-Thon

Thanks to some great volunteers, our section on November 13 conducted its second Phone-A-Thon this year to bring back into the fold members whose memberships had lapsed. Sue Girouard, Paul Houchens, Fred Roane, and Pete Saile worked the phones, while Phil Schlosser and Phil Hazen handled the paper work and the pizza. Our callers talked to some wonderful people, and 5 people rejoined as of this writing.

With our busy lives, some of us forget to renew our memberships. We hope that all our Burlington Section members will renew their memberships to help the club maintain and protect Vermont's Long Trail. We sincerely appreciate your support.

Mid-Week Hikers

Underhill resident Bruce Gilbert Smith wants to know if there are any retired people who regularly hike during the middle of the week. If you'd like to arrange a "work week" hike with Bruce, email him at sally.gilbertsmith@verizon.net.

Tips for Winter Hiking and Camping

From Dot Myer:

- ✓ Don't use your stove in your tent unless you have very good ventilation. It's hard to sleep when everything is damp.
- ✓ An old wool sock or other insulation around your thermos keeps your soup hot and keeps your fingers from freezing when you pick it up. Also, using a sock or insulation around your water bottle might keep the water from freezing.
- ✓ Allow more time for almost every activity than you think you will need.

From Laura Philipps:

- ✓ If you have to leave your boots out overnight, open the laces and tongue. That way, if your boots freeze, you can still get your feet into them in the morning.
- ✓ If you have enough fuel and water, boil water and put it in your water bottle. Put the hot water bottle in your sleeping bag to keep you warm. Just make sure the lid is screwed on tight!
- ✓ Put anything you don't want to freeze in your sleeping bag with you for the night, including toothpaste, sunscreen, and your journaling pen.

From Mary Lou Recor:

- ✓ Always wear red so the helicopter pilot can spot you from the air.

From Frank Gibney:

- ✓ To limit cold feet use AridXXX dry stick deodorant on the feet for three days prior to the hike. Change socks at the first hint of cold.
- ✓ To keep warm in your sleeping bag for a multi-day overnight trip in the winter, make sure you turn the bag inside out as soon as you get up in the morning. That will help get rid of moisture. Then, beat the bag up for at least a minute prior to getting into it at night. This will make a world of difference in keeping you warm.
- ✓ The cold fools your body into not drinking. Many problems with dehydration happen in the winter. Hydrate often.
- ✓ Days are short and lights are notoriously unreliable. Carry two.
- ✓ A hand full of gorp at 2 AM is like stoking the fire and putting on an extra blanket.

For the next issue, tell us what food you just can't live without when you're out on the trail. What do you eat when you need energy? What's your favorite hot drink? trail breakfast? dinner? snack? Best lightweight meal for backpacking? Best one pot meal? Please include recipes, too!

Deadline for submissions is February 1st.

BURLINGTON SECTION ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER

Join others who love the outdoors. Enjoy conversation, delicious food, and an inspiring program!!

Date: February 7, 2004

Place: Faith United Methodist Church on Dorset St., South Burlington

Times: 5:00 – Social Hour

6:00 – Supper

7:00 – Business Meeting

8:15 – Program

Directions: From I-89, take exit 14E. Turn right on Dorset Street. From the Kennedy Drive/Dorset Street intersection, it is 0.3 miles to the Faith United Methodist Church, which is on the right. There is plenty of parking and the cafeteria is at the far end.

Program: No Rain, No Pain, No Maine

Six Months on the Appalachian Trail with Easy Rider and Snowberry

If a through hike of the Appalachian Trail is a goal on your "before I die..." list, join Burlington Section members Chris Hanna and Mary Lou Recor as they re-live the snow, rain, bugs, wildflowers, and characters that were all part of their 2003 adventure.

Reservations: Fill out and mail the form on page 8.

Taylor Series Event Sponsored by the Burlington Section

Impossible Dreams: the Last Unclimbed Face of Everest and Eradicating Blindness

Friday, February 27, 2004

7:00 PM – UVM Campus Theater

Dr. Geoff Tabin, MD, is a doctor, teacher, author, world-class mountaineer and co-director of the Himalayan Cataract Project. He spends about two months a year in impoverished areas of Nepal and Tibet, countries with staggeringly high rates of curable cataracts. The Himalayan Cataract Project provides medical training to local surgeons and nurses as well as education, establishment of a world-class eye care infrastructure, and high quality ophthalmic care to local residents.

Dr. Tabin was the fourth person to climb the “7 Summits,” the highest points of all seven continents; and has pioneered difficult technical rock, ice, and mountaineering routes all around the world. He’s the author of *Blind Corners – Adventures on Everest and the World’s Tallest Peaks*, published by Lyons Press in October 2002. He’ll share breathtaking slides and talk about his experiences on mountains and in villages.

(Dr. Tabin will also talk at another Taylor Series event. On February 12, he’ll be at the Montshire Museum talking about “The Seven Summits: Climbing the World’s Highest Peaks”.)

Update from Membership Director Dot Myer

The following people have joined the Burlington Section since Jun:

Steve and Lynn Barclay, Michael Bassett, Michael Boutin, Patty A. Bradford, Dona Burdick, Maureen Cannon, Ann Chauncey, Charlotte Clews, Monique Dewyea, Heather Dickgiesser, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Walter Flintrop, Maria Fritze, Sarah Gamer, Stacey L. Graczyk, Steven Grant, Joe Guzelak, David Hardy and Carol Gregory, Brett Huggett, Lynn C. Kabot, Jason Keinsley, John C. Kinne, Jed Lowy, John Mantegna, Walter Maros, Tamara Marteney, Susan Mead, John R. Miller, Nancy Natvig, Thomas O’Connor, Richard and Annette Rubin, Barbara Schoen, Carrie Shamel, Patty Sheridan, Amy Stocklen, Andy Strauss, John Sullivan, Laurie Thompson, Matt Walker, Dory Wiegand

Welcome!

Report from the Nominating Committee

The following nominees are proposed for 2004 officers and committee chairs of the Burlington Section. Voting for officers will take place during the business part of the Annual Meeting. (See page 3.)

President: Sue Girouard

Vice President: Phil Hazen

Secretary: Joyce Gallimore

Treasurer: Sarah Berger

Education: Brynne Lazarus, Walter Lopuschenko

Publicity: Patricia Collier

Special Events: Brenda Wright

Membership: Dot Myer

Trails: Pam Gillis, John Sharp

Shelters: Chris Hanna

Highlights from the September 20, 2003 GMC Board Meeting

Money Matters

Revenue from book sales has decreased, partly because of the loss of the Hiker Center.

However, the Club will be able to avoid a projected \$13,000 deficit in the budget for fiscal year 2004.

Trails, Shelters, Buildings, etc.

The Fire Relief Fund is now over \$230,000. Plans for the South Barn replacement are still being revised.

The Board approved naming the new shelter near the Canadian Border “Journey’s End II”. The original Journey’s End shelter might be relocated to GMC headquarters for reconstruction along the “Short Trail” (a new nature trail being constructed in back of the headquarters in Waterbury Center).

A compromise has been reached between GMC and the Appalachian Trail Conference assuring LT hikers continued access to the summit of Bromley Mountain.

The Board is considering a donation of two winterized cabins on Wheeler Pond in Barton.

HELP WANTED

A person to assist with coordinating Outings for the Burlington Section. Involves contacting trip leaders and scheduling trips on a quarterly basis. Almost all is done through e-mail. Computer with internet access a must. Please contact Phil Hazen for further information at 879-1302 or philhazen@direcway.com

Color Coding

Several members suggested that we color code the calendar inserts by season – so here’s the code:

Director: Deb Brown
Alt. Director: Dana Baron
Outings: Paul Houchens, Phil Hazen
Ridge Lines: Maeve Kim, Laura Philipps

Orange – fall

Light blue – winter

Green – spring

Sunny yellow - summer