

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Summer 2024

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is a recreational hiking association of volunteers who preserve and improve the Appalachian Trail as the nation's premier, continuous, long-distance footpath.

Remembering A.T. Champion Dave Youmans

By Pete Irvine

Dave Youmans, a champion and stalwart of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) in southwest Virginia and beyond, passed away on Thursday, July 4, 2024 in the company of his family and his life partner Amanda Kulkoski in Savannah, Georgia. Dave suffered a debilitating stroke during elective shoulder surgery in June.

Originally from Wilmington, Delaware, Dave moved to the Roanoke, Virginia area in 2013 from northern Virginia after being the managing

partner of a real estate company in Maryland, a diver for a maritime construction and transportation firm in Louisiana, and a psychiatric social worker for the state of Delaware. An avid hiker, traveler, and outdoor lover; he quickly became involved with the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). With RATC, from 2014-2022, Dave volunteered in many roles: trail maintainer, land management supervisor, and club representative to the Virginia A.T. Regional Partnership Committee. He was also part of the inaugural cohort of Volunteer Ridgerunners, when the McAfee Knob Task Force was

created in 2015. In 2014 and 2015, he volunteered a total of 9 weeks on the ATC Konnarock, Rocky Top, and Mid-Atlantic Trail Crews.

In 2016, Dave became an ATC staff member as Crew Leader for both the Konnarock and Rocky Top trail crew programs. With Konnarock, Dave worked on A.T. projects including the Justus Mtn trail relocation (GA), Standing Indian Mtn trail rehabilitation (NC), Backbone Rock relo (TN), and in Virginia: Mount Rogers High Country rehab, Bluff City relo, New River relo, Highcock Knob relo, and Rockfish Gap rehab.

In 2017, Dave became the A.T. Catawba Mountain Ridgerunner - a seasonal ATC staffer working daily on a popular, heavily-used, and impacted 40-mile section of the A.T. covering "Virginia's Hiking Triple Crown", including McAfee Knob, Tinker Cliffs (both on National Park Service lands), and Dragon's Tooth (on USDA Forest Service lands). He remained in this role for four years - personally contacting, informing, and educating hikers, backpackers, trail runners, rock climbers, and dog walkers; while also leading and supporting more than two dozen volunteer ridgerunners of the McAfee Knob Task Force (MKTF). As Ridgerunner, Dave was the face of ATC, of RATC, and of the A.T. to thousands of A.T. visitors each season.

Amanda and Dave first met in August 2017 at Campbell Shelter while she was backpacking and he was on-duty as the Catawba Ridgerunner. Dave offered his



contact information for any future trip-planning needs, Amanda followed up, and a long-distance romance was born.

In 2021, while continuing to be an active RATC volunteer, Dave became the Mountain Region Public Access Steward for the Natural Heritage Program of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Although this role took him away from the A.T., he continued to protect southwest Virginia's beloved hiking destinations by interpreting the natural history and local regulations to visitors at Buffalo Mountain and Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserves.

In late 2022, Dave relocated to Savannah, Georgia to live with Amanda, while maintaining his house in Roanoke. Amanda and several of Dave's family members will celebrate his life on a hike to Tinker Cliffs this summer.

Few individuals impact the A.T. and the people who visit it in so many different ways in such a short time as Dave did. He was able to engage effectively with a wide range of people from fellow volunteers to both tenderfeet and experienced trail hikers to agency decision-makers and affect positive change, always with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face.

Thank you, Dave - wishing you challenging trails and far views.

In remembrance, Dave's family suggests donating to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (www.appalachiantrail.org) in Memory of David Youmans, aka: "Ranger Dave".

For questions or additional information, contact: Kathryn Herndon-Powell (ATC), c: 540.682.3543, kherndon@appalachiantrail.org, or Pete Irvine, (RATC, & USFS-retired), c: 304.676.6000, irvine.pete@gmail.com.

A.T. trail champion Dave Youmans passed away in Savannah, GA, on July 4, 2024, following complications from shoulder surgery. The following remembrances were compiled quickly, and brevity was requested. They are certainly incomplete, but they help describe Dave in the words of some of the people he touched during his time in southwest Virginia.



Memories of Dave Youmans...

"I will always remember those dark smiling eyes and his snarky yet good-spirited humor." ~Diana Christopoulos; RATC Archivist & MKTF Ridgerunner; past President of RATC and past member of ATC President's Leadership Circle.

"Dave always embodied what it means to be a steward of the Trail. He was hard working and up for any task; joyful in service and truly happy to do the small things, both asked and unasked. Those many

small acts of service over many years added up to an incredible contribution to the AT partnership, to the RATC, and to the Trail he loved." ~Andrew Downs; Senior Regional Director-South, ATC.

"He always had a smile ready." ~Jim Webb; RATC Trail Supervisor.

"Dave stepped up to be Catawba Mountain Ridgerunner when we



were in a tight spot and needed to hire quickly. I don't think speaking with strangers was his comfort zone at first, but he was great at it. His genuine love of the Trail just shone through in a way that was contagious, for visitors and for everyone he worked with. He led by example with that quiet authenticity. It's hard to set foot on the Trail in our region without touching something that Dave helped protect or improve." ~Kathryn Herndon-Powell; Central Virginia Regional Manager, ATC.

"I 'followed' Dave as the Catawba

Ridgerunner starting in 2021 and have heard so many stories from so many people about him and his time working for ATC. I deeply appreciate the work he did and the legacy he leaves behind." ~Suzanne Neal; Catawba Ridgerunner, ATC.

"Dave was always so full of life and a pleasure to be around. He was truly dedicated to the Trail." Mike Vaughn; past RATC Trail Supervisor.

"After camping at Lambert's Meadow during an overnight patrol, I thought I was getting an early start only to find Dave already cooking oatmeal on top of Tinker Cliffs. As we sat, talked, and ate breakfast, the sky turned black. The hike/wade/slip down the Andy Layne Trail together left us looking like muddy drowned rats - Dave was smiling ear-to-ear the whole time." ~Brian Wilson; NPS A.T. Law Enforcement Ranger.

"Dave was a happy, outgoing, knowledgeable trail and nature lover who passionately followed his heart, while living life to the fullest." ~Brian Boggs; RATC Board Member and MKTF Representative.

"I always admire how Dave could find humor in even the most serious of conversations and situations. He was always a great friend and will be deeply missed. His legacy of love for life, the trail, and the trail community lives on in all those who had the pleasure of knowing him." ~Conner McBane; Natural Resources Manager, ATC.

"Every single work hike or MKTF hike I ever went on, I hoped I would run into Dave on the Trail. I truly

did. I will miss him." ~Mark Farrell; RATC member and Trail volunteer.

"Dave was the perfect Public Access Technician for the Mountain Region (2021-2022). He expertly navigated his interactions with the public to both protect Virginia's rarest habitats and help visitors to Natural Area Preserves have the best possible experiences." ~Ryan Klopff; Mountain Region Steward & Natural Areas Science Coordinator, Natural Heritage Program of Virginia Dept. of Conservation & Recreation.



"Dave was a wonderful mentor for volunteer Ridgerunners - knowledgeable and full of good humor." ~Susan Terwilliger; RATC Secretary and MKTF volunteer Ridgerunner.

"Dave is an inspiration as a life well-lived and a true hero of public lands who made an impact on everyone he taught, from meetings about agreements with boring District Rangers (sorry, Dave) to welcoming a new hiker to the outdoors at McAfee. Happy trails, Dave - you will be missed." ~Dan McKeague; former USFS Eastern Divide District Ranger (2015-2020), current Deputy Regional Forester, USFS Northern Region, Missoula MT.

"As Dave himself would say - 'he was an OKAY guy.' (smile). I am lucky to have gotten to know and work with him." ~Bill Neilan; past President of RATC.

"Dave was a champ and was always great to work with. Whether dealing with a difficult Konnarock trail crew week or trying to reclaim an exceedingly challenging section of AT corridor boundary line, Dave never faltered and was always looking forward. His roguish grin was always appreciated, even more so when followed up with one of his dry comments. He did so

much." ~Josh Kloehn, Senior Trail Operations Manager, ATC.

"There are so many things I could say about working with Dave both as a volunteer and as a co-worker at Konnarock and Mid-Atlantic. However, the funniest was early-on, when teaching him and other crew volunteers about making 'fine crush' for steps. I said, don't hold a larger piece of rock crush between your

thumb and index finger, or you may hit your hand. Dave immediately did exactly the opposite and hammered his thumb hard - he said: 'You mean like this?' ~Jerry Kyle; High Country Regional Manager & Konnarock Trail Crew Program Manager, ATC.

"Dave epitomized the enduring non-federal-governmental strength of the A.T. - as an ATC Trail Crew Leader, as ATC Catawba Ridgerunner, as RATC volunteer and club leader - always with his sly smile, that twinkle in his eye, his quick wit, and unfailing good cheer." ~Pete Irvine; RATC volunteer road maintainer and USFS-GWJeffNFs Trails Program Manager (retired)



In memoriam: Zetta Campbell and Bill Cochran

By Diana Christopulos, RATC Archivist

Zetta Campbell
June 1930-July 2, 2024

If you have seen the RATC logo, then you know something about Zetta Campbell. She designed the club logo and illustrated the RATC's quarterly hike lists with humorous cartoons during much of the 1970s.

She joined the RATC in 1959 and led or participated in countless RATC hikes during seven decades. She was the club's Secretary in 1964-69 and again in 1983 as well as the Blazer Editor from 1969 to 1976.



Zetta Campbell's artistic creativity added a touch of humor to the Trail Blazer during her tenure as editor.

Zetta was an ardent and joyful hiker who continued attending and leading hikes well into her 80s. At least two were featured in the Roanoke Times. In 2008, when she was 77 years old and had been an RATC member for about 49 years, Zetta led a hike to Harkening Hills on the Blue Ridge Parkway and joked that she was, "not as fast as some of those young whippersnappers in their 50s."

In 1993, the Roanoke Times featured a hike Zetta led to Dragon's Tooth. Bill Cochran, who wrote a column about the outdoors for many years in the Roanoke Times, captured Zetta's spirit in a February 14, column:

Campbell is hardly what you would expect in a trail boss, slight of size, with the look of a kindly great aunt, more artist than outdoorsman. Some people have let that deceive them, only to have the Vibram soles of their boots pounded into the dust by this trail veteran.

Cochran also noted her sly sense of humor. When she notified the group that it was time to head back to their cars, she asked the hiker next to her, "Did I use enough of my command voice?"



Zetta Campbell leads a hike.

What you might not know is that Zetta was also an outstanding violinist and an avid gardener.

She passed away at the age of 94 on [July 2, 2024](#).

Bill Cochran
October 11, 1937 - June 30, 2024

Sadly, Bill Cochran, the outstanding journalist whose father had been Superintendent of the Jefferson National Forest in the 1950s and a great friend of the AT, passed away in the on [June 30, 2024](#) at the age of 86. Bill and his wife Katherine operated Cross-Trails Bed & Breakfast for eight years, an inn in the Catawba Valley adjacent to the Appalachian Trail, between McAfee Knob and Dragon's Tooth. When they moved away from the area, Bill presented his papers to our club, and they will be part of the Permanent Collections at Virginia Tech in the RATC archives.

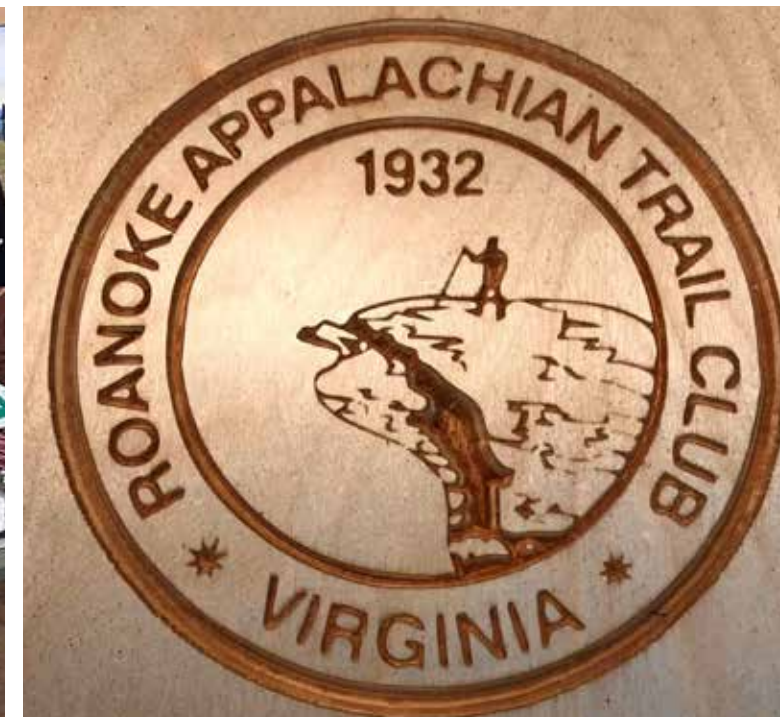


Tom Weaver, from the Carolina Mountain Club, gifts us with a sign he made of our club logo.

From the Sign Post

by Linda Mulheren

Kelly and Linda Mulheren, RATC sign makers, recently traveled to Asheville, North Carolina, to meet with Tom Weaver, trails facilities manager, sign maker, and past president for the Carolina Mountain Club. The purpose of the trip was to gather information about sign-making processes. Tom has made hundreds of signs for the trail and, as such, has a lot of experience and know-how. He has been using a computer numerical control (CNC) machine since 2015, which his club was able to purchase through a grant from L.L.Bean.



The high quality of the CNC technology has inspired us to learn more about this method and explore whether RATC might be able to purchase similar equipment. Currently, we freehand our signs with a hand-held router. This is a big improve-

ment from carving with knives, but when we are making large signs with a lot of text, the risk of making an error becomes a stressful possibility, which would waste a lot of time and material. Additionally, the CNC would enable us to add amazing graphics (see photo).

With over 120 miles of Appalachian Trail and shelters, and many blue-blazed miles as well, RATC needs to produce, maintain and replace numerous signs. Older, more historical signs installed by the U.S. Forest Service, often including script and art, are not being replaced with similar signage because we have never had the technology to produce such.

Tom has also used this equipment to create recognition plaques for volunteers, and is able to make signs with a great deal of text that are informational rather than map points, something we would like to be able to do, but cannot with our current setup. He gifted us with a beautifully carved sign of the RATC logo and he received a gift in return of our organic honey!

We discussed with Tom possible sources of funding including state grants, license plate funds or private corporation grants. Our funding research continues.

Although we are currently trying to make a complete inventory of all of the club's signs, we are still in that process. Do you have a sign in mind that needs replacing or a new sign idea? Email signs@RATC.org with a photo of the current sign and a sketch of the new sign, along with a detailed description of where it is found. We will research the mileage and coordinate with you to finalize the new sign. Contact us not just for replacing a current sign, but also when there is a need for a new or additional sign.

Hike Reports

by various authors



Humbert's Hill

Volunteers from RATC joined Suzanne Neal, ATC Ridgerunner, for a short but beautiful hike to Humbert's Hill. The group took in the gorgeous 360 degree view of

Tinker Ridge and McAfee Knob from the grass bald. The hike was a short one, just 0.5 miles from Route 11 in Troutville. Conversations about the ripening wine berries and tick prevention were had on the hike up!

by Suzanne Neal
Catawba Mountain Ridgerunner &
Natural Resource Technician
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Text or call: 540-808-7702



Parkway Triple Crown
Hike Leader: Daniel Burnette

May 2, 2024 - Sharp Top
Distance: 3 miles out and back
Participants: Daniel Burnette, Carol Rowlett, Amy Powell

We started at the Sharp Top trailhead at 8am, taking a nice steady pace up the mountain. The weather was absolutely perfect all morning. Getting to the top after about 1 hour of arduous climbing, we took a short break in the old cabin on the summit before walking out on top of the top summit rocks to take in the awesome view of Bedford and Botetourt Counties. I was glad to see that my great-grandpa's initials are still legible, being carved into a rock on the summit when he helped build the trail during the great depression.

Coming down from the summit, we took the short detour out to Buzzard's Roost to see some nice views straight down into Thaxton. We arrived back at Sharp Top Store at the trailhead to find that the store and bus were open for the



season, but they didn't have any ice cream at the store yet.

Flat Top
May 3, 2024
Distance: 4.4 miles point to point
Participants: Daniel Burnette, Carol Rowlett, Amy Powell, Laurie Wyatt

We started the hike at the Fallingwater Cascades trailhead at 8am on the backside of Flat Top, hiking 2.6 miles up to the summit. The weather was yet again perfect for the duration of the hike, with temps only reaching about 70 degrees for the day. From the summit we continued on the trail 1.8 miles down to the picnic area near the lodge at Abbott Lake. The trail to the picnic area was dry, yet still a bit treacherous, due to the loose stones and gravel for much of the length.

Apple Orchard Mountain
May 4, 2024
Distance: 11.5 miles, Loop/Spur
Participants: Daniel Burnette, Tom Behrmann



We started the hike at the trailhead at the end of North Creek Road at 7am. We started up the mountain on the Cornelius Creek Trail, following it all the way up to the AT. We then turned left on the AT and followed the AT all the way up to the summit of Apple Orchard Mountain. There were now views to be had at the summit, due to the entire mountain being encased in fog and rain. We had to get within just a few yards of the radar dome on the summit to even be able to see the radar dome. Coming back down the mountain, we followed the AT back down until we got to the Apple Orchard Falls Trail.

We turned right on the Apple Orchard Falls Trail and followed it all the way back to our start point, passing by Apple Orchard Falls on the way down. The falls were flowing very well due to the rain. We met several fisherman/women near the bottom of the mountain, as they were taking advantage of the recent trout stocking on North Creek, and the clearing rain later in the morning.

Petites Gap to the James River, 4/6/24

Kris and Bob Peckman (leaders), Barbara Martin, Madeleine Taylor

We ended up with only four hikers after several sign-ups had conflicts. We quickly found ourselves in two groups, the speed walkers and the smellers of roses (well, lookers at wildflowers). And there were plenty of wildflowers indeed. Just to name a few: spiderwort, bellwort, cinnamon fern, columbine, gaywings, bloodroot, trailing arbutus.

The hike starts with a significant climb to the top of Highcock Knob. On the way up, the many false summits make you think you have arrived, but alas, not yet. The weather alternated between chilly and windy, and warm and sunny, so jackets went on and came off, over and over. There was even hoarfrost in places. The area was burned last fall in the Matt's Creek fire, so the blackened ground and vegetation were quite a sight. As always, the views from the trail of the James River at Balcony Falls were stunning.

There were several people camped at the Matt's Creek shelter, and surprise! Three of our RATC hiking friends (Adele, Lannie, and Shelley) had come in from the James River, so it was fun to see them at the shelter.



Chessie Nature Trail, 5/11/24
Kris and Bob Peckman (leaders), Dee Case, Liz Kelly, Fred Meyer, Verona Thomas, Chris Wickham

In the past, at this time of year, spring flowers were the feature of this hike. This year, everything came early, so our flowers were very different. On both sides of the trail and for the entire length, Dame's Rocket was everywhere. But we also saw one fading columbine, leather-flower, fire pink, and a shrub with a fascinating flower

called bladder nut. The trail, an old rail bed, follows the Maury River from Lexington to Buena Vista, frequently passing through cow pastures, where Liz enjoyed chatting with the cows. Every gate upon entering a cow pasture contained a sign reading "Please close gate...COWS." Chris wondered if the cows could read the sign.

The weather was perfect, the river enchanting, and I think everyone enjoyed the day.



Starting at the Bennington parking area, we skirted around the wastewater facility and gasped our way up Underhill. We were rewarded with a sky of white egrets! We all joined in to clean up trash as we made our way along the greenway enjoying the day and each other's company.

Chestnut Ridge
Date: 7/18/24
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Ana Anderson, Cindy Lyons, Kathy DeCoster

Roanoke River Greenway - Bennington
Date: 7/23/24
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Kathy DeCoster, Laurie Spangler, Fred Meyer, Monica Lawfelt, Clive Hillyard, Kris Peckman, Bob Peckman, Christine Wickham, Debbie Steele, Kathryn Hopkins, Dave Grimm

We started out to do 5 miles on this paved greenway walk, but were having such a good time that we stretched it to 6 miles. Even though the humidity was high, we greatly enjoyed having a slight break from the blazing July heat.

The temperatures finally came down slightly toward the end of July and we ventured out for a hike along the Chestnut Ridge loop trail. We had deliberately picked a trail that could be easily shortened, which came in handy as the rains came in early. We did manage to complete 5 of the 6 mile loop before dashing (OK, walking quickly!) to our cars.



Social Coordinator's Report

by Pamela White Wolsey
RATC Social Coordinator

The 2024 Annual Corn Boil Celebration was a resounding success! With over 64 club members in attendance, it was an evening filled with fantastic food, camaraderie, a thrilling corn hole tournament, and the highlight of the night, The Easy Pickens Band.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our special guests, the Konnarock Trail Crew, whose presence added to the festivities. We also extend our deepest gratitude to all the dedicated volunteers who arrived early and stayed late, generously assisting with a myriad of tasks to ensure the event ran smoothly.

Here's to another memorable celebration and looking forward to the Holiday Potluck in December. More details coming soon!



Trail Supervisor's Report

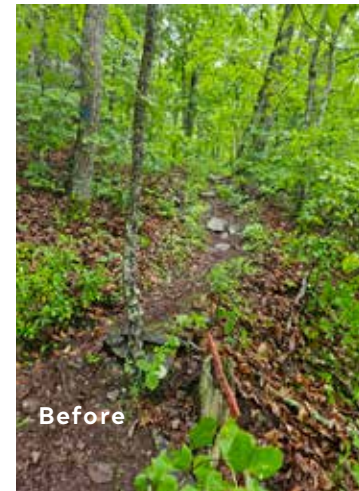
by Jim Webb

Date: 4/22/24

Location: 1 mile south of Black Horse Gap

Attending: Greg Stick, Phil Sodol & Jim Webb

After a brief layoff from weekly work hikes, we are back to where we left off on the trail. An almost perfect day for trail work found us hiking southbound from Black Horse Gap to locations we had flagged 2 months earlier. Working continually on widening the trail, we moved from one flagged area to another, only disturbed by 11 thru and section hikers. With our energy lagging, we headed out and were surprised to count 9 flagged areas repaired.



School of rock

On May 14-16 a rockwork course was held at the Goshen Pass Trail in Rockbridge County Virginia. It was co-sponsored by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. For brevity known as the ATC and DCR. It was taught by members of the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew, a group of volunteer workers out of the NY-NJ area.

It was attended by members of RATC, NBATC, USFS and the DCR. A bad section of the trail climbing up from the Maury River was chosen as the classroom. The first day was devoted to the handling and shaping of large rocks into steps. The use of rigging and slings was covered to move rocks.

The last 2 days were assigned to building a 17-step staircase as seen in the before and after pictures.

Date: 5/24-5/28 & 6/1-6/5

Location: Mountain Lake Wilderness

Attending: Erik Leedon-1 day & Jim Webb 5-days

Once again, this summer it is time for the Konnarock Trail Crew to visit the R.A.T.C. section and work on the trail relocation in the Mountain Lake Wilderness. The Konnarock crew is the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's trail crew consisting of volunteers lead by trained leaders.

The 6000 ft relocation was started in 2019 to bypass the fall line section that is deeply eroded. It has been worked on every year interrupted only by Covid. The relocation has wound its way up the mountain year by year and after the past 2 weeks is now 800-900 feet from its completion. The crossing of several rock slides this year has slowed work, but the crew is hoping to finish this year.





which should be at the Lutheran Church.

With deep regret, I would like to pay tribute to 3 long-time RATC members, Zetta Campbell, Mike Haynie and Dave Youmans. Homer and I hiked with all 3 and had high regards for each one. Their passings will leave a void that is not easy to fill.

Work is progressing on the VA 311 pedestrian bridge and it will soon be time to relocate the trail to connect to the bridge. We are confident it will be open in the fall and there will most likely be a ribbon cutting ceremony to which everyone is invited.

Troutville Trail Days was June 1st and we had several outstanding volunteers manning an RATC

booth. Mark Farrell redesigned the AT trivia game board and we used the new RATC canopy tent for the first time. As a final note, I would like to thank Adam Day for the research he did to find the tent vendor. We will also be participating in **Steppin' Out** in Blacksburg on August 2 - 3.

We are actively searching for someone to fill the positions of President and Vice-president in March 2025 as Homer and I will both be stepping down. If you are interested or have suggestions, please let us know.



President's Report

By Homer Witcher

I would like to thank Pamela and Josh Wolsey and Homer Witcher for all the outstanding work they did planning the Corn Boil. It was a very successful event with music and a cornhole competition. They have started planning the RATC Holiday potluck in December



Member Notes

By Pete Irvine

National Park Service A.T. Law Enforcement Ranger Brian Wilson continued his summer tour of Roanoke County Libraries at the South County Library on Wednesday, July 10. His presentation on

Backpacking Basics and Wilderness Safety

was well-received by a group of approximately 20 folks of all ages. (And considering he was competing against a "Flat Stanley" summer-reading event, and wasn't offering free ice cream that's impressive !)



Congratulations to our most recent members of the 113-Mile Club! These hardy individuals have successfully hiked all the Appalachian Trail miles maintained by our club:

Jay Young
Jean Stephens
Tom McAvoy
Daniel Burnette

Honoring Grandma Gatewood

Press Release from GrandmaGatewood.com

Fifty years after her death, Grandma Gatewood comes home to Gallipolis, Ohio, and back to the Appalachian Trail. Many know the story of Emma Rowena Gatewood. A 1949 National Geographic article about the Appalachian trail inspired her. In 1954, at 67, and after raising 11 children, Emma Rowena Gatewood left a dysfunctional home life and "went for a walk." She completed the Appalachian Trail in 146 days but also hiked the entire trail again two years later and section hiked after that. Loving adventure, she also walked the 2,000 miles of the Oregon Trail by herself at 71. Grandma Gatewood Memorial Hiking Trail in Gallia County, Ohio, is named after this influential hiker and part of the Buckeye Trail in Hocking Hills State Park.

People endearingly call Emma "Grandma Gatewood" and credit her for being the first solo female hiker to hike the entire Appalachian Trail and the first to do it twice. It is an incredible accomplishment for a woman over 60, even more so at that time in our history. She also did this remarkable feat without all the fancy hiking gear. There were no expensive backpacks or sleeping bags. Instead, she hung a homemade bag over her shoulder, which held a shower curtain and the rest of her gear. She wore plain sneakers and carried a simple stick for balance. Newspapers clambered on the trail to interview her. The Emmy-nominated documentary "Trail Magic"-2015 and the book "Grandma Gatewood's Walk" by Ben Montgomery-2016 have brought to life the accomplishments of Grandma Gatewood and her influence in saving the Appalachian Trail. She has motivated many hikers. As one person said, "Her story is ever-

green. It just keeps feeding the souls of those who find out about her."

Grandma Gatewood is coming home, home to Ohio, where she is from, and interred in Gallipolis, Ohio Valley Memory Gardens. She is also going back to the Appalachian Trail. Many people come every year to the cemetery to visit Grandma Gatewood. Paul Maxwell of Ohio Valley Memory Gardens has spearheaded a campaign for a statue that they will place at her gravesite. He chose internationally known sculptor Bridgette Mon-



geon. She has a heart for women and is an avid hike leader and an admin for an ever-growing hiking group - Houston Women's Hiking in Texas. She knows what encouragement Grandma Gatewood brings to the love of hiking and the support of women, as that is also at the heart of her group. Doing a sculpture of Grandma Gatewood is close to the artist's heart, and she has invited other women from her hiking group to help her bring Grandma Gatewood to life.

Where Can Grandma Gatewood live on the Appalachian Trail?

When brought on to the project, the sculptor asked Maxwell if they could raise money and cast two, bringing Grandma Gatewood Back to the Appalachian Trail. But where? Finding a location that will fit the sculpture and where it is permitted close to the trail but not actually on it is challenging. The Grandma Gatewood Fundraising Team is searching for a second location now, and open to reviewing both private and public land. Maybe this tourist attraction and historical icon can be in your town? The fundraising team will take care of the fundraising, installation etc. Please contact the artist with your suggestions.

Meanwhile, the sculptor is creating a small maquette that she will enlarge into a life-size sculpture. "My design won't look like the 'posed' photographs that you see of Grandma Gatewood taken by well-meaning photographers as they interrupted her solitude." states the sculptor and hiker.

The artist's vision is of Grandma Gatewood on a small berm, hiking uphill, pausing to marvel at the wonder of nature. "I know this feeling. Many hikers know this feeling. That is what I'm trying to capture." The bronze scene will allow hikers to pretend to hike up next to her for a perfect photo opportunity. The artist is documenting her creative journey on the grandmagatewood.com website, offering supporters an opportunity to peer over the shoulder of the artist while she works. She appreciates hearing the stories others share on how Grandma Gatewood has inspired their lives. "These stories inspire the art," states Mongeon. The installation date depends on the fundraising; however, life-size bronzes can take a year to create. You can plan on visiting Grandma Gatewood near the AT or in Gallipolis, Ohio, 2024/2025. There will be celebrations at each location, and Mongeon plans to bring some of her hiking ladies from Texas to hike the trails in honor and thanks to Grandma Gatewood.

Sharing about the project and the fundraiser is vital to this journey. Mongeon adds, "No donation is too small. Like the trail, it is one step at a time." To contribute to the statue project, visit the www.GrandmaGatewood.com website for the GoFundMe link and other banking information. Corporate sponsors are welcome.

For more information about this press release contact Bridgette Mongeon: 713-540-3201

RATC BOARD MEMBERS

President Therese Witcher president@ratc.org || **Vice President** Homer Witcher vicepresident@ratc.org || **Secretary** Susan Terwilliger secretary@ratc.org || **Treasurer** Jimmy Whitney treasurer@ratc.org || **Membership Coordinator** John Kelly membership@ratc.org || **Shelter Supervisor** Bennett Witcher sheltersupervisor@ratc.org || **Shelter Supervisor** Therese Witcher sheltersupervisor@ratc.org || **Trail Supervisor** Jim Webb trailsupervisor@ratc.org || **Hikemaster** Carol Rowlett hikemaster@ratc.org || **Newsletter Editor** Ron Bradbury blazer@ratc.org || **Conservation Supervisor** Tom McAvoy conservationsupervisor@ratc.org || **Land Management Supervisor** Joey Johnson landmanagement@ratc.org || **Counselor** Erin Byers counselor1@ratc.org || **Counselor** Brian Boggs counselor2@ratc.org || **Counselor** Brendle Wolfe counselor3@ratc.org || **Counselor** Adam Day counselor4@ratc.org || **McAfee Knob Task Force Liaison** Brian Boggs mcafee-taskforce@ratc.org || **Webmaster** Jill Pennington webmaster@ratc.org || **Roanoke College Liaison** Conner McBane cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org || **RATC Archivist** Diana Christopoulos archivist@ratc.org || **Social Events Coordinator** Pamela and Josh Wolsey

TRAIL BLAZER
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
PO Box 12282
ROANOKE VA 24024-2282

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Application New and Renewal

IF ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP, I AGREE TO:

1. Support the objectives of the RATC
2. Abide by the rules of the national and state parks and forests
3. Respect the interests of the owner when on private property
4. Keep trails and woodlands free of litter, and
5. Abide by the instructions of the leader on group hikes and trips

Name(s)	New Member Packet Fee:	\$5	_____
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15	_____
	Family # of years	x \$20	_____
City	State	Zip	Individual life membership x \$250
			Family life membership x \$300
Phone		Donation	\$ _____
Email		Total Amount Enclosed	\$ _____

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to "RATC" or use PayPal at ratc.org

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024

RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via treasurer@ratc.org or by calling 540-521-5435