

BootPrints

Volume 3 Issue 4
December 1999

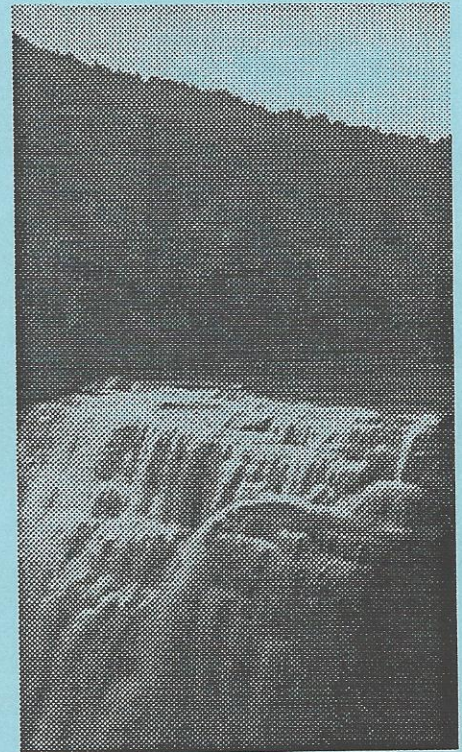
The Grand Canyon of the East

By Dick Forrest

Over Columbus Day weekend sixteen club members journeyed to Letchworth State Park in western New York State. If you look at a map of New York State, you will see one of the few state parks in the western part of the state, just south of Rochester. The park surrounds a seventeen-mile section of the Genesee River. Ravi Kulkarni was anxious to share this fabulous area with other members of the club, since he knew of its existence through spending some time in the area on business.

Letchworth's claim to fame is its spectacular gorge area with stunning waterfalls on the Genesee River. William prior Letchworth was looking for a country retreat away from his saddlery-hardware and malleable iron business in Buffalo in the 1850s. He evidently made a fortune, but it was not respectable in those days to retire at the age of 36. He worked for 25 years in his business, and then became the New York State Commissioner of Charities. His humanitarian work for New York State was renowned. He built his retreat overlooking the middle of three waterfalls, the most impressive called Middle Falls. His estate, Glen Iris, is known today as the Glen Iris Inn. He purchased at least 1000 acres that he later donated to the state. In addition to Letchworth's 1000 acres, New York State purchased an additional 14,000 plus acres to form the existing park.

Ravi had reserved four cabins many months in advance for our weekend stay in Letchworth State Park. Sue and I stayed in a tiny two-person cabin. It had two beds, a refrigerator, a stove, a table, two chairs and very little room for anything else. Frank Grabinski and Bryan Goodwin had the same set-up in another cabin. The rest of our group stayed in two six-person cabins in another part of the park. See *Letchworth*, page 3



PVHC members on the weekend: Joyce Berg, Ursula Brusco, Sue Carey, Shari Cox, Dick Forrest, Sue Forrest, Dottie Gates, Bryan Goodwin, Frank Grabinski, Frank Kamlowksi, Eva Kealey, Adeti Kulkarni, Ravi Kulkarni, Rushmie Kulkarni, Norm Laplante and Chris St. Germain.



PVHC Profile: Shari Cox

How long have you been a member of the club?

I have been a member of the club for five years. I had done a little hiking before that but I wanted to do more. I didn't know many people that hiked and I also didn't know where to go. The club gave me an opportunity to hike every weekend, and the hikes were planned so I only had to show up. The club is a great place for inexperienced hikers to learn about hiking.

I'm sure that by now most of our members have heard rumors of your planned thru-hike of the AT-what made you decide to attempt it?

I tell people that I made the decision to hike the AT because I was having a bad day. I had ideas about doing the AT, but I didn't really think I would want to give up the comfort of my bed and bathroom for six months. I felt like I needed an adventure and a goal in my life. I had heard and read so many good things about doing the trail that I wanted to experience it.

What preparations are you making? When did you start?

I started preparing for my hike as soon as I decided. I bought books on thru-hiking.

The first thing that I had to think about was, can I afford it? I was going to be without an income but would still have six months of mortgage, car insurance, utilities, health insurance and money for the AT. Once I decided it was possible, I approached my boss about taking a leave of absence.

The next thing that I did was get out there and backpack. That is the best way to prepare. When you are out there enough, you know what you need, what you don't need, what you like for gear and how things work, how much weight is good, and if you can handle the bad times along with the good. Of course four days out is not the same as six months.. Without knowing the trails, I



don't know what I can do for mileage.

I have planned 12 mail drops. Other than that, I haven't done much planning. One thing I have to plan is trying to find someone to take care of my home and cat. I will be making final preparations after the first of the year. I kept thinking that I had plenty of time to plan. I had over a year. Well, it's only a little over four months away.

How does thru-hiking affect your entire life? What does it mean in terms of work, friends and family?

I don't know how it will affect my entire life. I don't really think about being away from my family and friends for six months. I know that they will be supporting me and keeping in touch. I hope to keep a journal, even though I hate to write.

One thing I think about, is will I really want to go back to work at the same place. After being in the out of doors for that period of time, doing what I want when I want, it will be hard to adjust to punching a clock and sitting at a desk. I am hoping that my life will be affected by the hike. I have heard many good stories about the people out there. I am hoping it will restore my faith in mankind. I am hoping it will bring peace and serenity into my life. It's such a simple life. You get up, eat, clean, hike, eat and sleep. You just have the simple things to focus on.

How do people react when you tell them your plans?

I get all kinds of responses. Are you going alone? Are you going to carry a cell phone? (Where do I plug it in?) Are you going to carry a gun? You are crazy! I also get the "I wish I could do it." I know my family will be worried but they are pretty supportive.

What's is the farthest distance you've hiked so far? How long did it take you? The farthest I've hiked in one day is twenty miles on a backpacking trip-about 12 1/2 hours of hiking in the rain with a full pack. The longest backpacking trip I've completed is four days for 35 miles.

Your plans are to hike the AT alone. Aren't you concerned about your personal safety?

Many people who don't hike or know anything about the AT keep telling me that I shouldn't go alone. I have read that the AT is very safe. Sure, there have been some problems but overall it's safe. Even though I will be hiking alone, I won't be alone. They are anticipating that the year 2000 will see a record number of thru-hikers. I won't know them at first, but I feel that I will find many people to hike with.

I hear the odds of finishing from GA to ME aren't great. I would like to finish the whole thing, not to say I did it, but to experience the adventure. One bit of advice that was given to me, "Don't quit on a bad day". I think that is very good advice and I hope that it will get me thru to the end.

Skinner Mountain?

The following article is reprinted from Margot Cleary's Lifeline column in the Daily Hampshire Gazette. It was submitted to BootPrints by Sandy Cripps.

Q. Where is Skinner Mountain?

A. As you may know (if you are playing devil's advocate), Skinner Mountain is a misnomer...there is no such place in western Massachusetts. The peak that frequently gets misidentified as Skinner Mountain is actually Mount Holyoke, which is in Skinner State Park in Hadley — hence the confusion.

Park staffer Gini Traub says the park's name honors the man who gave the property to the state, Joseph Allen Skinner. Skinner, a member of a prominent Holyoke family which owned textile mills, gave the 390 acres of land plus the buildings on it to the state in 1940. He asked for no money in return for the property — just that the area be known as Joseph Allen Skinner State Park.

According to Traub, the genesis of the name Mount Holyoke is somewhat murky, but she gave us the commonly accepted story. Elizur Holyoke, a magistrate and surveyor, was a well-connected man in the 1600s, marrying into Springfield's

Pynchon family. He is thought to have surveyed the area where the mountain is located — and then named it after himself. "It's always been Mount Holyoke," Traub told Lifeline, adding that the mountain's name predates the City of Holyoke, and Mount Holyoke College.

Traub says that calling Mount Holyoke by the wrong name is a common mistake; even local TV weatherman Tom Bevacqua has been guilty of it. According to Traub, there is an informal network of park aficionados on the lookout for people who use the term Skinner Mountain, and they aren't shy about pointing out the error — even to local celebrities like Bevacqua.

Skinner State Park offers scenic views, hiking trails and other recreational opportunities. The Summit House at the top of the mountain, which operated as a hotel and banquet hall until the 1930s, is also open to visitors. Park hours vary according to the season; for information, call 586-0350.

Sharp-as-a-Tack Awards

In August, we gave out our first "Sharp-as-a-Tack" award. Recipients are chosen by nomination and vote at monthly meetings. The "point" of the award is to recognize a member for, let's face it, doing something dumb. Recipients to date are:

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| August | Dave Rotundo — didn't show up for a hike he was coordinating |
| September | Rob Schechman — lost his glasses, compass and watch, all on same hike |
| October | Dave Rotundo — got lost at McLean Game Refuge |
| November | Sue Carey — closed window on Norm LaPlante and almost ran over him |

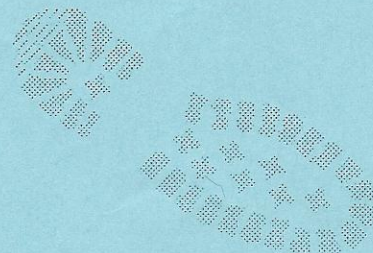
I would point out that a certain member has already received the award twice, but that would be "tack-less" of me.

Letchworth

Continued from page 1

We traveled to Letchworth most of Saturday. On Sunday, we hiked the seven-mile Gorge Trail. Most of the leaves on the trees that surrounded the gorge were at their peak color. I was amazed as I walked at how many sugar maple leaves I saw on the ground. Bright yellows and reds were ablaze around us. The gorge itself looked like a small Grand Canyon. You could see layer upon layer of sedimentary rock that had over time been carved out by the action of water. The gorge was amazingly deep at many places. The most spectacular of the falls, Middle Falls, is 107 feet high. On Sunday night, we had dinner at the Glen Iris Inn, and after dinner, we saw the falls illuminated at night. Day and night, it was an impressive sight! No wonder William Letchworth decided to build at this place overlooking the Genesee.

On Monday we drove home, but not before going to Howe Caverns, located southwest of Albany. Kudos to Ravi for planning a great weekend.





By Terry and Sandy Cripps

The headlines read "6,000 walk — \$425 thousand collected for cancer." PVHC was a part of it. Fourteen club members walked the five-mile loop and made a difference that counted.

Organized by Shari Cox and led by Bernadette Johnson, we were a small part of the whole, but we were a part. Some of us collected a small amount and some of us a larger amount, but as a group we did very well and made a fine contribution—\$1,341. Not only did we help in the effort to fight cancer, but we all had a great time doing it as well.

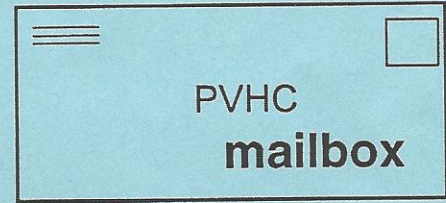
How about showing up next year with a larger group and making an even bigger contribution!!!!

**Boot Prints
c/o backpacking, etc.
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November 5, 1999

Dear P.V.H.C. members,

Wow! Let me write that again backwards: Wow! I would like to thank you for such a warm welcome back.

I am very blessed to be a member of such a fine group of people as yourselves.. On Tuesday night, November 2, 1999, you really made me feel welcome. Wow!

The concern you had for my wife Rose's health demonstrated your love and kindness to me. It was humbling to see and hear of your concern for her. Wow!

It was very flattering to be able to share my "AT" hike with you. Your desire to hear about Rose's and my experience on the trail made me feel very happy. Wow!

As I gave my talk, I was very impressed by the club for their alertness and attentiveness to me. Not one member seemed overly bored. This helped me overcome some of my nervousness. That was impressive. Wow!

Again, I would like to make mention of my gratitude to all the members who made my return an enjoyable one. Thank you. Wow!

"Just a walk in the Park."

Bill

