

Flip Flop

by Joe Barella

In mid-April of 1997, I began my only North to South through hike. Because it's near impossible to start on Katahdin at that time of year, I decided to start where Route 9 and City Stream cross the trail in Vermont. After stopping for lunch in Bennington, Pat left me off there on a fairly warm day (40 F). The climb up Harmon Hill is quite steep and with a foot of melting snow, very slippery and definitely challenging. I had dressed light in just nylon pants, a tee-shirt, and a jacket which I quickly shed as I climbed. Even then the sweat rolled down my forehead, but the climb is less than a half mile and I was soon at the top. As the terrain eased I became very comfortable. I had already done this section of trail going south but never with snow on it, so it was like a new trail to me. I arrived at Congdon camp at around four-thirty so I had plenty of time to get myself a bite to eat and layout my sleeping bag before dark. Congdon camp is a small, kind of ramshackle cabin but having a door makes it nice for cold weather. As the temperature dropped, the wind outside picked up and was soon howling and while this little shack was far from air tight, I was warm and comfortable in my zero bag and enjoying the sound of the wind and the creaking of the trees. I was excited about being back on the trail, so sleep didn't come right away but I eventually drifted off. As usual the urge to pee came sometime later but not wanting to leave my warm sleeping bag I lay there for a while, eventually giving in and going out into the wind and cold. Actually the cold felt kind of nice and I was soon back in my bag and asleep for a while. At around 3 am I awoke to a loud cracking sound in back of the cabin and then the whole cabin shook. I knew a tree had come down nearby and I just had to go see, so I put on my boots and jacket (I slept in my pants and sweatshirt) and walked around to the back of the cabin and there in the beam of my flashlight thirty feet from the cabin was the trunk of a very large maple tree. My curiosity satisfied, I was quickly back in the cabin and in my sleeping bag because it was now cold as a witch's tit. I didn't sleep anymore being all wound up over the falling tree and excited about the hike. I just lay there resting until it lightened up outside. I had used up most of my water I had kept from freezing in my sleeping bag, but there was enough to have with breakfast (a trail bar).

April 19

There was only one thing to do, so I put my spare (frozen) bottle inside my sweatshirt to thaw, then packed up, threw on my pack and was off on the trail. The snow now had a thick hard crust so the hiking was easy. Somewhere around nine, I was shocked to see another hiker on a side trail just past Seth Warner Shelter. He was 300 yards away so we just waved and went on our way. At the brook near the state line I saw the biggest otter I'd ever seen and I reasoned he got to grow so big because of the remoteness of this area. When he saw me he quickly disappeared into the brook and out of view. When I got to the brook I filled up my water bottles and looked in his direction but he was long gone. The last four miles into North Adams were uneventful but pretty with its coat of white. It hadn't warmed up much so the crust stayed hard and the walking easy. When I got into North Adams at 1:30 I was starved as I hadn't eaten anything but a couple of trail bars and a Snickers. The meal at the diner was great, especially the homemade soup. By the time I got served and finished eating it was after three and by the time I reached Wilbur Clearing Lean-to the sun was hidden

by Graylock Mountain and the temperature was dropping like a stone. By the time I got situated and into my sleeping bag it was already down to ten degrees. Luckily I'd brought a pair of down booties for shelter shoes. Other than that, I wore just one T-shirt, one sweat shirt, my jacket, nylon pants and two pairs of socks. By nine p.m. the temperature was already zero, and while I wasn't freezing, I was cold. As quickly as I could I put on my extra t-shirt under my sweatshirt and also stuffed my towel under my jacket and added my spare pair of heavy socks. It must have been enough because in fifteen minutes I was warm and comfy. At 6am when I awoke it was minus-five and I had survived well in spite of a chilly 1am pee call.

April 20

It was too cold to hang around to eat so I grabbed what turned out to be a frozen Snickers and gnawed at it before I leaped out of my bag, threw on my hiking boots, rolled up and attached my sleeping bag and was on my way. My towel was now a turban with one of the flaps covering my nose and mouth. The climb up the steep slopes warmed me further and I was even worrying about sweating, but the winds were strong and cold enough to keep me just about right. The winds of the past couple of days had blown the snow off to a crisp, crunchy layer in some spots and deep drifts in others but had somehow packed the drifts so that they were quite dense so I didn't sink in for the most part. The patterns it sculpted into the slopes were varied and quite beautiful. By the time I had reached the top I forgot about the cold as I surveyed the scenes below in all directions. Finally I headed down the trail where ice formed where people had walked a few storms ago. I tried walking on it, but it was too slippery, so I walked down where I could still see the trail but it was less slippery. By ten it had warmed up to the low twenties with bright sunlight. After descending Graylock the trail goes into a dense forest where the wind and sun couldn't get to the snow, and there was four feet of soft snow for me to flounder in. It never had a chance to crust over because it was shaded. Now it was still fairly cold but I could feel the perspiration dripping off my nose as I struggled through two miles of this. As I lost elevation the depth of the snow lessened and was only a foot or so when I got into Cheshire. When I got into the center and saw a clock I was shocked, it was after two. It had taken me six hours to do eleven miles. Of course I had done some zigzagging to avoid icy areas, and also to find the trail a few times. It's very difficult to stay on the trail with three feet of snow on it. There is no path to follow, only flat snow.

After a nice meal and resupplying at the grocery, I went to the church where they often allow hikers to stay overnight in the basement. No one was there. I walked back to the grocery to find out if anyone there knew where I could contact the priest and I finally got a number to call. I did get someone but they had no authority to allow me to stay and they didn't know where the priest was. By this time I was tired and leg weary. From the phone booth I was using I could see a small diner, so I walked to it and had a cup of coffee and pie and rested. While I was there I asked if there was a motel and they said there was but they thought it was closed but gave me directions anyway. By now I was grasping at straws. So I walked to the motel which was indeed closed. Tired, discouraged and a little panicky I said, "to hell with it" and called Pat and asked her to pick me up, I'd go home for a break. She agreed to come and was soon on her way. I was disappointed in myself because I did have a tent with me, but didn't want to deal with clearing a spot in the snow along the trail for it even though I knew I could handle it. To make things even worse, a local came by and told me I could stay on his porch but I declined because I didn't want to tell Pat her trip up was

for nothing. When Pat did arrive she told me there was a big snow storm predicted and I thought maybe, just maybe, I'd made the right decision.

April 21

That night the storm did come and dumped a foot of snow on Bakersville. Being home allowed me to shovel the driveway and do a few things around the house. Next day Pat brought me back and I was off on the snowy trail again. It had gone up to the fifties the previous day and the new snow had melted and settled so it really wasn't too deep and the section of trail between Cheshire and Kay Wood quite tame. My night at the shelter there pleasant and comfortable. (Low temperature 46 F)

April 22

I woke bright eyed and bushy tailed thanks to my day at home and short trip yesterday. The terrain from Kay Wood to Upper Goose is mixed, fortunately for me because the steep parts both up and down were slippery chutes now with melting snow. I had to actually walk off the trail where ever there were trees or bushes to hold onto. Even then I ended up sliding down on my behind at times. It was uncomfortable hiking with both a wet ass and wet feet but I was making pretty fair progress so I stayed upbeat. I stayed on the porch of Upper Goose Cabin after looking around for a hidden key. I don't even know if they hide one but I took a shot. It was pretty comfortable on the porch anyway and I had lots of good memories at Upper Goose. It had been an exhausting day with the slipping and sliding, plus being wet so I conked out quickly.

April 23

I woke feeling like I'd wrestled a bear or something. The slippery snow had done a job on me and it was very hard to get started. Lucky for me the trail around the pond is pretty easy and I got the kinks out fast. After that its downhill to the main road then a gentle uphill on the other side, then easy road walks until Mount Wilcox. Even though the hiking had been relatively easy, I was dead tired and it was quite late in the day when I finally arrived at Mount Wilcox South Lean-to. The snow on the Mountain wasn't very deep but at this point just having both hands and feet wet all day sapped my strength. As soon as I laid out my bag I crawled in and was soon asleep. When I woke up it was pitch dark and I was starved so I fumbled around in my food bag for some peanut butter and a bagel. After that and some water I was soon asleep again, this time until day light.

April 24

The first twelve miles to just past Tom Leonard Shelter were tough. Lots of roots, rocks, and ruts but there was only a few inches of snow, which helped. After that the hiking was easy and I was buoyed up knowing I'd reach Connecticut soon. I made it all the way to Glen Brook Lean-to which was 19 miles and not too bad for a snowy, wet trail. When I got to the shelter just before dark there was a young man already there. He was very pleasant and he had a nice fire going nearby. I was finally going to be able to dry my wet shoes, socks and gloves. I stayed up talking with him 'til 9pm but just couldn't stay awake any longer. This was the first time I'd had any company in a shelter on this trip and I really enjoyed it.

April 25

It was nice having dry feet for the first mile or so until I got past Race Brook Trail. There was no way to get thru that wet area just before the climb up Race Mountain. The stepping stones were all a couple of inches under water. The best I could do was to go quickly which helped but I soon ran into some slushy drifts so I gave in to destiny and wet shoes. I have always loved this section so I forgot my wet feet and enjoyed the day. There is a couple with a young boy here at Lime Stone Springs. They're very nice and I'm enjoying their company. Cornwall Bridge tomorrow, good thing too because my food bag is almost empty.

April 26

We awoke to a couple of inches of new snow this morning and it was damn slippery, good thing there was easy hiking for the most part. I was so happy to get to Cornwall Bridge and get something to eat. I was completely out of food after breakfast. When I got there I pigged out, eating a grinder and a couple little pies before I resupplied and then a half dozen donuts while I hiked back to the trail. I was sure happy to see Stewart Hollow Shelter. That five miles from the store seemed to take forever. I've got the shelter to myself.

April 27

Foggy, wet and slippery most of the day and my pack heavy with resupply, but I knew I could make it to New York So I was pumped up. This must be the seventh or eighth time I've ended up at Wiley Shelter. Very strange I always seem to end up here.

April 28

By the time I got to route 20 the last of the snow was gone. It felt so good to walk with almost dry shoes. I made sure to hike the twenty five miles here to Ralph's Peak Hikers Shelter so I could sleep in a bed. It's a two room cabin next to Long Hill Road and very comfortable.

April 29

Yesterday was my longest day so far on this trip so I was pretty stiff this morning and not very energetic all day. I pretty much struggled to make seventeen miles here to Denning Hill. It's early but I have a nice tent site and no ambition to go further.

April 30

I was all charged up looking forward to crossing the Hudson today. Between crossing the bridge and going thru the park it was a fun day. I've got a nice tent site a quarter mile from the overlooks. Only eleven miles but I had walked all of the way in and out of Montgomery for resupply also.

May 1

It's so easy to hike this time of year, being so nice and cool. I spent much of the day reminiscing about old hikes so the miles just melted away. Wild Cat Shelter - 24 miles.

May 2

I stopped at that road side market on Waywanda Road and added to my food bag. I like to walk around the store and look at all there homemade foods. I always find some goodies to eat while I'm there. It's so nice getting here to Pochuck Shelter with full water bottles. (No water at shelter).

May 3

I stopped at the grocery store in Unionville. The trail used to go right by it so I went the old way and then picked up the trail as it crossed Unionville Road. I didn't even think about the possibility of another relocation. Luckily for me it's the same as in 1995 but had been relocated twice between '85 and '90. I've been looking forward to tenting here near Catfish Fire Tower. It's on a very gently rounded small mountain with great views and quite a few almost flat grassy spots to pitch the tent. 24 miles.

May 4

I was so excited about going over the Delaware River Bridge and into Pennsylvania today. I got into Water Gap by 9:30 so I had a nice breakfast there. It's so nice having the faucet from the Abbey nearby to wash up with, I had worked up a pretty good sweat coming up from the river. I feel great now but not looking forward to the rocks tomorrow. Kirkwood Shelter - 19 miles

May 5

I'm so happy to be past that six miles of rocks between Wolf Rocks and Wind Gap. It was only thirteen miles here to LeRoy Smith Shelter but I'm happy here and have plenty of water I got in Wind Gap. I don't know if there is any water at the spring but I remember it being dry other years.

May 6

As I headed down scree into Palmerton, I couldn't believe the change since 1985. Instead of gnarled dead trees there are now some pretty fair size trees including some hemlocks which aren't tolerant to pollution. I can still remember the stench of acid from the smelting of zinc back in '85. I got into town at noon so I had all afternoon to shop and doodle around. I'm staying here in the basement of the police department now and very comfortable.

May 7

I can't get over how different it feels to be hiking in this direction. It not only looks different; it seems to work out better for resupply and water. Allentown Hiking Club Shelter - 19 miles.

May 8

Weather was just perfect today with a nice breeze. My mind was filled with images of friends from past hikes so the miles went by easy. Windsor Furnace Shelter - 18 miles.

May 9

I didn't really need to stop here in Port Clinton but it's raining and I like it here in this pavilion. It was only six miles to get here but I'm so comfortable I will stay. I may get up enough energy to walk a half mile to the restaurant later.

May 10

The rain stopped when I went to lunch yesterday and there was plenty of day left to make the Eagles Nest shelter but I was so comfortable in the pavilion I just hung around and wrote out postcards. The extra rest was probably a good thing as I easily

hiked the twenty miles here to 501 Shelter in Pine Grove today. This shelter was actually a small barn and very roomy.

May 11

I thought I might be seeing North bound hikers by now being at the half way point. I did meet quite a few day hikers and enjoyed talking with them. Rausch Gap Shelter. - 15 Miles

May 12

I got a pleasant surprise today during a rain shower that started just before noon. After an hour or so the sun did come out but the rain continued. As I looked down the trail in its steamy brightness I could see two ladies hopping from rock to rock and side to side avoiding the puddles. Even at a distance there was something familiar about them. As they came closer I realized it was Trip and Tag who I'd met in '95. Trip was my age and Tag a few years older and they were sister-in-laws. We had lunch together at Jenny Knob Shelter in April of '95 and then shared the shelter at Potawajo in August. I raced down the trail and gave them both a big hug. They asked me if I'd heard from Root (I had). Finally we sat on some stones right there on the trail and reminisced while we ate lunch. When I looked back down the trail after we parted they looked more like school girls then over sixty-year olds, skipping to and fro across the path. I'm staying at the new Peters Mountain Shelter this time - 18 miles.

May 13

I got to the supermarket in Duncannon by 9:30 am after an early start. I was resupplied and back on the trail by ten thanks to a local who was going back to town. Most of the hiking today was pretty easy through fields and such so I just kept going all the way to the motel here on US 11, making it 29 miles for the day. I feel so pampered this trip; staying in motels more than I used to.

May 14

Thought about Dandy Don and Tom Leonard today. It seems more like last year than twelve years ago that we hiked this section together. I have lots of company here at Tagg Run Shelters and I'm enjoying it. 20 miles.

May 15

It started raining at around ten a.m. and it got kind of sloppy so I was happy when I got here to Quarry Gap Shelters. Since the road walks in Pennsylvania have been eliminated, it's lost some of its charm for me and I'll be happy when I leave it tomorrow. 25 miles.

May 16

While it took some effort to get all the way here to Hemlock Hill Shelter (29 miles), I'm very happy. I haven't resupplied since Boiling Springs so I'm low on food but I'll make it to Harper's Ferry tomorrow.

May 17

By noon today I realized I wouldn't get into Harper's Ferry until after five and there is a candy machine here at Gathland State Park so I'm tenting right here where there is a bathroom with running water. Twenty miles was plenty after yesterdays 29 and I'm so

comfortable. Its only 11 miles into Harper's Ferry so I will leave at first light and be in town by 9:30 for breakfast.

May 18

I got into Harper's Ferry before ten. From this direction it's either flat or down hill so it was easy. After resupply in Harper's Ferry the trail goes over the Shenandoah River Bridge and the climbs come but they aren't too bad. I walked a quarter mile to the burger joint at Keys gap for an afternoon snack so I'm not hungry. David Lesser Memorial Shelter. 19 miles.

May 19

Easy hiking and good weather all day. I pretty much took it easy and enjoyed the day. I quit early and I'm very comfortable here at Rod Hollow . 21 Miles

May 20

I've been looking forward to staying at the Jim and Molly Denton Shelter. It's so roomy and the picnic tables are sheltered too. The way the shelters are built and sided is very tasteful also - 19 miles.

May 21

This is the first time I haven't picked up lots of ticks along the National Zoo's fences between VA 602 and the Shenandoah National Park. The field next to the VA 602 was newly mown instead of waste high like on my other three hikes. It's so nice being in the park again with its easy hiking and beautiful overlooks Gravel Springs Hut - 18 miles

May 22

It rained hard at times and was extremely foggy and raw. I'm here at Pass Mountain Hut with some Army Reserve guys who are doing some rappelling and mountain climbing nearby. Anyway they have a nice fire going in what I guess you call a stove (a two foot by two foot open metal container that burns wood and has a grate on top for cooking). They have lots of food and are sharing it with me making me a very happy hiker. They are all extremely fit so I suspect they might be Rangers. It's like a windfall for me after a tough day on the trail doing only thirteen miles.

May 23

I had such a great time with the Army guys last night; I was all charged up today. I stopped for a late breakfast at Skyland, making my day even better. The 27 miles here to Bearfence Hut flew by.

May 24

A little rain and fog today so views were limited. I would have gone a little farther and tented but the ground is wet and it will probably rain some more tonight. Anyway, it's quite comfortable here at Pine Field Hut - 21 miles.

May 25

After the fog burned off, views were spectacular. My day was filled with memories of past hikes, including hiking Calf Mountain in a dense fog and being afraid of going off the trail. Today I could see for a few miles - Calf Mountain Shelter - 26 miles.

May 26

When I got to Rockfish Gap I was offered a ride into the grocery store 4 ½ miles in so I took it and resupplied. I got a bite to eat at the restaurant and chiseled a ride back to the trail too. No wasted miles at all. I was so pumped up by this I made it all the way here to Harper's Creek Shelter - 31 miles.

May 27

After my long day yesterday I was a little tired and was dragging by the time I got here to Cow Camp Gap Shelter. It's still early but I'm going to jump into my sleeping bag now. 24 miles.

May 28

Sometime after dark last night a young lady came into the shelter sobbing. For quite a while I tried to ignore it by feigning sleep, but after over a half hour of this I finally acknowledged her presence and a half hour later she quieted down so I was almost asleep again. Then the boyfriend appears shining his flashlight all over the shelter apologizing to her and then got himself setup near her. It's now past midnight and they are still taking sweetly to each other, but not for long. Their previous argument now erupts into a full blown war of words. Completely oblivious to me, this continued to around 3 am when I quietly packed my gear and headed down the trail with my tiny flashlight. Now it wasn't pitch black out, but close to it. My only salvation was that I'd hiked the trail three times before; once just two years ago and even then it was very difficult for the first hour managing only around two miles. After that it lightened up a little and I did better. Naturally by five it was almost light and I was able to hike normally. I was surprised at how good I felt after dealing with those two idiots. I was on the top of Bluff Mountain before eight when I stopped to eat. It was absolutely beautiful looking out from there and I had already done 16 miles and was proud of myself. I had survived those two morons and actually turned it into a plus. The idea that I could now reach the James River and the relatively new hikers bridge that spans it brought my spirits even higher. After such a poor start, the day turned out to be one of my best. I arrived at Matt's Creek Shelter with very little fatigue and I have it all to myself - 28 miles.

May 29

I've been excited all day--- it will be less than two weeks hike to Atkins, Va. and home, then Katahdin south to Bennington, VT. The first ten miles of today's 22 were fairly challenging so I was happy just getting here. Bryant Ridge Shelter.

May 30

Not a great day today, lots of wind and rain. When I got here to Bobbets Shelter I just laid out my sleeping bag, ate some lunch and called it a day. It will only be 19 miles into Cloverdale tomorrow and I will definitely stay there. 12 miles

May 31

I'm here at the Best Western, resupplied, well fed, and tired. I didn't get into town until 2pm and by the time I cleaned up and rinsed out a few things, it was three. Between the half mile to the grocery, shopping and eating it was six by the time I got back here. Anyway I'm comfortable here watching T.V.

June 1

Today was what I'm out here for. All day was nice, but to end the day with both Tinker Cliffs and MacAfee Knob was awesome. I spent so much time at both places it was dusk when I arrived at Catawba Mountain Shelter. 18 miles.

June 2

Another great day. Somehow I enjoyed Dragon's Tooth a lot more from this direction. Every time I see the Audie Murphy Monument I think of my brother Richie and memories of him before he was killed on Iwo Jima in 1945. Visions of the good times when I was a little shaver flood my mind. The water source here at Niday Shelter is much better than it was on my other hikes - 24 miles.

June 3

Another bright sun-shiny day and very enjoyable. I had plenty of time and energy to go on to the next shelter but just didn't feel like it. War Spur Shelter - 18 miles.

June 4

Pine Swamp brought back memories of a seized knee in 1990 when I kept hobbling along and ended up at Niday Shelter after a 31 mile day. I'm happy to be here at Rice Field Shelter because I helped build it in 1990 when I was hiking thru - 24 miles.

June 5-7

After a quick trip into the grocery store (1 mile) in Pearisburg and an arduous climb up Pearisburg Mountain, I found a nice spot to set up my tarp a mile north of Doc's Knob Shelter. I had plenty of water and I'd been wanting to try out my tarping skills. It was already late in the day so by the time I rigged up my tarp and had a quick bite it was already dusk. It didn't take long to drift off. I don't know how long it was before I was woken by the sound of what I thought were nuts hitting my tarp. At first I dismissed it as that, but when it persisted every few seconds I suspected someone was toying with me. But who? I'd been hiking alone and didn't know anyone in the area. Finally after I challenged, out of the dark and into the beam of my tiny flashlight came the beaming faces of Root and Katy, both who had hiked with me in '95. Katy had baked a birthday cake for me and we had an impromptu party right there. I had corresponded with both of them since '95 but never in a million years would have thought they'd get together for my birthday (Actually June 6th). They stayed a couple of hours and we had a great time. I have no words to describe how it made me feel to have two elite hikers think enough of me to do this. Especially since they had a hard time finding me figuring I'd be at Doc's Knob Shelter. Anyway, eventually they went off to the side trail to Katy's car. When I broke camp in the morning, I was walking on air. Making it even sweeter was getting to Dismal creek, one of my favorite areas on the trail. By the time I got to Helveys Mill Shelter the temperature had dropped 20 degrees and a pleasant June day had turned unseasonably cold and rainy and the shelter was half full of hikers. After dark as we were getting to know each other, flashlights appeared down the trail. Katy and Root had come to celebrate my birthday on the right day. They brought in enough treats for everyone, including a large thermos of hot chocolate. While I had felt wonderful the first time, now I felt ten feet tall. Naturally everyone was really happy with all the treats and I think they enjoyed celebrating a fellow hikers birthday even though we just

met. Root has come up with plans for the two of us to light pack it tomorrow all the way to VA 42 near Ceres, which is 35 miles away. Katy will pick us up there and bring us to Blacksburg and her apartment. I thought it was a great idea so when the party wound down Root and I brought all of our nonessentials to Katy's car and saw her off. Then we went back to the shelter and slept.

Early next morning we jammed our sleeping bags into our almost empty packs. All we carried were snacks for the day and rain gear just in case. It turned out to be a fantastic day, sunny and breezy. We met quite a few hikers going the other direction, spending time talking to all of them. Knowing we had 35 miles to hike, this began to concern me but I found it impossible to say anything to Root, who had done all these nice things for me. Anyway, even with all these interruptions we somehow made it to Virginia 42 where Katy was waiting at dusk so all my worrying was for nothing.

By the time we had reached Blacksburg and Katy's apartment, we showered and laid out our sleeping bags on the rug and we were ready to sleep since Katy had to go to class early.

June 8

After Katy went to class, Root drove he and I to the grocery in her car. He wanted to make her a special meal. After we had a light lunch we spent the afternoon making her a great dinner. My only contribution was peeling vegetables and I insisted on paying for the groceries. The meal turned out very good and we all had a pleasant evening there.

June 9

In the morning they brought me back to the trail; we hugged and said our farewells. By noon I was in Atkins looking for a bus back to Connecticut. While in Atkins I ran into a northbound hiker from England who was also looking for a way north for some reason. We found out we could catch a bus north from Wytheville if we could get there within two hours. It was a long shot but we quickly got out there to thumb our way. Luckily, we caught the bus before it left and I was soon on my way to Connecticut. By that time, it was already 2:30, and while I enjoyed the trip north to N.Y., by the time I changed busses there, it was after midnight and I was tiring. I'd been up since 5 a.m. and it had been a hectic day. The bus stopped in every town between N.Y. and Hartford, wiping me out even further so I was really happy to be home at 9 a.m. after Pat picked me up.

One of the reasons I'd come home at this time was for Tim's Graduation, but there were also lots of chores to catch up on before I went back to hiking. Eventually, on the 24th of June, I took a bus to Portland, Maine, then transferred to one that took me to Medway, just outside of Millinocket. Between hitching and a lot of walking, I was able to get to Daicey Pond Campground in late afternoon. By the time I registered and got a shelter, I was wiped out from my hectic day, so after a quick bite I was soon asleep.

June 25

The morning of the 25th started with a sprinkle, but as I headed up Mt. Katahdin it cleared, and by the time I reached the plateau, the sun was shining and most of the fog had burned off. It ended up being a great day. After resting a while on Baxter Peak, I made it all the way to Hurd Brook lean-to. That made over 26 miles for the day. Not bad considering part of it was both up and back down Katahdin.

June 26

I saw moose at both Rainbow Lake and near Polliwog stream today. I was thinking of 1985 when I didn't see any moose the entire trip. I have a nice spot here at Nahmakata Stream. 23 miles.

June 27

I took a dip in lower Mary Jane Lake. Water was great, but I stirred up some of the rotted vegetation and released the methane gas which stinks like hell. I felt clean and refreshed after anyway. Mt. View Pond, 22 miles.

June 28

Going over White Cap Mt. brought back memories of a 20 degree temperature drop as I went over it in 1995. It went from T-shirt weather to 45 degrees and rain very quickly so I went from comfortable to almost hypothermic in the two miles to Logan Brook lean-to. I dried myself off and was into my sleeping bag in record time but it still took a while to regain my body temperature. I can see how casual hikers could get into serious trouble. The weather was good all day today, if a little on the warm side. Chair Back Gap lean-to, 23 miles.

June 29

I was so excited about getting to Shaw's, I thought of doing a long day but figured I wouldn't get into Monson until late anyway, so I took my time and enjoyed the day finding low-bush blueberries along the way. I like this Leeman Brook shelter because I'll get to hear the train tonight.

June 30

I had to walk into Shaw's, but my total mileage was only 8 miles. I had my shopping and laundry done early so I had the whole afternoon to goof off. Keith gave me a Shaw's T-shirt and a jar of homemade jam free-- I don't know why other than I've been a guest there many times.

July !

I got a late start after a big breakfast at Shaw's. After that, I enjoyed the whole day including the two fords. I spent a lot of time sitting and enjoying Moxie Bald. Its contours are so rounded and easy to navigate; it was fun there. Bald Mt. Brook lean-to. 18 miles.

July 2

I had an hour or so wait for the canoe trip across the Kennebeck. I'd heard that the Harrison kids were selling lemonade so I made a quick side trip there. I gave the girls \$3 and told them to keep filling my glass, as it was hot as hell today. The kids got a big kick out of it so it was worth it to see how happy they were with their big sale. Pierce Pond lean-to, 19 miles.

July 3

I'd been looking forward to staying at Myron Avery Lean-to but it is no more. It's been torn down and replaced by a tenting platform. It sounds like some AMC bonehead play. Even though I belonged to the AMC for a number of years, I think they are

generally a bunch of snooty asses. Anyway, I tented on Bigelow Col and though not as good as a shelter, it was fine. 25 miles.

July 5

I'm sitting here on Saddleback Mt. looking back towards the Horn while having my breakfast. I left Poplar Ridge shelter very early and quietly so as not to wake the other hikers who had graciously made a spot for me when I got there at dark. Yesterday was a great but wild day. It started by raining the night that I stayed at Bigelow Col. It had stopped before I got up so my tent wasn't sopping but it was wet and a little heavy and the trail was very muddy all the way to Caribou road so the first 16 miles were somewhat tedious. I still made it to the road by noon and by then there was some sun and things dried up. The view of Caribou valley was great and the ford of the Carrabasset exciting, as it was on the high side. The climb from the river up to Lone Mt. from this direction is much harder than from the south and the difference in elevation almost doubles from the river up. Anyway, I made it fine and enjoyed the cliff edge walk along Lone Mt. and eventually the Orbeton Stream ford but knew I had burnt a lot of time and I'd have to hustle to get to Poplar Ridge lean-to. As soon as I got across the Orbeton, the skies opened up, making the trail muddy and slippery. I must admit I was panicky knowing there wasn't much light left. I almost gave up and set up my tent less than a mile from the shelter because it was pretty dark and I really didn't know how far the shelter was but I somehow navigated the trail in a semi-darkness when I heard voices a quarter mile from the shelter. The tension and fatigue left me; I knew I'd be in a warm dry shelter soon.

The shelter was pretty full, but the hikers shuffled things around and made room for me. One of them even made me cocoa. After getting myself situated and hanging my pack, we talked for a while but I was so bushed I was soon asleep. The only thing I remember was getting up to pee and walking out into the rain barefoot because I couldn't find my shoes and it feeling so good when I jumped back into my sleeping bag. Well, I better get moving if I want to get in and out of Rangely today.

I was able to get a ride in and out of Rangely fairly quickly but between the 15 miles of hiking from Saddleback, the rides and shopping, it was a struggle to get here to Sabbath Day Pond lean-to but somehow I made it. I'm still pumped up from these two wild days but know that I'll be out as soon as I finish eating. 20 miles.

July 6

After all the excitement of the past two days, I needed a quiet one with no crisis and I got it today. I just hiked easy and enjoyed the scenery. I had planned to end up at Hall Mt. lean-to but when I got to the top of Moody Mt., I found a nice little niche for my tent and called it a day. There are no mosquitoes or people here so it is nice and restful. 19 miles.

July 7

That climb out of Grafton Notch is a bear. Luckily, I was early and I was so excited knowing I'd end up here at Speck Pond shelter it put some spring into my step. I had a great swim and have been enjoying throwing worms that I find under rocks to the bluegills. 23 miles.

July 8

What a great day, Mahoosuc Notch and Goose Eye Mt. in the morning, a dip in Gentian Pond plus dragon flies and butterflies at Dream Lake this afternoon. I found a nice tent site near the stream just before the Androscoggin River. 25 miles.

July 9

What a day, starting with the Imp, the Carters, and then the Wildcats. I ended up at Pinkham Notch and after 22 arduous miles, decided to stay at the AMC lodge there. It was a big mistake. Before I even got settled, the clerk sent in four pot-smoking pseudo hikers whose packs literally exploded when they entered the room and they hadn't even hiked yet, just driven here in a car. For the clerk to send these four idiots into a room with an older hiker was at least idiotic which is probably what I should have expected from the AMC. I tried to make the best of it since I've shared shelters and cabin space with lots of pot smoking hikers, but those were real hikers and these guys idiots. I finally had enough, picked up my pack, and went to the desk clerk and told him that this wouldn't do. He looked at me like I had three heads or something, but gave me the key to another room. When I got to it, I found the occupant to be a somewhat portly truck driver who had come all the way from Pa. to hike. He had, in fact, gone a couple of miles up the trail earlier and was now completely spent. I have often wondered why people who have never hiked want to start on very big mountains instead of perfectly good medium ones in their back yards. I just had to ask him why. My question went completely over his head but it seems absolutely insane to me. Anyway, he was amiable enough and we got along fine. After talking awhile, we turned out the light and started to doze. It wasn't long before he started to snore and not an ordinary snore. He definitely had apnea and the only quiet were his pauses in breathing. I tried shaking him to get him to change position but it was futile. He was unstoppable and unwakeable. There was little else to do but come out here to the couch in the lobby and it was late enough so there wasn't much business. I did manage to get some rest but upon waking at 3:30 a.m., I decided to get on the trail at first light. I did get an early start leaving at 4:15 a.m. I did quite well considering my lack of sleep, but somehow made a wrong turn and ended up on the Great Gulf Trail. I knew it ended up on the top of Mt. Washington and not wanting to backtrack, said to hell with it and kept going. I really enjoyed it and the stream it followed with its beautiful falls and pools. Then the blazes disappeared which worried me but in another quarter mile, I began to see wet footprints after the stream crossings. I knew I wasn't alone anymore and most likely was on the trail. After another half mile, the forest opened up into a very large, high scree field and the couple hiking two hundred yards ahead starting up the scree. I quickly caught up with them and they assured me I was indeed on the Great Gulf Trail and pointed to a red blaze on a large rock. As I looked toward the mountain top, I was in absolute awe. I'd seen lots of scree fields but never one rising over a mile just in elevation. My God, I thought, it'll take me the rest of the day to get to the top. It was fun climbing up, hopping from rock to rock, and I could hardly believe it when I found myself at the top in around an hour. I had lost the blazes again and had to cross some areas of "do not walk—fragile zone" for a hundred feet or so but was soon on the blacktop. In a couple minutes, I was in the restaurant eating hotdogs and having a soda. My total time for this adventure was about the same as if I'd stayed on the Huntington Trail. I had tempted fate and actually came out ahead because of the wonderful experience of doing the Great Gulf Trail and it wasn't even 1 p.m. yet. Mizpah Spring Hut was only 4 miles away and even though I felt no fatigue yet, I knew 20 miles was plenty in this terrain. When I arrived,

the hut was already full but they have a tent site there, so I took a site. When I was setting up my tent, I got to meet my very beautiful neighbor, who it turned out was from the Netherlands. Now being married, I behaved myself, but it was still a thrill to have such an attractive next-door neighbor. She was very friendly and we talked for about an hour. A couple from Quebec I'd met a couple of days earlier and hiked with for a few miles were staying at the hut and I enjoyed seeing them again.

July 10

It rained hard last night so I had to carry a wet tent. I was also sad leaving my new friends, especially the beautiful Hollander. Most of the steep ups and downs are gone now. I dried my tent on Mt. Webster before going down to the Sacco River and I'm almost out of food so my pack was nice and light except for the first 3 miles. It started raining just before I got here to Gale Head Hut so I'm happy they have room for me.

July 11

Mt. Garfield tough for me, even in this direction. The last of the 13 miles into North Woodstock, N.H. fairly easy, but we had a thunder shower that started a couple miles before Franconia Notch and the stream a half mile before the road was wild. It scared the hell out of me, jumping from rock to slippery rock over the rushing water. When I neared the bridge on the highway that the side trail into town goes under, a van on the highway stopped and motioned for me to come. Knowing I now had a ride into town, I took off like a shot and in a couple minutes was on my way into town, saving me miles. They brought me right to a bed and breakfast near the center. The entire house appeared a little decrepit but it was clean and only \$15 so I loved it. With my pack stored there, I walked around town buying food and trying to buy a cheap pair of sneakers because both my sandals and sneakers were on their last legs. They had what I wanted but their prices were astronomical so my footwear will have to last until Vermont. Back at the Bed and Breakfast, I jumped into the huge old spring bed. It sagged and squeaked a little but was still heaven.

July 12

After a great night's rest yesterday, and a \$5 ride to the trail, I hiked without fatigue today. What a difference it makes to not struggle getting in and out of town. It rained last night so the first 5 miles were soggy but the sun came out on my way up Kinsman Mt. and the rest of the day was perfect. It was such fun going up Moosilauke Mt. from this direction. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I have the strength to do such difficult trails so easily at 60 years old. Jeffers Brook shelter. 25 miles.

July 13

It's almost sad leaving the Whites but I'm also looking forward to getting to my starting point in 156 miles and then home. I'm staying in the fire tower hoping no one will catch me and boot me out. It's late in the day now, so I think I'm fine. Smarts Mt. 21 miles.

July 14

Staying in one of Dartmouth's houses and it's very comfortable. The Ct. River is ¼ mile away and I've been swimming there like I always do. There's a rope on a large hemlock that hangs over the river. Like always, I was swinging and jumping off it with

the kids and it was going great until the knot of the rope snapped back and it me in the lip, splitting it wide open. I was bleeding like a stuck pig, worrying the kids. I quickly pushed it together with my thumb and forefinger and told them I was fine. As I walked the path back, I wondered if I could keep the flow stemmed without stitches. I did have some butterfly bandages and with the aid of a mirror, was able to stem the flow completely. I looked a little strange, and it was a little difficult to eat, drink, or talk but it worked. 23 miles.

July 15

At noon today, I took the butterfly off my lips and everything held. I still get water all over myself when I drink because my lip is still swollen. Luckily I haven't met many people so I didn't have to talk much. I found a nice soft tent site in the pines along Woodstock Stage Road. 20miles.

July 16

When I got to the little wooden footbridge over Stoney Brook, I had visions of me inching over it through 3 feet of rushing water in a torrential downpour to get to the shelter on the other side in 1990. Going through Griffith Woods was magical as ever. When I got here to Pico Camp, I took out my mirror and checked my lips and it's healing well. My parents must have given me some good DNA because my body's healing powers are nothing short of miraculous. I've wanted to stay here at Cooper Lodge Shelter since 1985 but it never worked out going north. 28 miles.

July 17

Going past Gov. Clement Shelter this morning made me think of all the rainy, clammy nights I'd spent there with its fireplace blazing, especially the night the guys from Torrington were there. I spent much of the day in kind of a mental fog, hiking robot-like, not even getting excited about the view of Clarendon Gorge from the bridge. It was rainy much of the day, but I usually enjoy hiking in the rain. I even wandered off the trail for a few hundred feet just past Minerva Hinchley Shelter which made me a little more alert for the rest of the way here to Lula Tye Shelter. 24 miles.

July 18

I sat on the rocks on Baker Peak not wanting to move and break the spell it had on me. I've hiked this section from Mad Tom Notch here to Spruce Peak shelter so many times, I feel like I'm home. I'm already thinking of hiking south from Atkins after a break home. 22 miles.

July 19

I'm almost out of food but it's alright as I only have 14 miles to go and I'm so keyed up. I'm sure I'll come out on route 9 before noon. I took a nice bath here in the stream and I'm so comfortable here in "the rabbit hutch", my name for Caughnawaga Shelter. 23 miles.

July 20

I woke when it was still dark and waited for dawn and was unable to go back to sleep knowing I would be going home soon. I got to route 9 before noon and tried to hitchhike down the hill and into Bennington, Vt. but had no luck. I finally gave up and

found this motel just before the bottom of the hill. By the time I was able to get hold of Pat, it was already 4:30 p.m. so we decided she'd leave at 8 a.m. to pick me up the next morning. I wasn't hungry enough to walk the two miles to the restaurant and back so I just took a nice hot shower, straightened out my gear, then watched some T.V. Next thing I remember is waking up at 3 a.m. to pee and shut off the T.V.

July 21

Had a great meal with Pat at the bottom of the hill because I was starved by the time she arrived and we got going. It's great to be home and eating something besides trail food.

July 24

I arrived in Atkins, Va., late on a bright, sunny afternoon near where the trail crosses the highway and goes into rolling pasture land which was great after a long ride and being late in the day. I always enjoyed these pastures and this time even more because the blackberry bushes there were loaded with ripe fruit. I knew Chatfield Shelter was only 4 ½ miles from where I started and I had almost 4 hours of daylight left so I gorged myself with handfuls of the largest blackberries I've ever seen. The clumps of bushes lasted for a half mile and I finally just got tired of eating them and continued on to the shelter. When I got to the shelter, I was so full of berries, I just laid out my sleeping bag then went out and sat on a log enjoying the last of the sun.

July 25

I'm amazed that I saw only one hiker all day. I know all the northbound thru hikers are past here now, but I thought there would be section hikers or day hikers. Raccoon Branch Shelter, 20 miles.

July 26

I was looking forward to seeing the wild horses again in Grayson but saw none; just cattle. I was pretty much focused on mileage because I want to get to Damascus as early as possible tomorrow. I made it here to Buzzard Rock with three hours of daylight left. The lights should be spectacular tonight from this vantage point. I always stopped and sat here on my northward hikes enjoying the breezes and views. Whitetop Mt. 30 miles.

July 27

I knew today was going to be a great one, starting by going down Whitetop which is all switch-backed and easy going down and then getting to the old railroad bed with its beautiful trestles over a breath taking river. There must have been over a hundred people on the last 1 ½ mile of the grade; some camping or fishing along the river, the rest either walking, or bicycling on the railroad bed. Everybody was so happy with the beautiful weather and all, that many waved or talked to me as I passed. I was walking on air. The only down-side was getting bit by a yellow jacket as I strolled down the middle of the trail. It didn't bother me much, but I was surprised to be bit so randomly. I didn't even see any others around, but somebody must have disturbed a nest somewhere. That 30 mile day yesterday really paid off for me because I made it here to Damascus just after 2 p.m. When I got to The Place, one of the hikers there told me someone was looking for me. When I asked who it was, he just smiled and shrugged like he didn't know. Now, I didn't even know I'd be here today. I'd been

hiking so fast and having so much fun waving and talking to people along the Creeper Trail, I hadn't eaten anything except a Snickers Bar around 9 a.m. I just had to get a bite. By the time I got back from the restaurant, Katie and Charlotte were at The Place waiting. I was so excited to see them, it's indescribable; I still couldn't figure how they found me. It turns out they had called Pat who knew where I was four days ago. I had hiked with both of them at different times in 1995 along with Root and Parris, often ending in the same shelters. They seem to know my habits better than I do. They took me out for an ice cream and brought me back to the place before going back to Blacksburg, telling me they'd be back the next day and take me shopping.

July 28

Katie and Charlotte came at 11 a.m. and took me into Abington to buy food and after we stopped on our way back and ate. After our goodbyes, I threw on my pack and was down the trail. It had been such an incredible two days, my mind raced, but fatigue caught up with me the last couple of miles here to Abington Gap shelter, 10 miles.

July 29

After all the excitement of the last couple of days, I enjoyed my solitude today. This shelter is where I met my friend from Holland in 1990. We enjoyed our time together in spite of our language barrier. Vandeveter Shelter. 23 miles.

July 30

I took the Blue Trail near Laurel Falls which is prettier, easier, and three miles shorter. It's so beautiful along the river. Moreland Gap shelter. 20 miles.

July 31

I tried hitchhiking both ways to get groceries, but no luck. I finally walked there and then a couple more miles here to the motel. The manager told me he had no rooms ready because his daughter, who actually ran the place, had an emergency. I convinced him to rent me an uncleaned room because I had nowhere else to go being on foot. The room turned out to be just fine. I just opened up my sleeping bag on the top of the bed and slept on it. Everything looked clean anyway. I was able to call Pat, then watch a little T.V. 14 miles plus road walk.

Aug. 1

I enjoyed both Hump and Little Hump Mts. from this direction as much as heading north. It was quite foggy but still fun walking down those steep, grassy slopes. I picked up a case of giardia from drinking water from the spring in Bradley Gap. I didn't filter it because it bubbles straight from the ground, so I figured it was relatively safe. Anyway, it was a mild case, just that classic bubbling in the stomach and then a little diarrhea. I'm so fortunate my body handles it so well. I'm sure it's because I grew up drinking from the streams in the pastures of Bakerville. It slowed me down a little but I still did 20 miles. Clyde Smith Shelter.

Aug. 2

I thought of going into Erwin, Tn., but I have some food left and they have burgers and soft drinks here at Nolichucky Expeditions. I just tented because the cabins are full but it's just as good because I have use of their tables and snack bar. Also, the river rafters are quite friendly. 24 miles.

Aug. 3

I've always loved the colorful names here in Tn. and North Carolina. Today I went by No Business Nob, Ogelsby Branch, Spivey Gap, Whistling Gap, and Big Stamp. When I got my first data book and was planning my first thru hike, I used to thumb through it, wondering what these places were like. I never dreamed I'd hike the entire entire A.T. four times. I'm camped somewhere between the spring and Low Gap. 20 miles.

Aug. 4

More colorful names today: Hogback Ridge, Rice Gap, Frozen Nob, Boone Cove, Devil Fork Gap, and Flint Mt. shelter. I ended up here at Jerry Cabin shelter. 21 miles.

Aug. 5

It took all I had to get here to Hot Springs on a sweltering day. I jumped into the river and cleaned up as best as I could because I'm sure I smell bad after doing 26 miles in this heat. I was shocked that the restaurants were so busy because I had forgotten about the landslide blocking the highway east of here. There must be rerouting traffic through Hot Springs and that's where all these people came from. I tried to get a room at Elmer's, "The Inn", but they're all booked. This is now a boom town and hikers are not big on their list right now. Lucky for me, the church hostel is still open. It took me forever to get served at the restaurant when I got into town. Anyway, I finally got served. The good grocery store, although a little busy, was still a good place to shop. By the time I got settled in the hostel, it was almost sunset so I just had some fruit for supper. My wash is hung all over the room in case it rains and I'm ready to hop into my bunk. I am very happy to be alone tonight.

Aug. 6

I guess I was a little tired after yesterday's big day because I didn't get here to Max Patch till almost sunset and I've had enough. It's nice and breezy here and fairly flat. 19 miles.

Aug. 7

Coming down out of the woods before Interstate 40 drove me crazy just before noon. I kept listening for road noises and kept thinking I've got to be almost to the highway. When I finally got there, I remembered the landslide and the reason for no traffic. I walked the 1.3 miles to the grocery store and back to get some snacks and a coke. It's over 2 ½ wasted miles but it perked me up. I was so up the rest of the day after my little snack break, that the 24 plus 2 ½ mi day was easy. I love being in the Smokies: good vistas and easy hiking.

Aug. 8

Ran into two bears today. One was fine and ambled off; the other a fairly small one stayed very close to the trail and looked like trouble. I sidled my way past it and down the trail, keeping my eyes on it till there was a good distance between us. With all the bears I've encountered, this one made me the edgiest. Cosby Knob shelter. 24 miles.

Aug.9

For miles and miles, I kept noticing beautiful drainage work; water bars, etc., along the trail and thought there must be a very good crew ahead. After 15 miles or so, I came upon one man and complimented him on it. I found he was the whole crew. I was amazed anyone could or would do that much in a few days. Here's a volunteer doing work (they get a stipend), that would take a half dozen public servants and cost thousands. He was perfectly happy living in a tent and practicing his art with a pick, a shovel, a bar, and an ax. Not much flow here at Ice Water Spring so it took a while to fill up.

Aug. 10

I got to New Found Gap fairly early so there weren't as many tourists as my northbound trips. Just after I entered the woods on the other side of the highway, I started to hear a strange whooshing sound. I was so mesmerized by the sound, I walked off the trail towards it until I observed the branches of a small tree waving wildly and realized it must be a bear scratching his butt. I slowly backed up 10 steps, turned around, and got the hell back to the trail where I belonged, realizing I done something dumb. The rest of the trip here to Derrick Knob shelter was less eventful and very pleasant. 21 miles.

Aug.11

I daydreamed my way through the last of the Smokies today. So many exciting memories, especially the wild boars back in '85. I stopped back at the Dam for my shower and then stowed my gear here at Fontana Dam Shelter before I hitchhiked my way into town for resupply. I got a ride into town easy enough but ended up walking a couple of miles on the way back. 23 miles.

Aug. 12

I felt like a "Model T" going up and down the Stecoahs after all that easy hiking in the Smokies. I made sure I had plenty of water so I could stay up here on Cheoah Bald for the sunset. It's nice and breezy at my tent site. 20 miles.

Aug. 13

I came up behind 4 hikers struggling up Wesser Mt. and felt bad about passing them so easily, but what the hell, I was them at one time. Actually, these Stecoahs have slowed me down too. Cold Spring shelter. 20 miles.

Aug. 14

I was getting antsy about finishing and going home when I ran into four vacationing hikers. We shot the breeze for a while and they told me they were finishing and going out at Winding Stair Gap and asked if I'd like their left-over food. I was ecstatic. I wouldn't have to be trying to hitchhike into town and possibly lose a day. When they finished emptying out their food bags, mine was full. For the rest of the day I snacked on cheddar cheese they had given me. It's a great feeling I have enough food to finish. Rock Gap shelter. 19 miles.

Aug. 15

As I descended Albert Mt. this morning, a picture of that snow storm I climbed it in '85 flashed in my mind. What a difference. It was hot as hell today. It's not too bad here Muskrat Creek shelter and there's still enough flow in the creek to wash up and cool off. 25 miles.

Aug. 16

I almost called it a day at the cheese factory site with its great spring but knowing how much breezier it was here at Blue Mt. shelter gave me enough oomph to do the last 6 miles here. Long day but definitely worth the extra effort. 30 miles.

Aug. 17

I slept so well in the coolness on Blue Mt. that I was full of energy this morning. Knowing I might be able to finish tomorrow spurred me on today to get as much mileage as possible. I stopped at Neal's Gap long enough to have a coke and a Snickers Bar and was quickly on my way. The only things I ate today were a few Snickers Bars I munched on while I hiked. I never thought I'd make it all the way here to Gooch Gap. I can hear hikers at the shelter a half mile away, but I have the stream here and I'm comfortable. I've also had enough walking for today. 31 miles.

Aug. 18

I enjoyed my hiking today for the most part but doing the 8.1 miles of the approach trail seemed to take forever. All that high mileage lately has taken its toll and fatigue has set in. Anyway, I'm here at the Visitor's Center looking for a ride out. I hitchhiked as far as Dahlonga, but was stuck there. I finally got a ride through a local volunteer emergency unit that was recommended to me. The price was steep but they brought me right to the bus station in Atlanta so I guess it was worth it. It feels good to be in this bus heading home.