

# **1990 Thru Hike**

*by Joe Barella*

March 29, 1990

After spending 24 hours in Charlotte, after missing my bus because I couldn't understand a single word on the PA system and waiting in the information line too long to make my connection. Any way I finally made it to Gainsboro. I then took a taxi out to Amicola falls but got there late afternoon (4:30 pm). I did some huffing and puffing to get up Frosty Mtn., as I am not quite in shape. The rain came and it got dark very quickly, as a result I ended up pitching my tent on a side hill with the door facing downhill. It was raining so hard, I just threw my pack in. I was cold wet and hungry, so I faced myself up hill and pulled my sleeping bag up around me, ate a trail bar zipped up and drifted off to sleep. This Bigfoot bags is wonderful, though a little on the heavy side. Sleep was somewhat fitful because I kept sliding towards the door of the tent, so I was happy when morning came. I had only done 5 ½ miles yesterday.

March 30<sup>th</sup>

I was so wiped out from my semi-disasters of the past couple days, I stopped here at Stover Creek Shelter to regroup. Total mileage to date around ten miles, but I'm comfortable here and it's still raining. My gear will all be dry and I will be rested tomorrow, this is a beautiful place in the rain. The sun came when I awoke for supper and I am feeling better but a little more rest wouldn't hurt either.

March 31<sup>st</sup>

Woke up well rested but a little stiff. The streams running through the Rhododendrons are so clear and fast this time of year. I saw an Army Ranger trainee near Hawk Mountain today. I understand they're told to ignore us which is what he did. I camped here at Blackwell Creek, I guess just because I camped here in 1985 it brings back memories of a group eight of us tenting here and singing and talking. (Only 12 miles but it's ok.)

April 1<sup>st</sup>

Shelter here at Blood Mtn. chockfull of hikers. It's kind of nice because it has been cold all day and was even a little cold and damp when I arrived. I don't know if it is the camaraderie or all these warm bodies, but it feels pretty good in here now. Everybody's being entertained by the shelter rat that they catch in their flashlight beams. Looking forward to Neels Gap tomorrow. (14 Miles).

April 2<sup>nd</sup>

I arrived here at the hostel at Neels Gap early but had to wait 'til eleven to check in. In the meantime I was able to buy some candy bars and postcards for this afternoon when we are able to go inside the hostel. In the meantime, I have been buying Cokes from the machine eating Nabs and talking with other hikers as they come in. I also went back toward Blood Mtn. and carried out a ladies pack for her. I knew she was in over her head when I met her at the shelter. I don't know how she made it this far. The hostel is full or close to it, I think around twenty of us. They served us Spaghetti and Meatballs for dinner here. I would have called it so-so a week ago but it tasted great today. With so many of us here in one room, there is a constant dull roar, but it feels good to be among so many hikers.

April 3<sup>rd</sup>

Today was a fun day in spite of the wind and rain. Bill and Judy were hiking with Bill's Dog Mandy (A very nice Red Setter) just behind me. As we were hiking along, all of a sudden I found myself looking at the sky. Mandy had grabbed that scrap of tent material I've been using as a pack cover as it dangled from my pack. We all roared with laughter, even *SOB (Sweet Old Bob)* who also was with us. Mandy also entertained us when she went on a sit down strike until Bill carried her pack. She's one smart dog. By the time we all got to Montray Shelter the rain slowed down but it's getting colder. The shelter is absolutely packed. Some weekenders and some thru hikers, but they're a jovial group and everybody is making the best of things.

April 4<sup>th</sup>

The temperature dropped sharply during the night and my feet were freezing. We were packed so tightly I knew I could never get to my pack to get extra socks, so I took my mittens off my hands and put them on my feet. It worked pretty well and I was soon asleep. Morning light revealed a couple inches of snow and it was as cold as a witch's tit. Our boots were frozen in whatever shape they were when we took them off and we knew we wouldn't be able to put them on until we thawed them out. In the mean time I was walking around the shelter in my mitten'd feet when one of the *Southern Boys* loudly bellowed, "Oh my God!!! We've got a Gorrilla in here!!!" The Shelter resounded with laughter and our discomfort from the cold was forgotten. We thawed out our shoes over cook stoves until they were pliable enough to put on and I was soon off hiking the snowy trail. I hadn't even eaten but I had to walk to warm up. At about ten I found a sunny spot with a nearby spring and a log to sit on so I boiled up some pea soup and ate breakfast. I thought some of my fellow hikers would show up but I guess I left everybody behind. It warmed up a little during the day and most of the snow is gone. Some of my friends are showing up here at Plum Orchard Gap Shelter now.

April 5<sup>th</sup>

This section brings back memories of *Raven* and *Sunshine*. I had to walk over and peer inside Muskrat Creek Shelter and reminisce a little. I enjoyed walking thru the Rhododendron “Jungle” there. There are only five of us here at Standing Indian Shelter. (Where has everybody gone?)

April 6<sup>th</sup>

I thought by now I’d be cruising, but I did only 15 miles today. It was a somewhat miserable day starting with a heavy frost and quite slippery but I should’ve done better. Well at least I got out of Georgia yesterday. There was a crew at the top of the tower on Albert Mountain so it was open. Very nice views up there of a Mountain that was logged off and has large ravines were it eroded. There is no snow here at Big Spring Shelter like in 1985 but it is just as cold.

April 7<sup>th</sup>

Walked into the grocery store on old U.S. 64. Not much to pick from but I can make do. I found a spot just below the parking lot near the peak of Wayah Bald. It looks like we’re in for some rough weather. If it gets too bad there is a port-a-potty a hundred yards away that I could duck into. So far the wind and rain not to bad.

April 8<sup>th</sup>

Big day today. Just stopped long enough in Wesser to get a hamburg and buy some Snickers but I thought of staying at the hostel. I am anxious to get to Fontana Dam and the Smokies. It’s over 24 miles from Wayah Bald to here at Sassafras Gap Shelter. In spite of not wanting to leave the comfort of Wesser it was a pretty nice hike that last seven miles.

April 9<sup>th</sup>

I am here at Fontana Dam Shelter and happy to be out of the Stecoahs. They’re extremely steep and it’s a bitch either going up or down. It’s nice to know the Smokies with their much gentler terrain are just ahead. I enjoyed my shower at the visitors center, all that hot water is such a treat for us. Hikers like to call this shelter “the Fontana Hilton” because of its size. It even has a loft and would handle at least two dozen of us, in fact there is over a dozen here right now. I wanted to go down to the lake for a swim but the water level was quite low and the bank very steep. There is a lot of very loose shale and I was afraid even if I made it down, I might not be able to get back up.

April 10<sup>th</sup>

I enjoyed looking down into the gorge as I walked across the dam. I’m still in awe of it as I was in 1985. I was hoping to see some wild boars like I did in ’85 but I am told they’ve been

trapping them because of the environmental damage they do. In fact there was one of those cage traps near the dam. I stopped here at Spence Field because it was raining lightly and looked like a real storm coming but outside of some pretty strong gusts of wind it's still just raining lightly. I was going to tent it here because there was a group from Alabama who were members of the Sierra club that had taken over the shelter. It turns out that two different people from the club had each reserved one-half the shelter. Now I would have just gone along with this, but Alison (A thru hiker also) knew this was bull and that only ½ of any shelter in the Smokies could be reserved and the other half on a first come first served basis. Actually I had already set up my tent, but Allison wanted to make a point and I wasn't going to argue with her. Needless to say relations between the Sierra club members and the Thru hikers weren't too good. I'm going to make it a point never to argue with Allison.

April 11<sup>th</sup>

Allison and Jerry (her husband) and I hiked together today. After her getting me a spot in the shelter I didn't want to just take off on them and I must admit it's kind of nice having someone to talk to. Beautiful sunset here at Double Springs. The shelter is full so I'm camping outside the Anchor fencing but my pack is inside to keep it away from the bears.

April 12<sup>th</sup>

I don't know if I got any sleep last night, I wasn't worried about the bears but the deer grazed near my tent all night. When you're sleeping on the ground, the sound of deer ripping up grass is very loud. When I would open my tent flap and look out, they'd move ten or fifteen feet away, but soon would be right back. The events of the last couple of nights have tired me.

April 13<sup>th</sup>

Slept pretty well last night. It started snowing this afternoon and the temperature dropped like a stone. There was a couple of inches of snow on the ground when I arrived here at Tri Corner Knob shelter. The shelter is crowded, but they are a great bunch. One of the weekenders brought extra food for everybody. A nice big block of cheese and some trail bars. He also made enough cocoa for all of us. It was great, since we were all freezing when we arrived. Lots of story-telling and laughter later.

April 14<sup>th</sup>

Weather better today. Slippery in the morning but snow gone by noon. Thought of going into the grocery but I have enough food to make it to Hot Springs and I wanted to get as near as

possible to there so I got some mileage today. I'm not crazy about this campsite but it gets me within range of Hot Springs. (23 miles).

#### April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>

I hiked like hell to get here to Hot Springs (28 miles) after an early start. I got here soon enough to get groceries and have supper at a restaurant. I've got a load of wash going here at the church hostel, but will have to hang stuff on lines that I strung across the room. Another hiker I met in town convinced me to stay in town one more day and stay at the inn (Elmer's). He serves one vegetarian meal a day. The inn is very old and unkept on the outside, but the inside is plush and well furnished. It's even stocked with quite a few very nice books. The meal was very formal and we each had to get up and introduce ourselves and give a little background (where we came from, occupation, etc.). I enjoyed resting an extra day.

#### April 17<sup>th</sup>

Hiked with Allison and Jerry today after a late start. We only did 11 miles so I know I have to break away soon. There's a half dozen here at Spring Mt. shelter. One of them is a somewhat portly fellow who sports a stripped sweater-vest over a long-sleeved shirt, but the vest is 3 sizes too small. He's a jovial fellow and a pleasure to be around, but a sight to behold.

#### April 18<sup>th</sup>

It turned very cold last night and snowed a couple of inches. We were all pretty cold and wet so we were all bundled up in our sleeping bags. All except the fellow in the 3 sizes too small vest. He was outside in the privy, which is nothing more than a 4ft. by 4 ft. platform with 3 ft. sides for privacy. You can't see this privy unless you peak around a corner of the shelter, but when we heard singing coming from there, we all had to get up and peek. He was sitting there on the pot, in his stripped sweater vest, his body from the armpits up showing in the moonlight, with large snowflakes falling around him while he sang. We all forgot that we were cold and wet and tittered quietly so that he wouldn't hear us. When he returned to the shelter and settled into his sleeping bag, we all drifted off. Some where around one a.m., I also felt the call of nature and sat in the moon-lit flurries, but somehow I didn't feel the urge to sing, only shiver. This morning it warmed up pretty good by 11 a.m. and most of the snow was gone by noon. I said goodbye to Allison and Jerry because I felt the urge to stretch my legs out and really hike. I think it really ticked them off but c'est lavie. It's nice and quiet here at Flint Mt. shelter. Twenty one miles today; I'm back in the groove.

#### April 19<sup>th</sup>

The weather was nice and the day uneventful. I've got a nice place to camp here in Whistling Gap. If I was ambitious I'd go on to No Business Nob shelter because it's early, but I'm comfortable here and 6 more miles is a long way.

#### April 20<sup>th</sup>

Boy! Did I make out! I got a ride right away into Erwin. Both in '85 and this year there has been a lot of trail talk about Erwin being unfriendly, but I find it just the opposite. Today I ate, ran a load of wash, shopped, and got a ride to within 2 miles of the trail head and was back on the trail in under 4 hours. I was going to stop at Curly Maple Gap Shelter but I'm so pumped-up, I came here to Indian Grave Gap. 24 miles.

#### April 21<sup>st</sup>

This is strange; I ended up in almost the same spot in '85. I probably would have gone on, if I didn't already know how steep that next mile is and how tired I am. The climbs today have taken their toll on me, so I will have to settle for Ash Gap. I'd really like to be on Roan High, but just don't have it in me. (21 Miles Today).

#### April 22<sup>nd</sup>

I didn't see anybody on Roan High bluff this morning, probably because it was so foggy and also quite early. In '85 I was there in bright sunlight and it was loaded with tourists. I loved that wood road near Roan High Nob Shelter, with all its moss covered road banks. The trees were sopping wet with fog near the trail and the growth farther in just kind of disappeared into the fog. I wished that I could describe the feeling it gave me, it was eerie, but it pumped me up. I stopped at Apple House Shelter, snacked and pondered about why anyone would stay there. Walked into the grocery in Elk Park and resupplied, so I actually walked over 21 miles today. Looking forward to Dennis Cove area (Laurel Falls especially) tomorrow. Found a pretty spot here on Cambell Hollow road even though there is a shelter one mile ahead.

#### April 23<sup>rd</sup>

I am actually writing this on April 24<sup>th</sup> because of an event on the afternoon of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> was somewhat of a blur, because I was so focused on Dennis Cove. It was overcast all morning and by noon it was clear there was a substantial storm coming. One of the things I'd been looking forward to was a dip in the beautiful stream there and it didn't disappoint me. The stream is ten or twelve feet wide and over four feet deep in most parts and it felt so good floating around in it. I could hear rumbling in the distance so I knew I shouldn't dawdle too long, so after a half hour or so I dried off, packed up and was off towards Laurel Fork Shelter. It was only a couple of miles but by the time I neared the shelter a few large drops were already

falling. The shelter sits on a kind of mesa a 150 feet up from the valley floor. Just after I entered it all hell broke loose. The shelter shuddered under the impact of the torrential rain and the already darkened sky became as dark as night. I turned on my flashlight and found a stub of candle and lit it, but the wind blew it out. I finally found a spot in the rear corner of the shelter where it would stay lit, though flickering wildly. This all took place around 3p.m.. I was so enrapt with the storm, I just stood there peering out into the darkness, finally grabbing my sleeping bag and draping it over my shoulders. I don't know how long it lasted, but after an hour or so of standing I found myself a cozy corner, laid out my pad and sleeping bag and crawled in. The storm kept on and I lost track of time. Finally I had a snack, brushed my teeth and nodded off feeling very privileged to have witnessed the phenomena. In the morning I felt super refreshed. I wondered how long I had slept, I knew I'd done only seventeen miles and I think I may have slept around 11 hours. Anyway I was really pumped up by yesterday's experience and my feet seemed to fly over the trail. Lots of beautiful sights today including Wautauga Lake. I ended up here at Iron Mtn. Shelter 23½ miles

#### April 25<sup>th</sup>

I got an early start today and most of the trail was pretty easy. Since I wanted to get here to Damascus as early as possible, I didn't even stop to eat. I still had a few apples I'd bought in Elk Park left and I ate them while I hiked. It was a nice bright day and I felt really good. When I crossed the road at McQueens Gap and knew there was only twelve easy miles left, I really stretched out my legs and was able to keep up a hell of a pace. I thought I would be pretty well spent by the time I reached the place but seemed to have quite a bit left. After claiming a bunk and stowing my gear, I headed out to the grocery and resupplied. It felt so good walking around unencumbered by a pack, although I did have to carry my groceries back a block and a half. I ate an ice cream and a couple of bananas on my way back from the store, but I am still starving so I am going out to eat now. After 26 miles I know after I eat I'll just crash.

#### April 26<sup>th</sup>

Pack a little heavy with resupply, but this Jansport Pack fits so well and most of the weight is on my hips. I was thinking about that bone crushing hand-me-up I used in '85 and the aching shoulders I used to get. I did just short of 30 miles today fairly easily. I loved Buzzard Rock on White Top Mtn. so much I spent over an hour there just looking at the views and enjoying the breeze. It must be a wild place in the winter though. Camped Rhododendron Gap.

#### April 27<sup>th</sup>

I had arranged for Pat to pick me up at Troutdale, but had it mixed up in my mind with Cloverdale, Troutville area. Pat somehow figured out where I'd be. When I got to within three

miles of the road I realized my mistake and panicked, but had no options but to keep on going and go into Troutdale. When I reached the road, I found Pat had pinned a note to a post next to the trail saying she'd gone into town and would be back soon. It was so wonderful having the panic disappear. I guess Pat and I have been together so long she could figure out my screw-up's. Anyway, when she came back we drove into Marion, got a motel room and had a great day and a half together in spite of my stupidity. I enjoyed the mobility of driving around so quickly but had been traveling at three or four miles per hour so long that my knuckles turned white as we reached speeds of over 50 miles per hour. It's probably hard to understand unless you've also been walking for a month.

April 29<sup>th</sup>

My great break is over, Pat left me off where she'd picked me up at around 11am. I'm well rested now and the miles fly by. Twenty miles in just over half a day (Chatfield Shelter.)

April 30<sup>th</sup>

Had a nice breakfast in Atkins. When I got to Ceres all I could think about was the pretty girl who'd given me a Daiquiri that hot day in '85. It was hot today but not as bad as '85. I ended up in the same Knotmole Branch Shelter. (20 Miles today)

April 31<sup>st</sup>

Water very sparse today, so I went dry for about eight miles. I finally found some seepage and with patience was able to collect about 20 ozs. I didn't want to walk the extra one half mile to Davis farm campsite and back. Anyway I have enough until morning. (Jenkins Shelter 20 miles)

May 1<sup>st</sup>

Plenty of Water today, even enough to take a dip in at Kimberly Creek. (Dr. Doyle's bathtub embedded in the creek). I thought about going into Bastian, but walking 3.6 miles extra when I have enough food would be silly. I am glad I didn't because I made it all the way here past Licksillet Hollow to Virginia 607 and have a nice flat shady tent site (26 miles). I will try to make it into Pearisburg tomorrow.

May 2<sup>nd</sup>

I knew it would be pretty easy hiking today. I loved Dismal Creek and the short road walks nearby. Plenty of places for water to drink and dip in. Coming down Pearis Mountain it's damn steep. The south bounders have a real challenge there. I just walked in as far as the grocery and right back to the trail, remembering how hard it was to get to the hostel and back. I found a nice spot ½ mile from the road. (27 Miles).

May 3<sup>rd</sup>

I wasn't too ambitious today and the miles came a little hard. I must have spring fever. Pine Swamp Branch Shelter (18 Miles).

May 4<sup>th</sup>

I find this section of trail somewhat monotonous, but at the least it's mostly shady and has plenty of water. Laurel Creek Shelter (18 miles).

May 5<sup>th</sup>

There were some big climbs today that I enjoyed. Water source near Niday Shelter almost dry but with patience I was able to fill two bottles, just in case there was no water here at Pickle Branch Shelter. (24 Miles)

May 6<sup>th</sup>

Dragon's Tooth always a challenge and fun. Walked into grocery in Catawba and quickly back out. I'd never stay in the "Pig Pen" again. It did keep me dry that night in '85. McAfee knob fantastic, I even enjoyed the large pastures on the way out of Catawba. I absolutely love Tinker Cliffs. I think I enjoyed them more this time. Got to see a small copperhead there this time. I had a great time with the locals at the store in Catawba who were trying to give me the business in a good-natured way and I got a helluva kick out of it. With the walk in and out of Catawba, 22 miles. Lambert's Meadow shelter.

May 7<sup>th</sup>

Today I put in maximum effort, going into Cloverdale, taking a shower at the truck stop, walking and hitch-hiking to the next town and it's barber shop and back to Cloverdale to the grocery store. Luckily a couple at the grocery asked me if I wanted a ride back to the trail. By this time I'd probably walked about 20 miles already, so even though it was only a mile back to the trail, I was ecstatic. I was dog-tired when they left me at the trail but still made it to Fullhardt Knob shelter. Those last 4 miles made it 15 on the trail but I'm sure I did another 10 walking around Cloverdale.

May 8<sup>th</sup>

I'm back in heaven again (the Blue Ridge Parkway). The trail criss-crosses the highway every mile or so with lots of vistas and picnic tables at the crossings. I have lots of good food, plenty of good water sources, and the hiking is easy. I also enjoy an occasional tourist, seeing my backpack and coming over to talk. It's been a little bit misty at some of the overlooks but clear

in others. I think I stopped and sat at every road crossing but still did 24 miles. I found a nice spot to tent here on Fork Mt.

May 9<sup>th</sup>

In all this beauty, there is a place called Floyd Mt. that is one of the ugliest on the trail. Poison ivy is so abundant there that even if you wanted to sit for a minute there's no place to do so safely. After Floyd, it's all gorgeous views, picnic tables, and road crossings. I'm looking forward to crossing the James River tomorrow. I'll have to remember to take extra water for Punch Bowl Mt., last time I had to go over a half mile down to get it. I'm also looking forward to Bluff Mt.'s nice views and I also enjoyed the climb. I'll say a few words to Jody Powell Kline while I'm there. Matt's Creek shelter, 23 miles.

May 10<sup>th</sup>

So many memories flooded my mind today. Pat visiting me in Glasgow and then both of us giving Tom Leonard a ride back to the trail, then spending time at John's Hollow shelter with the Spunks and the great Appalachian athlete. The miles flew by and were so enjoyable. Bluff and Punch Bowl are both big mountains, but my mind was so full they seemed to melt away. I enjoyed Pedlar Dam as much as last time, but was sad the horses were gone. I'm super comfortable here at Brown Mt. Creek shelter and have a nice shelter mate. 25 miles today.

May 11<sup>th</sup>

Nice easy hiking today. Spent some time with a group of kids at Spy Rock who are very curious about my gear. I took a break with them there. While I was descending The Priest, I met a trio of section hikers going up. I didn't envy them going up the south side, it's so steep. It was even a little difficult going down. I enjoyed going over the suspension bridge over the Tye river. I was a little tired when I arrived here at Harper's Creek shelter but it's understandable after 29 miles. There's a falls here with a nice pool at the bottom. It was deep enough to immerse most of me so I feel really refreshed now. I'm already getting excited about going into Waynesboro even though it's 2 days away. I had a great time there last time, tenting on the lawn of the Fire House. The people there were quite friendly and laid back.

May 12<sup>th</sup>

I was wrong about it's being 2 days to get to Waynesboro because I got here to the road crossing before 4 p.m. After calling home, I tried to hitch-hike into town but after a half hour I gave up. I ate at the restaurant here, then walked up the hill to the motel here. It's very old, the plumbing is bad but works, but the room is large and this must have been a very high-end place 25 years ago. Anyway, I'm comfortable and will go into town in the morning.

May 13<sup>th</sup>

Had breakfast at the bottom of the hill before hitch-hiking into Waynesboro. Somehow, I seem to have a hard time getting a ride into Waynesboro. Between hitch-hiking and walking, I finally got here to the fire house. I'm here at the lunch table and my tent is set up on the lawn. I have so much to do, I've decided to stay an extra day.

May 15<sup>th</sup>

Between washing and drying clothes and my sleeping bag, looking for tablets for my stove and getting food, I was busy all day. Doing things on foot takes almost as much energy as hiking, but at least I wasn't carrying a pack. I found time to take a nap earlier, and it was wonderful. I feel so rested now and I'm going out for supper.

May 16<sup>th</sup>

It rained really hard last night, keeping me awake for quite a while. When I shouldered my pack with its resupply and a sodden tent this morning, I groaned under the load. My luck hitch-hiking didn't change much either, so I hoofed it about half the way back to the trail. After I got back to the trail, I resigned myself to the heavy pack for a few miles anyway. After that I found a nice airy spot at a road crossing and hoisted the whole tent up on a tree branch. I rested there for a half hour or so, repacked and was on my way. It's nice to be back in the Shenandoahs and Black Rock Hut again. 20 miles.

May 17<sup>th</sup>

It's been overcast all day but hasn't rained yet. I took it nice and easy and still got here nice and early and I'm enjoying just resting. High Top Hut, 21 miles.

May 18<sup>th</sup>

Rained last night, but was beautiful today. I ran into a Bill Clinton look-alike and could tell he was amused as I gawked at him while we talked. I felt it today, it was almost like walking on air, the miles flew by. Of course it may have something to do with knowing I would be at Skyland tomorrow. Rock Spring 27 miles

May 19<sup>th</sup>

I got here to Skyland for breakfast and am staying tonight. It's so wonderful to see how the other half lives. The meals are great and I feel like a real tourist.

May 20<sup>th</sup>

I feel really good today after the luxury of staying at Skyland. In 1985 I rarely stayed in Inns or motels unless Pat came. Anyway, it was heaven dining "out" and sleeping in a bed. The hiking is so easy here, I stopped at every overlook and sat for a while and still did 22 miles and arrived here very early at Gravel Springs Hut.

May 21<sup>st</sup>

Just like '85 I picked up lots of ticks on the trail as it paralleled the National Zoo's fences. The field just prior to the road going into Front Royal had crotch high grass and by the time I reached the road I picked off a half dozen. Instead of going into Front Royal, I opted for going into the store in Linden which is only a mile from the trail. I was pleasantly surprised to see they had a five pound bag of nice apples. Some hikers think I'm crazy carrying them, but they're 90% water and to me a much better way to carry it. I ate three of them on the way here to Manassas Shelter. A hiker friend (*Sid Not So Vicious*), who I first met in '85 just came so I'll close. 24 Miles

May 22<sup>nd</sup>

Last night *Sid* started Barbequing chicken he'd bought in Linden for himself and (*Slim Chance*) who had been hiking with him. Darkness came and no *Slim Chance*. At about 9:30, *Sid* not wanting chicken in the shelter while we slept said, "Hey Scallion, come help me eat this chicken." Now I had already eaten but no thru hiker ever turned down good food so we dined royally, and I carried the bones about a ¼ mile away and came back and jumped into my sleeping bag. Within minutes we heard a noise and soon saw a form emerge from the dark in the glow of the waning camp fire. No it wasn't a bear, just *Slim Chance* who had missed his chicken. He took his loss well and laughed when I told him how he had a "Slim Chance" of getting any chicken.

May 23<sup>rd</sup>

It's been a nice warm but breezy day with fairly easy hiking, but I still miss the Shenandoah's with their vistas and picnic tables every mile or so. I have a nice tent site here at Crescent Rock. I had to walk a half mile to the spring, but my site is worth it. 26 Miles.

May 24<sup>th</sup>

I got into Harper's Ferry before noon but between registering at the AT center, meeting people, getting a motel room and all I wasn't able to buy any food. I'll do that tomorrow before I leave. I called Pat earlier and am going to use the rest of the night for postcards and letters.

May 25<sup>th</sup>

By the time I had breakfast and backtracked to the grocery store and hiked back to the footbridge it was already noon and I was tiring. By the time I reached the top of Weaverton Cliffs a storm was imminent so I quickly set up the tent right there in the middle of the trail. I'd only done 4 miles of forward progress but had done at least 16 miles with my errands.

May 26<sup>th</sup>

Setting up on the trail yesterday wasn't a great idea, but I got away with it. It rained so hard last night that the whole trail became a stream. Luckily my tent floor has a flap 3 inches high and the water somehow only rose to 2¾ inch level, but it was very close for a while before the rain subsided. Oh well it's over and the sun shined today. I spent the morning at Gathland State Park drying out the tent and getting myself together. I didn't get much sleep last night with the storm so I quit today after 12 miles. Rocky Run Shelter.

May 27<sup>th</sup>

I got my free shower at Dahlgren and thought about how much this means to us hikers. I left a nice note in the register but its hard to describe how great a shower feels when your hiking. With clean shorts, t-shirt and socks it was like strolling around town until the last mile here to Pen Mar County Park. Even though the terrain was gentle the last mile was all Rock Walking. 25 Miles. We're really not supposed to stay here after dark but the head man winked as he was telling us this. Its encouraging to find that there are some "human beings" left in the world.

May 28<sup>th</sup>

I thought about *Dandy Don* and *Tom Leonard* a lot today. We hiked together all the way to Duncannon after Pat brought me back to Blue Ridge Summit in '85. It was only a few days but we had a great time together. It seems so strange to me that *Tom's* gone now, he was so young. Quarry Gap Shelter, 20 Miles.

May 30<sup>th</sup>

Got myself in somewhat of a pickle yesterday. I walked right past Tagg Run Shelters. I kept looking for a tent site with water with no success. I finally stopped fifty yards from Whiskey Spring Road. That's 31 Miles for yesterday. Anyway the site was great and I had plenty of water but I fell right to sleep just after I set up and didn't wake until dark. Well anyway I got some extra sleep, I probably needed. I loved going through the wheat fields today and watching it blow in the wind. It makes the lyrics "*amber waves of grain*" come to mind. I had a nice lunch at the U.S. 11 crossing. Looking forwards to Duncannon tomorrow. Darlington Shelter, 20 Miles.

May 31<sup>st</sup>

I thought of staying in Duncannon, but I had my resupply and a good meal in me by 12:30 and felt really frisky. Walking across the Susquehanna and climbing up the ledges on the other side charged me up even more. It's like I can't wait to see what is over the next ridge its strange because I remember most of it even though it was five years ago when I was last there. Peter's Mountain Shelter, 24 Miles.

June 1<sup>st</sup>

I really stepped out today, I guess I sense I'm getting close to home. Thought about the *Spunks* and their antics today so I chuckled to myself a lot. Nice tent site here on Blue Mountain, 31 Miles.

June 2<sup>nd</sup>

Much of the trail today was through ugly scrub and very dry. I had remembered enough from '85 to carry an extra 20oz's of water so I didn't have to go into Phillips Canyon to get any (Almost ½ mile straight down). Anyway I love Port Clinton and have a room over the bar here. I did have to walk almost three miles to get groceries but lucked out on the way back. I actually had a couple beers with two other hikers here. The lady that runs the place made me a helluva hamburger steak even though she says she doesn't do food. I think she kind of likes me because I'm an old guy. 25 Miles +3.

June 3<sup>rd</sup>

It got real hot this afternoon so I was glad I got all the way to Hawk Mountain Road before noon and took a little break there. There were no cool spots in the scrub after that, so I just kept going. The heat took so much out of me, I crashed as soon as I got here to Allentown Shelter even though it was hot here too. I don't know how long I was asleep but it's still hot. I think it's around 4pm so I know it will cool off soon. I'm thinking about ice cold cokes in Palmerton tomorrow but that's 18 miles away. If I wake up at the crack of dawn tomorrow, maybe I can get there around 11am and avoid most of the heat.

June 4<sup>th</sup>

I'm here in the police department basement in Palmerton and it's been a fabulous day for me. First, I made it here to the police department by 11:30 am, signed in and left my pack. This left me free to walk around town with just my food bag to carry. The people here like us hikers so I got to talk to quite a few of them. By the time I ate out and shopped for my groceries, it was already 4pm and since they lock the station by 5pm, I thought it prudent to get back here. There's a nice deep sink so I am rinsing out a few things. There is a candy machine and a soda

machine just up the stairs and I did just buy a coke but I had bought bananas and apples and oranges from the store so I don't need the candy machine. For a hiker this is luxurious which is good because tomorrow's hike will be rugged and dry. I'll be carrying an extra five pounds of fruit which will help me make my water last.

June 5<sup>th</sup>

This section just as I remembered. The scramble up the scree from Palmerton was even more enjoyable than in '85 because the stench of the zinc refinery is gone and there is now life on the mountainside. There are small trees poking their tops among the gnarled dead ones. I was very surprised that this area could recover this much in five years. From the top all the way to Wind Gap is pretty normal hiking if a little on the dry side. From Wind Gap on is another matter. You can't put your foot down on anything but sharp rocks. It's amazing because there's vegetation, albeit scrubby. It goes on that way for over seven miles of boring ugly torture. Kirkwood Shelter is great, there is even a water spigot near the shelter so I was able to take a sponge bath. I have a couple of hikers for company here. It's so nice and cool and starting to rain. Perfect timing for me. 29 Miles.

June 6<sup>th</sup>

Lots of wind and rain last night making it easy to sleep. Woke raring to go today despite tough day yesterday. I had a great breakfast at Delaware Water Gap. As usual enjoyed walk across Delaware River Bridge and being able to see a few very large fish from there. It was very hot so I washed up in the restroom at the recreation area. I loved walking along the stream with all its little falls but it was so hot, I wanted to jump into some of the pools. I just kept going until Sunfish Pond because the stream is so difficult to access. I had a nice long dip there in spite of the no swimming signs. That refreshed me enough to make it here to Rattle Snake Mountain. 29 Miles. Looking forward to the easy hiking I'll have tomorrow.

June 7<sup>th</sup>

Yesterday, after a great day of hiking, I got myself into somewhat of a pickle. I had a great time all day talking to people and even doing the side trail to the tower at High Point. I had planned to stay on the farm land just before County 519 and was doing fine, except rejecting and walking by some good tent sites. Right around dusk, I reached the point where the trail goes right between the house and barn of said farm, so I decided to go a little further so I wouldn't be too close. The trail there was an absolute mess of boggy ground with scattered bog bridges and by this time it was just too dark to negotiate them. My only choice was to go back ½ mile and set up on the edge of a very stony cornfield. It wasn't very comfortable and I cursed myself for not taking one of the perfectly good spots I'd rejected earlier. It was pitch dark by this time, so I had

no choice but to make the best of it. I somehow managed a couple hours of sleep, but at first light I packed up and wove my way through the boggy pasture. Even in the light, I ended up falling in up to my knees a couple of times. After that, things went better. I stopped at the place that sells everything from shrubs to cider and homemade products including homemade bread. I had ice cream, soda, and a box of donuts and bought a loaf of homemade bread and a package of cream cheese to take with me. My misadventures behind me and my belly full, I was back to my old self. Climbing the steep slopes of Wawayanda with a fully belly and extra food in my pack tested my mettle some but after all the burps were out and the ground leveled a little, I was able to cover some ground. I'm tenting near Prospect Rock but don't really know today's mileage, only that it's 52 miles for these two days.

June 9<sup>th</sup>

Good hiking today, enjoyed Fitzgerald Falls and Little Dam Lake the most but whole day was interesting except the lemon squeezer which is stupid. Why they route the A.T. through it mystifies me. Finger board shelter. 22 miles.

June 10<sup>th</sup>

As usual I enjoyed the whole park at Bear Mountain. After being alone so much of the time it is kind of nice to be among so many people for a while. When I cross Bear Mt. bridge, I start to feel like I'm almost home. Found a pretty good spot to tent near Chapin Rd. It's kind of buggy but it's been a long exciting day and I'm tired. 23 miles.

June 11<sup>th</sup>

I was so excited about being near home, and wanted to get as close as possible so Pat doesn't have to drive too far to pick me up. I've hiked this section so many times, it's like home to me. My loaf of homemade bread is finally almost gone, along with the cream cheese, but with a few soups and oatmeals on the bottom of the food bag, I can stretch things out for a couple more days. Morgan shelter, 25 miles.

June 12<sup>th</sup>

Hiking is so easy on such familiar ground with such a light pack. My mind was flooded with memories of past hikes all day. It was almost like just finding myself at the next location magically instead of walking there. It was so nice out, sunny and breezy and not too warm. I was going to stay at Mt. Algo lean-to, but it was early and I felt so good I kept going. About a mile later, I regretted my decision a little but kept slogging along to Caleb's Peak. I found a great mossy spot to set up my tent here and I'm pretty happy I kept going. I did 32 miles today, so I'm a little whipped but I'm going out at West Cornwall tomorrow and it's only 13 miles.

June 13<sup>th</sup>

I'm sitting here waiting for Pat in West Cornwall at an outside table. I just had a nice early lunch here. This is such a pretty little town and very artsy. I think there's more tourists here than natives. I didn't eat anything until I arrived here so I was starved. I did have some oatmeal left but was too pumped up to prepare it.

June 18<sup>th</sup>

While I was home catching up on chores, I decided to do a slack-packing day hike for the section of trail from Race Brook trail back to West Cornwall, to complete that section of trail. When I conceived this, I just glanced quickly at the data book and without really planning things, I assumed from memory it was doable, but I guess my memory isn't all that great. The AT is four miles in on the Race Brook trail, about an hour. From there to West Cornwall is 27 more which is very doable even with another 4 on the trail out. It would have been fine if I hadn't somehow calculated the whole trip at around 25 miles. I had a wonderful day talking to people along the way and walking without my pack, carrying only a couple of sandwiches and a water bottle and filter. Ignorance is truly bliss and I must say I was in hiker heaven, until it hit me sometime after I crossed the Housatonic River that I had calculated my mileage from the wrong access trail and my total mileage would be 35 miles. If I was aware of this from the start I could have easily been 9 or 10 miles down the trail, but now it was 7 miles to the exit trail and 4 more miles out with at the most, 2 hours of daylight left. I thought of hitchhiking to my truck on route 4 but the stubborn streak in me said "go for the impossible". I gave it all I had, but by the time I could hear voices from Pine Swamp lean-to, it was dusk. Now I could have spent the night there in the company of other hikers, but I couldn't make myself quit. I kept plugging another mile or so until it was pitch black. Here I was in shorts and a T shirt, having only a water filter and bottle with me. I had tried to get as much elevation as possible so the bugs weren't too bad. (One reason I hadn't gone to the shelter is it abuts the swamp and is alive with mosquitoes). Using a tree trunk for a pillow and pulling my arms down inside my T shirt, I tried to, and to some extent succeeded in sleeping. I was awoken up by raccoons scratching around a couple times and then came the rain. Luckily it was fairly light and somehow I was able to get through the night. I took off as soon as the white blazes were visible. The ground being so damp, I hiked very silently and was able to come upon a beautiful barred owl and observe him for a while. In spite of my ordeal of the night before I was enjoying myself. Soon I crossed a small stream and was able to get a drink and fill my water bottle. I hadn't had a drink all night. Another mile and I was at the side trail and within an hour of my truck on route 4. When I arrived at my truck I quickly drove to a phone to call Pat who said she wasn't worried anyway, then home to a nice breakfast she had waiting. I spent the rest of the day finishing up my chores around home.

June 22<sup>nd</sup>

Today Pat left me off again at Race Brook trail, this time with my pack, and it's been a few days since I carried it and since I just resupplied, it's heavy, so I didn't do a lot of mileage. Tom Leonard shelter, 15 miles.

June 23<sup>rd</sup>

It's a little bit difficult getting back in the groove after my time home. But my pack was a bit lighter today and I felt more "spirited" today. I think between my somewhat disasterous slack-packing and all the work I did at home, I came back to the trail more tired than when I left it. I'm camped here at Finerty pond, so it's 24 miles today which isn't bad and I feel great. I've been wanting to camp here for years.

June 24<sup>th</sup>

I walked into the restaurant in Dalton for lunch. It was only a half mile and the lunch very good so it was worth the effort. It was overcast for a while this morning so it didn't get too hot. I'm staying in the church gym here in Cheshire. This is such a pretty New England town, that I took a nice walk around town after supper. Considering I was on the trail for 24 miles today, I find it quite amazing that I still have the urge to walk and sight-see. Of course I was able to shower here and that always perks me up.

June 25<sup>th</sup>

Bascom Lodge was open when I went through so I was able to get some good (if a little strange soup) there. The young man who made it said he wasn't really a cook, but I think he's onto something. It was chock full of al dente veggies like zucchini, yellow squash, tomatoes, and even chunks of butternut squash. Even as I write it, it doesn't sound so good but it really was quite good. The views were good today, even at Pine Cobble. I always enjoy my scramble up the scree there and then getting to the area where I saw my first bear in the wild many years ago. I'm camped a half mile past Seth Warner shelter because of "the weekenders". It's a lot nicer here than the camping area which is hard packed from all the activity. I also find regular camping areas often harbor more ticks, probably because camper's food scraps draw mice. 23 miles.

June 26<sup>th</sup>

What a great day I had when I got to the stream on the far side of VT. 9. I took a quick dip and had a snack as I hadn't eaten anything except an apple. I literally charged up the steep mountainside there remembering how daunting it had been the first time many years ago. I noticed the water source at Melville Nouman shelter was dry when I went by and I was glad I

had filled all my bottles in the stream. Between that shelter and Glastenbury is just a walk in typical New England woods, but soon after the spring on Glastenbury you come to a semi-alpine zone with all conifers then opening up to spongy alpine growth. The next couple miles are tough and tangled. I'm here at Caughwaga shelter which bears describing. You'll wonder why I stay here after my description, but I love it here because of the nice little stream and the surroundings. The shelter is around 8 feet by 8 feet with hardware cloth (a fine wire mesh) on 2 sides, boards on the back, with one side open for access. The closest thing I've ever seen to it is a rabbit hutch but even as I bash it, I love it. It's comfortable and I've never had to share it with anyone. It's been such an easy relaxing day, it didn't feel like 25 miles.

#### June 27<sup>th</sup>

So many beautiful places today, Stratton Pond, Stratton Mt., Spruce Peak, and now Bromley. I was excited all day and enjoyed the bog bridges around Stratton Pond and all the peaks. I feel so good, the 27 miles I did today felt like a stroll in the park. I'm staying in a shack near the ski lift that is open. I was going to tent near here but on a whim came here and checked the door and Viola! It was open. They have wooden platform about 40 ft. high nearby and the sunset was great from there. The little stream on the way up was almost dry, but there was some pooled up water in spots, so I was all set. I filled up an extra water bottle because the south bounders say Mad Tom Spring is dry and the pump at USFS 21 isn't working, so there's no water until Griffith Lake.

#### June 28<sup>th</sup>

While all of VT. is beautiful, Griffith Lake and Baker Peak are really spectacular. I sat there on Baker Peak and didn't want to leave. I had to walk 3 ½ miles both in and out of Danby to get groceries but it was such a pleasant road walk, I enjoyed every minute of it. Lula Tye Shelter is fine but the water source is a swamp and the side that's accessible is sunny and quite warm. I'm filtering it, so it's safe, but warm swamp water is not the best tasting. 17 miles on the trail plus 7 more to and from the store. 24 miles.

#### June 29<sup>th</sup>

I had a great swim at Clarendon Gorge. It was a little difficult getting down and back up from the river, but well worth it. The view from Mill River bridge is spectacular. When I got here to Governow Clement shelter, it was occupied by 6 guys, it turns out are from Torrington. They spotted my Eblen's bag and figured out I was from the area. They have a nice fire going in the fireplace and it's raining and quite raw outside. This is an ugly shelter but the fireplace is great. 20 miles.

June 30<sup>th</sup>

The first 10 miles from Gov. Clement shelter to Sherburne are steep and rugged and a joy to an in-shape thru-hiker. I wish I could describe how wildly beautiful the trail there is. After that it's a walk in the park, literally "Griffith Woods State Park". About a mile before Stony Brook Road, the skies opened up and rained so hard I could barely make out the trail. When I arrived at Stony Brook, the normally 7 or 8 inches of water had crept over the log bridge by 2½ feet with frothy whitecaps. The shelter is a few hundred feet on the other side, and I wanted so badly to get out of the torrential rain. I thought of setting up my tent right where I was and waiting out the storm because crossing that raging torrent would not only be difficult, it would be downright dangerous. The brook was now over 30 feet wide, and I thought if there were any gaps in that bridge under the water and I stepped in one, I'd probably be a goner. I was so uncomfortable standing there, completely soaked even though I wore rain gear, that after about 10 minutes I said the hell with it and started to cross with a long sturdy pole I'd found nearby. The waves lapped above my knees and the pressure on my legs was very strong, as I inched my way across. My heart raced, but my legs strengthened by thousands of miles of hiking held. After I passed the half-way point, I calmed down a little but was still pretty nervous until I reached shore. A few more steps and I was in the shelter. The shelter was occupied by 3 hikers coming from the opposite direction. After introductions, I got dry clothes from my pack, changed, and jumped into my sleeping bag and warmed up. After about a half hour, the rain stopped and the sun came out. I'm sure it had rained 9 or 10 inches in the space of 2 hours. We all stayed in the shelter for around 15 minutes after the sun came out, then I just had to go back to the bridge I'd come over which was not visible from the shelter. I was absolutely shocked to see the brook was almost back to normal. This wasn't my first experience with Mt. streams but was the most dramatic so far. It's funny, but being in that storm together seemed to bring the 4 of us close together and we talked into the night before going to sleep. 18 miles.

July 1<sup>st</sup>

I ran into a group of neighborhood ladies out for a hike, who were quite out-going and inquisitive. We walked together on the old Stage Road and it was kind of like home in a way. I seem to remember something about warm swamp water at Cloudland Shelter so I kept going and ended up almost to King's Highway. I have a nice stream here and it's very pretty. I'd remembered it from 1985, but didn't entirely trust my memory, but it turns out I was right on.

July 2<sup>nd</sup>

I got into West Hartford quite early, so I had a wonderful swim in the river there before going to the grocery store. I love all these VT. Country stores, while they're not very large, they always have everything I need. This one in West Hartford has great hotdogs and a crock full of great

beans, along with all the deli sandwiches. As usual, I was starved and had a couple of dogs and a bowl full of chili and got a grinder to go. Before I arrived at Hanover, I had eaten that too. I grabbed some snacks at the gas station on N.H. 20 to carry me the rest of the day. The area near Velvet Rock shelter is so mosquito infested, I don't know why anyone would stay there. I'm here on the south peak of Moose Mt. There are no over-looks but at least there are no bugs. 24 miles.

July 3<sup>rd</sup>

I didn't see any moose on Moose Mt. this morning, but there's a sheep running around on top. I stopped at a house as I crossed N.H. 8 near Lyme and they told me they already knew and the sheep's been running loose there for a couple of months. Hexacube shelter is really fancy, it was built by a crew from Dartmouth and they did a helluva job. Hexacube is very pretty and made up of rectangular blocks of stone as the name implies. Mt. Moosilauke tomorrow, I'm very excited. 19 miles.

July 5<sup>th</sup>

The events that occurred yesterday made it impossible to write in my log on what turned out to be a plus day in spite of my screw-up. The day went well and I especially enjoyed the farm country near each of the three road crossings, and then there was Moosilauke which is definitely one of my favorite mountains. The day was so gorgeous and the climb up fantastic. The top of the mountain is almost flat and covers a large area. As I was hiking along, I noticed there were quite a few changes since 1985 in the form of rocks and cairns that I didn't remember. As I looked at these new additions, I saw an AT blaze on a stone in one of the cairns. Looking back, I should have noticed that the blaze was at an odd angle, but farther on there was another white blaze and evidence of a lot of trail work. I sensed something was wrong, because the trail was headed too far eastward. In spite of this, I reasoned that since I'd seen 2 AT blazes, this whole thing must be a relocation which are quite common on the AT and the lack of any more blazes I attributed to the newness of the trail. As I headed down this very beautiful "relocation" I thought this is all very nice but I liked the old trail better. All this time I had this sinking feeling in my stomach something was wrong, but by this time I'd dropped a thousand feet in elevation. Soon I was at the bottom of the mountain and in a parking lot with half a dozen people getting ready to hike and an information sign post with maps. Of course, by this time, I already knew I was in the wrong place but was grasping at straws in hope of there being a connection trail around the mountain but it was not to be. There was no choice left but to go back over 4 miles up the mountain, so after a quick swig of water, back up I headed. Since it was fairly late in the day and quite steep, I made it only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up. At this point I had hiked 28 miles in very rugged terrain and still felt pretty chipper. Before dark set in, I managed to find a very pretty and

comfortable, in a little slanted spot to sleep right next to the trail in the open. I snuggled up in my sleeping bag, munched on a snickers bar and drifted off to sleep. When I woke up during the night to pee, it was so beautiful there with the moonlight on the firs and the hooting of an owl in the distance. I wanted to stay awake and enjoy it all but after what I'm sure was only 10 minutes or so, I drifted off to sleep until first light. I woke up bright-eyed, bushy-tailed and very hungry and was soon on my way up the last of the mountain. Within 25 minutes I was heading down Moosilauke on the right trail, none the worse for my experience and laughing to myself about it. I knew today was going to be a great one and enjoyed my trip down Moosilauke even more than in '85. By the time I reached the base of Kinsman, it was already very hot but I kept myself cool by kind of crawling into every pool on the stream on the way up Kinsman. As I gained elevation, I started to feel a breeze which stiffened as I approached the peak, making it very comfortable. On the peak it was beautiful and it stayed great down the other side, past Lonesome Lake where I took a dip in preparation of going into North Woodstock. I got to US 3 and took the side trail to the outskirts of North Woodstock which is around 3 ½ miles long, and gets you to a parking lot on the outskirts of town and a possibility of a ride into the center. When the lot came into view, I watched with disappointment as a van pulled out and away towards the center. Now I'd already hiked 24 miles, counting the side trail, but I knew there was little chance of getting a ride, so I just hiked down the road towards the center. After 1 ½ miles more, I spotted a tiny store a block and a half down a side street. It didn't look like much, but I was tiring so I went for it. When I entered, I was shocked!!! There was a center "aisle" with 50 or so cans on it and some benches along the sides with some bread and homemade goods. Not wanting to walk many more miles, I thought to myself, somehow I'm going to make this work. I walked back and forth, scanning this sparsely stocked shelves, finally settling on a small jar of peanut butter, a smaller jar of homemade jelly, and a loaf of some kind thin sliced Arnold bread and a half dozen candy bars. I was also able to get a soda and a little bag of cookies that I consumed right there. When the guy finished adding up my purchases on a piece of paper (there was no register, only a cigar box), it came to \$28 and change. At this point, I just wanted to get back to the trail and find a tent spot and get off my feet. I was hot, sweaty, and tired. So what if I paid double, it would be worth it to get back to the trail with a little daylight left. So back 1½ miles to the side trail and the 3 ½ miles to the AT, another 1 ½ to here, a mile south of Liberty Spring. According to my calculations, that's 30 miles, some of it on hot asphalt. Anyway, I'm here in my sleeping bag, tired but comfortable and it's getting dark so it's time to stop writing.

July 6<sup>th</sup>

The climbs today were tough, especially Garfield, but the views so spectacular, the miles went by quickly. I got to talk to people coming from side trails to Lincoln. There must have been 75 people near the peak. I hiked dry for 4 or 5 miles today because I didn't think of filling my spare

bottle, luckily I found a seep where I was able to fill up a bottle to spell me. The rest of the way here to Zeacliff went nicely and it made the whole day a plus. I was going to set up my tent near the cliff's edge, but there's a tent there already and I don't want to annoy anybody even though there is room for a couple more tents. I'm camped a couple hundred feet away behind a clump of bushes and trees. I hiked only 17 miles today, but considering part of it was Garfield and the day I had yesterday, that's not too bad.

#### July 7<sup>th</sup>

Shortly after I finished writing in my log yesterday, I walked out of my little hideaway and over to the cliff, and got to meet my new neighbors. They were 2 very friendly young men and they told me they had been coming to camp at Zeacliff on their summer vacations for the last 5 years. When I had arrived, they'd been in North Woodstock getting groceries. When they came back, they didn't realize anyone else was up there even though I was only 300 ft. from their site. Before I left to go back, they told me they would be having a fire and roasting some hotdogs as soon as it got dark and invited me to join them. After resting back at my tent for a half hour, I did just that. It had cooled off enough by then to put on my jacket which was great because the bugs were bad in spite of the nice breeze we had. We sat around peering at the campfire and talked. While we were doing this, we noticed a faint rumbling off to the northeast and looked in that direction. The sky there was alive with the zig zag pattern of lightening. We stared in awe as the storm increased in intensity. I don't know how far away the storm was but the stars were out around us. It was so eerily beautiful that I will never forget it. It seems to last forever and I'd had a long day, so I said good night and headed to my tent, collapsed on my sleeping bag and was out. When I awoke this morning, my mind was filled with mental images of last night, kind of charging me up for the day ahead. It was too early for breakfast when I went past Zealand Falls Hut but I got to talk to a couple of early birds there. The first 9 miles today were all down hill to the Saco River, and after a short, steep climb to Mt. Webster most of the trail here to Lake of the Clouds Hut is fairly easy. I laugh when I hear people talk about their arduous treks up Mt. Washington. Of course, they haven't just hiked 1500 miles. Lake of the Clouds Hut is filled up so I found a spot 300 ft. directly below the hut towards the Amonoosik Revine. My site is quite slanted, but has a clear 360 degree view and hell, I won't need a pillow. 20 miles.

#### July 9<sup>th</sup>

I woke to a light drizzle, quite early this morning, rising and quickly packing before the tent got sopping wet. I hate carrying a wet tent because it doubles it's weight. I figured I'd get some breakfast at the visitor's center on Mt. Washington. My plan went well for the first ¼ mile in light rain and a stiff breeze, but with every step the weather deteriorated. By the time I reached the half-way point (one mile), I found myself in swirling fog, heavy rain, and a 60 MPH wind. I

began to worry and scanned the large boulders for a niche to weather out the storm but kept plodding along. It got much worse and I thought my pack straps would break as the wind threatened to rip it from my back. Visibility was down to 30 ft. and I pondered going back, but knowing I was much closer to the visitor's center than Lake of the Clouds Hut, I knew my chances of getting warm and dry anytime soon were better if I kept slogging along, reeling like a drunken sailor as the winds changed direction. The terrain leveled so I knew I was somewhere on the peak, but couldn't see anything but swirling fog. Then to my right I saw a faint vertical form, quite high, slowly emerge from the fog. As I walked toward it, the building it was mounted on came into view. I realized it must be the radio station and since I couldn't see any other buildings and no idea which direction the visitor's center was, I approached the building and tried the door. To my amazement, it opened and I found myself in a 6 ft. by 6 ft. foyer. Now I was cold and wet and knew even though I was in great shape and tough, even I was subject to hypothermia so this little room was heaven to me. There have been many times in my life I was happy to get out of the weather and this time rates up there near the top. I rested there, gradually pulling myself together, toweling myself off and putting on a dry T shirt and also my one sweatshirt from my pack. In the space of 15 minutes I was warm and confident again and ready to venture into the melee outside. Soon I was able to see the outline of the Visitor's Center, and better yet, could see it was lit. Again I was elated to find the doors were unlocked. When I entered, I could find nobody around so I went to the men's room, shaved and cleaned up, found a candy machine and a coffee machine which I used and then laid down on a bench in the lobby. After an hour or so, one of the staff came by and told me they had cancelled everything for the day, but there was a truck going down the mt. soon that could give me a ride to Jackson Rd. This would by-pass 14 miles of trail including Mt. Madison, but the alternative was waiting for the storm to subside which could be 2 or 3 days. I opted to take the truck ride and as we dropped in elevation, the storm abated. By the time we got to the trail crossing at Jackson Rd., it was just drizzling with a few gusts of wind. When I got to Pinkerton Notch Camp at 11 a.m., I called home bought and wrote out a few postcards and after eating some over-priced M&M's, and headed out. The next 12 miles are some of the roughest on the AT and I absolutely love them. Both Wildcats (A & B) are steep and rugged and it's extremely wild all the way to the Imp. I was already pumped up about not getting hung up in the storm on Washington and that the sun had come out while I was at Pinkham Notch. After I scrambled up Wildcat A, and looked out from the observation deck, I was even more cranked up. Anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed those rugged miles here to the Imp campsite. Although the Mt. Washington storm was tough at the time, it's been a wonderful experience that I'll treasure for the rest of my life, my only regret was missing Mt. Madison but I'll make a special trip to finish that 14 miles later.

July 10<sup>th</sup>

A man from the hostel in Gorham picked me up after I walked a ¼ of a mile towards town. It seems he goes out a couple times a day to pick up and return hikers. They have motel units here too, along with the hostel and a restaurant and as you can see they really hustle for business I would have gone to the Red Barn if he hadn't picked me up at the trail head. Their prices are good and their food was even better and they have a very unique thing they do for us hikers. They "sell" you a bicycle for five dollars so they won't be liable in this sue happy world. It's great for getting around Gorham to shop and when you're finished you just sell it back. If I hike here in the future I will definitely come back.

#### July 11<sup>th</sup>

I'm all fat and rested after only eight miles of hiking and the wonderful day of sloth in Gorham. It was such fun riding the bike to the grocery yesterday. The Barbeque, the hostel put on was awesome and it was nice talking to the other hikers there. The Hostel gave me a ride back to the trail head after breakfast and I was quite logy for the first five miles after eating bacon, eggs and home fries but it sure was worth it. They didn't get me back to the trail until after ten so I only hiked twelve miles today. It was so beautiful today with Dragonflies and butterflies everywhere so I dawdled a bit and enjoyed them. When I got here to Gention pond I took a nice dip with the leeches. It didn't bother me as much as it did in '85. I guess I have developed a tolerance for them. No boy scouts here this time so there is plenty of room in the shelter which is good because we are having a little shower now.

#### July 12<sup>th</sup>

I was right back in the swing of things and there were so many "tens" today, Goose Eye, Mahoosic Notch, Old Speck, and the hike down Grafton Notch. All of it is so exciting to hike. Mahoosic Notch with its huge boulders to navigate and the coolness of its ice; Goose Eye with its openness and views; Speck with its pond that I swam in and the steep hike down Grafton Notch that's so exciting. There is just so much beauty packed into the nineteen miles I did today, I'm in ecstasy. I'm only a mile and a half from the lean-to but it's so pretty here and even though I've done only 19 miles, they have been very steep and rugged. Also I've talked to so many people today I'll enjoy a little solitude.

#### July 13<sup>th</sup>

While today's hike wasn't nearly as spectacular as yesterday, I enjoyed Dunn Falls and took a break there. It's not that Baldpate, Wyman and Hall aren't attractive; it's just there overshadowed by Goose Eye, Mahoosic Notch, Speck and Grafton Notch. One mountain that does impress me is the Little Nob between Hall Mtn. and Sawyer Brook that isn't even listed in

the data book (I think it's name is Moody Mountain). Anyway I am camped just past it by Sawyer Brook. 19 Miles.

July 14<sup>th</sup>

This has been another exciting day going over Old Blue and Bemis which are not steep but I find them very picturesque and I also enjoy the Bemis Stream ford. The water was only knee-high this time and much easier to ford. Sabbath Day Lean-to, 20 Miles

July 15<sup>th</sup>

Hope my food holds out since I didn't go into Rangeley. The trail again was spectacular: Saddleback, The Horn, Saddleback Jr., all with gorgeous views, hairy climbs and descents. Southbounders Red- Shoofly and Flatland Glider are staying here at Poplar Ridge. I'm looking forward to Orbeton Stream ford and the cliff walk along Lone Mt. tomorrow. 19 miles.

July 16<sup>th</sup>

Orbeton Stream ford was as enjoyable as I remember and the spongy path along the ridge edge on Lone Mt. also great, you're so high and the path is so soft and spongy you get the illusion of danger. Both Spaulding and Crocker are nice but so heavily wooded there are no overlooks and become almost boring. I'm so spoiled from restaurant food, I was tempted to hitchhike into Stratton but I resisted and am tenting about 2 ½ miles past the Maine 27 crossing. It's quite nice here and I have enough food left. Looking forward to Avery Peak tomorrow, I'd love to stay there tomorrow night but it's only 6 miles and I can't justify it. 23 miles

July 17<sup>th</sup>

The Bigelows are fantastic!!! I enjoyed every inch of them. Every climb is rewarded with great views and the climbs themselves are exciting. It's funny, but I never heard other hikers mention them at all, but for my money Avery Peak ranks in the top 20 of the entire AT. That spring near the peak always amazes me, it's so icy cold. I took a nice dip in Flagstaff Lake after struggling through the underbrush to get to the water. My effort was worth it though. I thought of staying at Pierce Pond but it's pretty here at the north end of East Carey Pond and I'm fairly whipped anyway. 24 miles.

July 18<sup>th</sup>

Crossing the Kennebec was a lot easier this time. There's a guy that takes you across in a canoe for \$5. He had just taken 2 people over when I showed up so I got quick service. He was going home to eat and do some chores and then come back and check for hikers so I would have had a pretty long wait. As it was, I was able to cross the river, resupply in Caratunk, and still do

around 20 miles. I'm camped just off the road before Moxie Pond. Things happened so fast today that it was a blur to me. I took a nice break on the peak of Pleasant Pond Mt. and relaxed a little. The last 5 miles to here, I took it easy and enjoyed myself. It was downhill anyway.

#### July 19<sup>th</sup>

One of the reasons I was so antsy yesterday was that I was eager to get to Monson and Shaw's. If I hadn't done that 20 miles yesterday, it would have been very difficult. Anyway, with just 20 miles to do today, I did it quite easily and got here before 2, leaving me plenty of time to shop, call home, and write out some postcards. I had called Keith yesterday to tell him I'd be here for supper. This would sound funny to a non-hiker, but I have time to burn this afternoon.

#### July 20<sup>th</sup>

Both supper and breakfast were great and Keith gave me a ride to the trail head after breakfast. I was so full, I waddled the first 4 or 5 miles and burped a lot. It's been what I call a butterfly, dragonfly day. (I love the colors on both). Little Wilson Falls was as usual very beautiful and I spent a little time soaking in one of its pools. I'm camped in a great spot behind the cliff on Barren Mt. My tent site is a tiny niche overlooking a lake, just a hundred feet from where I'm sitting now at cliff's edge. I thought I saw a moose swimming across the lake but after closer scrutiny I discovered it was a boat. In my defense, it's a long ways away and I hadn't noticed there's also a cottage hidden in the trees along the shore. I would never have dreamed there was a road to this lake. 31 miles.

#### July 21<sup>st</sup>

While today's hiking had some mountains, much of it was flat and quite a bit on logging roads. It was very hot and humid until the thunder shower at around 11. When I reached the Pleasant River ford, the rain abruptly stopped and the sun came out. If I thought it was hot and humid before, now it was like I was in a sauna. I kept slogging along but it took the heart out of me. I was so relieved when I got here to Logan Brook Lean-to. After I stowed my gear in the shelter, I walked to the brook and laid in a pool there for a good 20 minutes until I felt human again. It's nice and shady around the shelter and the sun is going down so it's getting better, except for the mosquitoes. 24 miles.

#### July 22<sup>nd</sup>

I haven't been looking forward to today's section. It's not that there's difficult hiking or that it isn't very pretty, but it's definitely 10 times as buggy as any other section. I don't carry a head net, but use my T-shirt with the neck hole over my face and draped over my neck. This works quite well but it's over 95 degrees out and I certainly don't need anything blocking the air flow

around any part of my body. Potaywadjo Spring for taste and volume is one of the 2 best on the trail, the other being the half mile before Palmerton, Pa. Potaywadjo, being in a pristine area, and the one in Palmerton being very near what was once the most polluted area in the country but saved by the direction of the prevailing winds. I just had to include that because of the irony of a wonderful, very pure spring being so close to what I described in 1985 as looking like a war zone. Anyway, I'm here at Potaywadjo Spring Lean-to in a very beautiful but extremely buggy area. As usual, it's damned uncomfortable all zipped up in a sleeping bag on a very warm night but it is necessary. 22 miles.

July 23<sup>rd</sup>

Today was much better even though there were a few buggy areas, they didn't compare with the literally millions of bugs I faced yesterday, in fact, I hiked bare-backed for around 8 miles today. I stopped briefly at Rainbow Stream lean-to to write in the register and left before I received too many mosquito bites. Here on Rainbow Ledges, which is basically a large, slightly rounded rock, it's bug-free, with a nice breeze. Despite it being mostly ledge, there are clumps of stunted trees and bushes all around me, and it's actually quite pretty with its large patches of moss. 27 miles.

July 24<sup>th</sup>

Since Pat and I had agreed to meet at Katahdin Stream campground, and I didn't expect her to arrive until afternoon, I took my time, stopping at Abol Bridge to eat and then stopped at the falls to swim and didn't arrive until late afternoon. There were no cabins available, we decided to go into town and a motel.

July 25<sup>th</sup>

We got a little bit of a late start climbing Katahdin, but it was such a nice day the climb went very quickly. Since there's an opening here at Katahdin stream now, we're staying tonight.

July 26<sup>th</sup>

I've had a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach since Pat left this morning. Even though I already knew that I wasn't going home before, it didn't seem to bother me, but now that I know I won't be home for a while it's hitting me pretty hard. Rainbow Stream lean-to 24 miles.

July 27<sup>th</sup>

Most of the sadness of not going home is gone now that I've gone almost 50 miles south. I'm camped here on the southwest shore of Pemadumcook Lake where I've wanted to camp since I saw it in 1985. It's funny but when I was headed north, I never thought of going past Potawadjo

and camping here. The lake shore is all rounded, very smooth stones, most from 4 inches to a foot in diameter in size that extend into the water at a very steep angle. The water is crystal clear and it's over my head within 4 feet of shore. I can dive right from the shore without any fear of hitting anything. I feel so alive sitting here in the breeze after my long swim. The sensation of being such deep water, so far from shore, was so stimulating and exciting even though there was no real danger.

July 28<sup>th</sup>

It amazes me how different the trail looks going the opposite direction. I was surprised to run into only a couple of other hikers today. I got through the extremely buggy area between Potawadjo Spring and Little Boardman Mt. before it got too hot which made me very happy. I watered up at Logan Brook so I could stay here on the top of White Top Mt.. I'm on a ledge facing southwest and the setting sun. It's so beautiful and feels so good in the late afternoon breeze. I had to pitch my tent in a tiny 5 ft. by 7 ft. clearing where the trail crew had piled brush. The bushes and small trees along the trail are so dense here, it was the only opening big enough for a tent. I just stuffed the brush anywhere there was an opening along the trail. Anyway, it was well worth the effort to be here. It feels so good to be here on this ledge in the sunset, I think I'll just sit here basking until dark. 25 miles.

July 29<sup>th</sup>

Between meeting hikers and the thunder shower yesterday, I got thrown off schedule. I had planned at staying near the stream on the bottom of Barren Mtn. and had plenty of time to get there, but somehow the dark caught me before I could get there. I was able to setup the tent in the dark, but had a helluva time finding a high enough branch to hang my food bag. After much stumbling around on the mountainside, I finally got the end of my parachute cord over a branch, and hoisted my food bag. My tent site was actually almost level so I slept well in spite of being a little apprehensive about hanging my food bag only 50 feet away. Being in bear county and in the dark I was very concerned until the food bag was hoisted. Being in pitch dark with a food bag and only a tiny mag-lite® for light was also definitely unsettling. (25 Miles).

July 30<sup>th</sup>

Since it was only 20 miles here to Monson, I was able to get here by one. Shortly after I arrived *Keith Shaw* asked me if I liked to go into Dover where he was going grocery shopping. I was ecstatic about going into a real [if a little small] supermarket. I was able to get exactly what I wanted for my food bag instead of making do. By the time we returned here it was almost supper time so I spent a half hour or so talking with other hikers. Supper as usual was great and I'm looking forward to *Keith's* breakfast. Leaving *Shaw's* after a great breakfast is almost like

leaving home. *Keith* and *Pat* treat us hikers like family. When I was hiking north I liked this spot near the road on the south end of Moxie Pond. I pitched my tent in the same place. The growth is so dense here that even though I'm only a couple hundred feet from the road I can barely hear the few cars that pass. (20 Miles).

July 31<sup>st</sup>

It felt funny going through Caratunk with an almost full food bag. I stopped for an ice cream anyway. The wait for my canoe ride over the Kennebec was about an hour which wasn't too bad. I'm really enjoying the rugged beauty of Maine from this direction. It looks so different but you're also very comfortable because you know exactly where you are. I'm here on the West side of West Carry Pond and it's breezy and amazingly bug-less. While it wasn't too bad a few weeks ago there were bugs. Twenty-six Miles today and I feel fresh as a daisy.

August 1<sup>st</sup>

The Bigelows, from this direction are even more impressive. I'm in such good shape and so relaxed that the climbs, though very steep, were very easy for me. I spent time on the peaks enjoying the 360 view. The feeling of elation is impossible to describe, except that it was like walking on air. I've had this feeling before, but it has never lasted so long. I could have done many more miles but I didn't want to break the spell, so I came here to Cranberry Pond after only 18 miles. The pond is covered with lilies and so beautiful. I was a little sad about not staying near Avery Peak but it was way too early and I have to say, in its own way this spot is equal. I'll spend the rest of the day watching the dragonflies as I bask in the sun at ponds edge.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>

While I enjoyed my whole day, the last 12 miles to here were by far the best. From the climb down from Caribou Valley Road, to the Carrabasset and later the climb up Lone Mtn. and its ridge walk and then down to the ford at Orbeton Stream are all spectacular. I just hope these areas are rugged and remote enough to keep out any motorized idiots, because they certainly would destroy them. It's funny how areas hiked quite heavily will stay pristine and litter free and how fast an area can become tainted once the motor-heads come. The shelter here is full so I am tenting nearby. (Poplar Ridge Lean-to). Everyone here is what I would classify as real hikers. Two of them are northbound thru hikers and the others are also very experienced. I'm looking forward to some good trail stories later. (25 Miles).

August 3<sup>rd</sup>

We did swap trail tales for a while last night, but I pooped out after an hour or so and couldn't keep my eyes open. I'm sitting here on Saddle Back after a great morning. The climb up from

this direction is much more challenging and I loved it. I'm looking back towards The Horn where I came from and the view takes my breath away. I just came through here a couple weeks ago but it's like I can't get enough of it. Well, I'd better get going if I'm going to get in and back out of Rangely today.

It's been a hectic day for me. I ended up walking a couple miles towards Rangely before I got a ride. Time was short and I kind of panicked thinking I might not be able to shop and get a ride back to the trail before dark. Luckily, my ride in was only 2 blocks from the grocery store. While I was shopping, a lady asked me about the trail and whether I was going back to the trail head today. When I told her "yes", she told me they had a few errands but would be heading that way in a half hour. I was able to finish shopping and grab a hotdog which I ate while I waited for them at the roadside. I had lots of daylight left to get here to Sabbath Day Pond shelter after they left me off. The ride back in their station wagon was fun with the kids asking questions about the trail. After a couple of miles back on the trail, it started to darken up, but I made it to within 2 miles of the shelter before it rained, so it wasn't too bad. It's raining really hard now and I'm snuggled up in my sleeping bag. It's not really that cool but with getting wet and not moving, I seem to have lost my body heat. It's so pleasant here listening to the rain and thinking about the wild day I had. 19 miles.

#### August 4<sup>th</sup>

It's been raining and foggy all day. The trail from Sabbath Day Pond to ME 17 was a muddy mess and the ford at Bemis stream was wild. The high ground after that was fine as much of it is softly-rounded ledge. Bemis Mt. was actually quite pretty as parts of it emerged from the rain and fog, even with limited visibility. Old Blue was the same, although it may have been raining a little harder. I never would have believed the ford of Sawyer Brook could have been so difficult. The ford is normally below the knees at most, but today it was mid-thigh with a pretty strong current. The climb up Hall Mt. was a little difficult and slippery with the rain. It's so good to be here in the shelter after a day that felt like more than 21 miles. Within an hour of my arrival here, other hikers began arriving. Strangely enough, I knew all of them. I had already met Joe and Eric Wells going down Hall Mt. while I was climbing up and wondered where they ended up camping. Anyway, at the shelter, in came 2 hikers I stayed with at Daicey Pond who were doing some peaks on their vacation. Next came 2 thru-hikers I'd stayed with a couple times in Carolina, followed a half hour later by one I'd met in Tennessee who had been trying to catch the first two since Gorham. Thru-hikers are always aware of each other because of the registers and the trail grape-vine and we bond quickly. The peak hikers fit right in too, since they had also backpacked for years and were serious hikers. Soon we were swapping trail stories while we snuggled in our sleeping bags, dry and well fed. The rain was now torrential and the shelter shuttered under the impact. Being among fellow hikers in a storm like this was surreal. I

couldn't imagine it getting any better but it did. Around 11 P.M., a light appeared on the trail from the north. We stared in disbelief, wondering what lunatic would be out in this weather. When the light neared the shelter, we shined our lights on the broadly beaming face of Shoeless Joe. He told us he got bored down at the bed-and-breakfast and knew we were here (us thru-hikers) and thought he would pay us a visit. I'd met him once before and we'd all heard trail stories of this military man. He wasn't actually thru-hiking the A.T., but loved hiking and hikers and hiked all the more challenging parts of the A.T. Needless to say, there was more camaraderie now. He stayed about an hour, then headed back down the north side where he came from. We offered to share our sleeping bags but he said he'd be O.K. and we "believed it".

To climb down a slippery mountainside and cross a wild Sawyer Creek in a raging storm at midnight was probably just a day at the office for him. We all eventually drifted off to sleep. We slept a little later than usual and it was still sprinkling at 7:30 while I was eating some breakfast but by the time I got packed up and left, it was only misting. The trail in the beginning had 3 or 4 inches of water, but as I lost elevation, the water deepened. For a while I was able to jump back and forth across the trail to high spots but soon gave this up as the water widened and deepened. I slogged through calf-deep water for a while, then knee-deep and as I neared the bottom of the mountain, long stretches of water up to my crotch. By the time I reached East B Hill road, I'd been through enough water for a lifetime. Instead of staying on the trail, I headed down East B road towards Andover. After walking a mile or so down the road, a couple with a pick-up truck told me to hop in the back. I thought of staying at the bed-and-breakfast for a couple of days until the water subsided but by the time I got to Andover, I decided to call Pat to pick me up. I'd had enough!!! The couple left me off at a grocery/gas station/ convenience store. After calling Pat, I pigged out on hotdogs and Hostess cupcakes and waited. No regrets.

A month later, I got a letter from Joe and Eric Wells telling me how they got flooded out that night that I spent at Hall Meadow Lean-to but they were able to get some rest after moving to high ground. In the meantime, I had been living the high-life back here at home sleeping in a bed and eating great tasting food.