

Long Trail

NEWS > SPRING 2024



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 4 The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Long Trail
- 8 Reconnecting with Nature
- 12 Generations on the Long Trail
- 15 Remembering Harry T. Peet, Jr.

Long Trail NEWS

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The *Long Trail News* is published by the Green Mountain Club, a non-profit founded in 1910.

THE MISSION OF THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB is to make the mountains of Vermont play a larger role in the life of the people. We are committed to ensuring the GMC and Long Trail System are places that are inviting, safe, and open, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

The Green Mountain Club and Long Trail System are located on land which is the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples including the Western Abenaki. This land has served as a site of meeting and exchange among Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We recognize and respect them as the traditional stewards of these lands and waters, whose presence continues to enrich our community. We strive to respect and protect the lands within our use.

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GET IN TOUCH! Staff and Board Directory can be found at greenmountainclub.org/about

FRONT COVER: Laura McIntosh

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH, and as President of the Green Mountain Club, I stand on the shoulders of four talented and dedicated women who held the role before me:

SHIRLEY STRONG was elected as the first woman president in 1969, six decades after the club's founding. Shirley was a revered environmental activist who established the ranger-naturalist program, revived the caretaking program at shelters, began a trail ethics program, and started an inventory of Long Trail landowners.



Shirley Strong

MARTY LAWTHERS, president from 2000 to 2003, felt a deep commitment to volunteers and land stewardship, and this showed through her work with GMC's 14 regional sections, which vary significantly in size and resources. In a recent conversation, she advised me to follow my instincts and encouraged me to keep a vision for the club's future in mind throughout day-to-day business.



Marty Lawthers

MARGE FISH, president from 2009 to 2012, is still an active volunteer (President of the Manchester Section and on many committees). She has been a strong advocate for getting children out hiking and teaching them ethics and trail maintenance skills. She valued strong leadership among both volunteers and senior staff, and kept the vice president current on club affairs. Her advice to me was to speak up and be strong.



Marge Fish

JEAN HAIGH, president from 2012 to 2015, had the motto: "Do what you love and love what you do," and she did. Her dedication to big projects never wavered: the Winooski River Foot Bridge; creation of the Northeast Kingdom Section and the Kingdom Heritage Trail System; and the resurrection of camps – Bolton Lodge and Bryant Camp in Bolton, and the newly constructed Jean Haigh Cabin in Barton. I will always remember Jean's limitless energy and passion for the work of the Green Mountain Club.



Jean Haigh

The club has also had many other incredible women in the room throughout its 114 years. Yet that does not mean the organization – or the trails – are immune to incidents of discrimination, bias and sexism. Yes, they have occurred on trails and in meetings. I am committed to continuing the DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) work of the club and to providing opportunity at every board meeting to learn and address the ways this issue affects staff, volunteers, and the hiking public.



Nancy McClellan

Today we celebrate women who have broken stereotypes and contributed to the protection and maintenance of the Long Trail System for more than a hundred years. I thank them for their accomplishments and for the bootprints they have left for us to follow.

I hope you are enjoying our lengthening days on and off the trails!

— **NANCY MCCLELLAN**
GMC President



◀ Read more about the incredible women of GMC's history.

Vote for GMC's Next GENERAL DIRECTORS

AT GMC'S ANNUAL MEETING ON JUNE 15, four general seats will open on the board of directors. Directors are elected by members to three-year terms, with a limit of six consecutive years of board service.

The GMC Nominating Committee presents the following candidates for approval:

- > Ram Moensad (Second Term)
- > Melissa Reichert (First Term)
- > Ryan Robbins (First Term)
- > Jeff Wehrwein (Second Term)

To meet the candidates and cast your vote, go to greenmountainclub.org/vote2024



SAVE THE DATE for GMC's 114th
ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 15, 2024

GMC Headquarters in Waterbury Center

Information and Registration coming soon!

greenmountainclub.org/annual-meeting

T H A N K Y O U

Just like hiking shoes, donations and membership dues come in all sizes. And together, they make all of our work possible! *Because of your support* of the Green Mountain Club, we are able to invest in:



Trail work and backcountry facility maintenance throughout Vermont



Land Conservation & Stewardship



Hiker Education and Safety



Fostering a Strong and Inclusive Hiking Community



The Civilian Conservation

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU HIKED THE LONG TRAIL, hoping with every step to arrive at a shelter where you could rest your weary bones, eat a meal, and maybe spend the night? Today, there are about 70 backcountry shelters on the Long Trail System, built over decades by volunteers, Long Trail Patrol crews, and the CCC.

But what was the CCC?

The Civilian Conservation Corps, a national public works program from 1933 to 1942, was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. It targeted unemployed single men 18 to 25 years old and World War I veterans, who provided unskilled manual labor for conservation projects and to develop natural resources in rural areas.

Roosevelt's proposed Emergency Conservation Work Act laid out a plan to recruit thousands of unemployed men, enroll them in a peacetime army, and send them into "battle" against erosion and other damage to natural resources. "I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps," Roosevelt said, "to be used in simple work... more important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work."

Congress received the proposal on March 21, 1933, and Roosevelt signed the executive order on April 5, now considered the birthday of the CCC. He promised to enroll 250,000 young men by July. The first enrollee was selected on April 7, and by

April 17 the first camp was in operation in the Shenandoah Valley near Luray, Virginia—Camp Roosevelt.

The Department of Labor selected and enrolled applicants through its state and local relief offices. Enrollees were single and unemployed men aged 18 to 25 on Home Relief, an early government benefits program. They enrolled for six-month stints and worked 40-hour weeks, with food, housing, uniforms and medical care provided. The CCC paid each enrollee \$30 per month; \$25 was sent home to the workers' parents, and the men got \$5 spending money. By July 1, 1933, there were 275,000 enrollees and 10,000 supervisory personnel in 1,468 camps. It was the fastest large-scale mobilization of men in United States history.

The U.S. Army supervised camps of about 200 men each in all 48 states and four territories. Most were segregated by race, and the few integrated camps were typically assigned to remote locations. Separate camps accommodated Native Americans and World War I veterans.¹

The CCC also helped create 94 national parks and 741 state parks, shaping much of the park systems millions of people enjoy today.

¹ "Company 818 and Segregation in the Civilian Conservation Corps." National Park Service, nps.gov



An example of a CCC Camp, in Middlesex.



Men from the CCC Peru Camp which worked on several Long Trail projects.

Corps and the Long Trail

BY MARTIN PODSKOCH



PHOTO COURTESY GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST ARCHIVES

The backside of the original Little Rock Pond shelter, built by the CCC in 1935.

The CCC in Vermont

Vermont was slated to host four CCC camps, but passionate lobbying by legendary State Forester Perry Merrill raised the number to more than 30, from Bellows Falls to St. Albans.

Workers built trails, roads, campsites and dams; stocked fish; built and maintained lookout towers, lookout cabins, and telephone lines; fought fires; and planted millions of trees. In Vermont, the CCC laid the foundation for much of the state park system. To a lesser extent, the CCC helped develop the Long Trail system.

Peru Camp

The Peru CCC Camp worked on the southern part of the Long Trail, building and maintaining shelters, girdling trees, and removing slash from the trail. They also built the beautiful Hapgood Pond Recreation Area and a trail connecting it to the Long Trail.

In 1935 the CCC built the original Griffith Shelter with space for 10. It was renamed Peru Peak Shelter in 1966, after construction of the nearby Griffith Lake Shelter (since replaced by Griffith Lake Tent Site). In 1979 the Youth Conservation Corps and U.S. Forest Service rebuilt Peru Peak Shelter. It stands today after subsequent replacement of rotted lower logs and other repairs.

Peru Camp also built Mad Tom Notch Shelter, replaced in 1962, and replaced again in 2003 by Bromley Shelter in a different location. In 1934 its men built the Stratton Mountain fire tower, which LT and AT hikers enjoy to this day. Peru Camp also planted

thousands of trees, some of which the U.S. Forest Service cut in 1983 to build Spruce Peak Shelter, a log cabin sleeping 16.

Other Notable CCC Work on the Long Trail

After the Flood of 1936 the Rochester CCC Camp did maintenance work on the Long Trail. The Company 133 Weston-East Wallingford Camp built shelters on the Long Trail in the Wallingford Pond area. The Underhill Camp constructed the CCC Road up Mount Mansfield to the Long Trail, now considered a side trail accessing the Laura Cowles Trail, Sunset Ridge Trail, and Mansfield's ridgeline.

The CCC's Legacy

The CCC disbanded in 1942 due to reduced unemployment, changes in public opinion, lack of funding, and the need for soldiers in World War II.

The program is considered one of the most successful elements of Roosevelt's New Deal. His "Tree Army" planted more than three billion trees on land made barren by fires, erosion, intensive agriculture or logging. In fact, the CCC conducted more than half the reforestation, public and private, in the nation's history.

MARTY PODSKOCH is an author and historian, and is working on a book about the CCC in Vermont. See more of his work at greenmountainclub.org/ccc-long-trail

The CCC and GMC

In Vermont, the CCC laid the groundwork for important partnerships between the Green Mountain Club, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Department of Labor. Today GMC works with youth corps modeled after the CCC, including AmeriCorps National Civilian Conservation Corps and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps.

The support of members and donors like you enable the club to employ these crews on large-scale projects like the Burrows Trail reconstruction, continuing Roosevelt's legacy of creating jobs for youth and preserving public land and recreational opportunities.

FIELD NOTES

Winter Highlights

BY NIGEL BATES, FIELD PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

WHAT DOES GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB FIELD WORK look like in the winter?

The field program team shrinks from 30 or 40 seasonal employees to just a handful of year-round staff. Much of the winter workload is administrative –planning projects, and hiring and preparing training for the seasonal staff who will arrive in May.

But we still get into the field sometimes! Here are a few examples of field work we do while the Long Trail is covered in snow and ice.

Winter Privy Maintenance

Most of our privies (outhouses) are hot composting, meaning the waste is composted in a bin away from the privy and needs to be moved there manually from a collection bin under the toilet seat. At the peak of the summer hiking season, we have to perform this task weekly, and historically have not done this during the winter. However, with increased interest in winter hiking, we have needed to conduct mid-winter maintenance at the busiest sites like **Stratton Pond** and **Little Rock Pond**. Field staff use shovels and pitchforks to chip away at the cone of waste that forms directly underneath the seat, moving material away from the center. Frozen waste can be quite unpredictable, so proper protective gear is essential!

Severe Weather Response

Climate change is likely to increase the frequency of severe storms and rain-on-snow events in Vermont, underscoring the need to build and maintain climate-resilient structures. The Long Trail is not maintained for winter use, so most damage can wait until spring, but field staff do investigate and address conditions that pose a major threat to hiker safety. We are grateful to the many volunteer adopters who make special visits to check their trails or shelters after major storms like the one last December. Any substantial damage reported by volunteers is added to the winter field staff workload.

For example, field staff scouted the **Winooski Valley Farm Fields** after the December flooding, and found that one of the stiles over electric fences had washed away. GMC closed the trail and directed hikers along Duxbury Road until the stile can be rebuilt in the spring.

A similar field trip is planned to **Bamforth Ridge Shelter**, where the foundation piers shifted in the historic rainfall last July. We plan to brace the shelter with lumber while a more permanent fix



Because of the increased interest in winter hiking, our staff must manage privies (outhouses) year round, like Nigel is above. Your donations and membership support make this important work possible.

is devised. The bracing must be finished before mud season, because otherwise the start of freeze-thaw cycles would likely worsen the damage. Note: This work was completed as this issue went to press, so the shelter is now reopened for hiker use.

Materials Transport

Moving heavy stuff is a staple of the GMC field program, and sometimes it's easier with snow on the ground! Rather than put the burden on our backs, we can ski or snowshoe with the load strapped to a sled. This is especially helpful for delivering wood shavings to the many moldering privies on the trail. Shavings are added to waste in a moldering chamber to maintain optimal conditions for aerobic decomposition. Most privies consume one or more bales of shavings each hiking season, so it is essential to keep extra at every site. A six-cubic-foot bale can be cumbersome on a pack frame, but it fits neatly into a toboggan. With more than 50 moldering privies scattered over the Long Trail System, we are grateful for any chance to lighten the load.

Snowy trails can be useful for getting things out of the woods too. At **Stratton Pond** there is a variety of materials left over from the trail relocation and shelter construction projects of the past several years. The wide and gentle Catamount Trail, boggy in summer but solid when frozen, offers an ideal route for getting these items to the road, where they can be returned to GMC headquarters and given new life in future construction.

Your support helps ensure that the club's field staff can complete these and other essential winter projects. Thank you! After a bit of backstage work in the winter, the Long Trail will be ready for everyone to enjoy once the snow melts and the mud dries. 🌨️

NIGEL BATES hires and supports each season's cohort of caretakers and trail crews, and coordinates project schedules and partnerships.

BATELL TRAIL: A volunteer trail adopter shared this image ► of the Battell Trail on Mt. Abraham after December's flooding. Underneath the root in the center of the photo, 6-12" of tread was lost as snowmelt and rain gushed down the trail. This is the level of erosion we would typically see over the course of several decades. *Photo courtesy: Rowan Kamman*



Reconnecting with Nature

A Tech-Friendly and Family-Friendly Approach

BY ARWEN TURNER



PHOTO BY ALICIA DICICCO

LAST SUMMER AT THE RUTLAND DOWNTOWN FESTIVAL a child visited our Come Alive Outside (CAO) booth with a freshly painted tiger face from a nearby booth. Clutching a well-worn Summer Outdoor Passport adorned with stickers (and what looked like mustard), this lively tiger aimed to collect a stamp and share their record of completed activities.

The CAO Passport, a Rutland tradition for 10 years, promotes more than 35 local activities exploring green spaces, completing nature tasks, and attending outdoor events. It's distributed to every elementary school student in the county, and strives to provide opportunities and encouragement for families to spend time outdoors for health, wellness and joy.

Ten-year-old Ryan, the tiger, had a special relationship to the small colorful pamphlet. Ryan's family of six had spent the summer living in an RV after their home suffered flood damage. Mom handed out the passports to encourage the four kids to stay active outside of the small space they called home.

Ryan took up the challenge, earning 184 points (more than four times the average!) and a slew of prizes, even while their siblings had lost or damaged their small passports. Ryan also proposed combining the passport program with a smartphone, since no one in the family had ever misplaced their phone for long. Fortunately, we were already launching a mobile app version of the passport.

The Power of Nature

Nearly 20 years ago Richard Louv introduced the world to his concept of nature deficit disorder (NDD) in his book *Last Child in the Woods*. NDD is a simple yet profound concept – humans (especially children) were spending less time in nature than earlier generations, and this decline was damaging their health and wellness. Louv publicized the value of time in nature, and suggested parents, teachers, and individuals create opportunities for children to experience nature, even if in simple ways. The response to Louv's book was huge, and the Green Mountain Club got on board as well, joining the "No Child Left Inside" initiative with Vermont Forests, Parks, and Recreation back in 2007. The Montpelier Section's Young Adventurers Club launched around in the same time (LTN, Fall 2007).

Louv advocated for lives balanced between the indoors and outdoors, but publications around the same time with similar themes inspired some people to immediately declare war on the inevitable growth and prevalence of technology in our lives. A cultural dichotomy emerged, with nature equals good and technology equals bad, and nothing in between.

Some families tried to eliminate all screen time, but that became impractical as our reliance on technology increased. Many felt they were compromising their family's health by their inability to entirely stop using technology to spend more time outdoors. Cutting out technology, becoming trail weekend warriors, and seeking solutions to nature deficit disorder was and is not feasible or even possible for many families.

Nature deficit disorder has a greater impact on those with lower incomes and who hold marginalized identities. Low-income urban areas often lack green spaces, even in Vermont. The 2017 census noted Vermont BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and low-income communities are more likely to experience nature deprivation than others.

Parents experiencing poverty or working class lifestyles must spend more time at work to support their families, so they have less time and resources for nature outings.

As the theory of nature deficit disorder reached the mainstream, many nonprofit organizations and initiatives worked to provide resources and tools to help families connect to nature. No Child Left

OPPOSITE: Mabel and Lane, 7, take a break while scaling Jay Peak. Exposing kids to nature from an early age can have positive impacts on health and wellness. **RIGHT:** A child from Rutland shows their winter passport, full of prompts for playing and learning in nature.

Inside, Children & Nature Network, and Come Alive Outside address the gap between modern lifestyles and declining connections with nature. These and similar organizations seek ways to integrate experiences of nature into modern lives, technology and all. Their websites are chock full of programs, resources and ideas to make spending more time with families outside fun and accessible.

“ When I ask people about their barriers to spending time outdoors, they rarely blame screen addiction, but often cite time constraints, safety concerns, cost, health problems, unfamiliarity with the outdoors, and feeling unwelcome or unrepresented. ”

How Screens Can Help

Eliminating screen time was difficult in 2005, and nearly impossible today. What if we *reject* the idea that embracing technology means forsaking a connection with the outdoors?

In my personal and professional life, I advocate for tech-lovers to use technology to *enhance* their outdoor experiences.

Ninety percent of families of all incomes use smartphones every day to communicate and manage their schedules, finances, health care, and even to track their children's grades.



PHOTO COURTESY OF COME ALIVE OUTSIDE



PHOTO COURTESY OF COME ALIVE OUTSIDE

Kara Richardson Whitely, Arwen Turner, and Mirna Valerio use the Come Alive Outside passport. For CAO's "Mile-a-Day" challenge in 2021, Kara hiked 100 miles on the Long Trail.

By offering the Outdoor Passport as a mobile app, we meet families where they are, and eliminate some of the barriers they face. We can send reminders and notifications of free outdoor events; notices of cancellations or park closures; and announce last minute events.

Of course, many folks prefer to take a break from electronic devices while in nature or playing outside. So we still offer paper passports. And we believe *all* time in nature is valuable, whether in remote mountains or backyards.

Some of many mobile apps that make the outdoors more enjoyable and accessible include:

- **PictureThis** identifies plants; it's ideal for nature newbies, foragers, and wildflower hunters.
- **AllTrails**, though imperfect, is a digital guide for hiking, with user reviews and details about trail accessibility and difficulty, and amenities like restrooms, parking, and cell phone access.
- **SkyView**, an augmented reality app, overlays celestial information for stargazing with or without a data signal.
- **The Outdoor Passport** by CAO connects people to hyper-local activities and green spaces so they can experience nature where they live, work, and play, in Rutland and beyond.

Technology can also connect people to like-minded and affinity communities, to help break down the barriers around representation, safety, and inclusivity. In Vermont, these include Unlikely Riders, Body Liberation Hiking, Outdoor Afro, and more.

Integrating technology and outdoor programs not only addresses contemporary challenges but ensures that reconnecting with nature becomes realistic and enjoyable for individuals and families alike. Rather than fostering guilt about screen time, using technology can enhance natural experiences, enabling individuals and families to relish in the best of both worlds. 🌿

ARWEN TURNER is the Executive Director of Come Alive Outside, a Rutland-based nonprofit dedicated to connecting families to the health and wellness benefits of the outdoors. She also co-founded a plus-size outdoor apparel brand, and advocates for inclusivity in the outdoors.



PHOTO BY TAYLOR WIKKELL

Whether in your backyard or on Vermont's tallest peak, time outside is valuable in all forms.

“Let Go of Expectations”

GMC Burlington Revives the Young Adventurers Club

GMC HAS A LONG HISTORY OF GETTING KIDS OUT to experience Vermont's mountains and trails. James P. Taylor, founder and visionary of the Long Trail, was originally inspired to bring students at Vermont Academy, where he was an assistant principal, out hiking.

In 2006 Lexi Shear and her late husband David Blumenthal, of GMC's Montpelier Section, started the Young Adventurers Club, aimed at getting kids ages 0-10 and their grown-ups out and about on the trails. The group has dual purposes: Help families access the outdoors and build an appreciation for nature in their children; and help GMC cultivate the next generation of hikers, stewards, and club members to invigorate the club into future decades.

Young families are stretched thin these days, and the YAC, which had since spread to the Burlington, NEK, and Bread Loaf Sections, among others, largely disbanded during the pandemic.

Last spring, Corinn Julow, new member of the Burlington Section, committed to getting the group back off the ground, starting slowly with monthly leisurely outings fit for children of all ages. “I emulated my first few hikes off the Montpelier Section model,” Corinn explains. That meant trying to tailor hikes for kids under 6, and 6-10. But with low attendance on the first several outings, that wasn't a practical approach.

“Now, I ask myself ‘What could a four- and six-year-old do?’ I try to keep everything to about two miles, relatively flat. We plan for about two hours and keep things really easy going.”

The monthly outings typically meet Saturdays at 10 a.m., to work around nap schedules, at trail networks convenient to the greater

Burlington area. The Long Trail proves too rugged and out of the way for most toddlers and their caregivers, but places like 100 Acre Wood in Fairfax, and Russell Greene Natural Area in Georgia offer flat trails and plenty of mud puddles and wildlife to keep the littlest feet and minds occupied.

“Destinations don't mean a single thing [to a child],” Corinn observes. In fact, it's often counterproductive to plan a hike around a destination, because then the adults get fixated on that destination while kids may be fixated on, well, the ground in front of them.

“My biggest takeaway so far is that to be successful, you can't have *any* expectation,” when hiking with kids, Corinn explains. If you were planning to reach a summit, but the kids are fascinated by millipedes for 45 minutes (like on a recent outing), that summit must be saved for another day.

Corinn lives in North Hero and is an active community member. Her own two kids are grown, but her niece sometimes joins the group, and her experience as a parent and community volunteer made her perfect for the role.

Winter hikes have had the added challenge of contending with the cold and varying needs of babies and kids of all ages. Corinn's goals for the next phase of the program are to schedule events several months ahead, and spread awareness of the outings by promoting in parents and kids-oriented community forums.

Visit the Burlington Section's website for upcoming YAC Outings: gmc Burlington.org



The Bread Loaf Section YAC led a hike to Silver Lake back in 2017. The YAC largely disbanded during the pandemic.



Corinn Julow, left, is working to revive the Burlington Section YAC. Babies and kids enjoyed December's Round Pond hike.



Generations ON THE Long Trail

Musketeers Across Time BY CARA NELSON

ON JULY 25, 1927, MY ADVENTUROUS GRANDMOTHER, CATHERINE ROBBINS, embarked on a remarkable journey along Vermont's iconic Long Trail. Catherine and her friend Hilda Kurth, both 25-year-old school teachers, were joined by Kathleen Norris, age 18. Their plan was simple – to spend their summer vacation immersed in the beauty of the trail, relishing the exercise and the great outdoors. Thirty-two days later they crossed the Canadian border, and became the first documented women to complete a thru hike of the trail.

Their journey captured the country's attention. Headlines hailed them as "The Three Musketeers," praising their adventurous

spirit. "They carried no firearms and had no male escort," the *San Francisco Sunday Examiner* proclaimed. The *Boston Sunday Post* noted "a stunt they said a woman couldn't do." They challenged the conventional wisdom of the 1920s that asserted women couldn't undertake such adventures.

My grandmother and I shared a close bond, and my middle name, Catherine, pays homage to her. Time with her was extraordinary, and our conversations never lacked depth. I grew up in her town, and visited her often to hear and cherish her stories of the Three Musketeers' hike, which came to life through sepia-toned photos and yellowing newspaper clippings in her scrapbook.

◀ "Our fondest hopes realized." L to R: Catherine Robbins, Kathleen Norris, Hilda Kurth.

In 1996, realizing the 70th anniversary of her hike approached, I turned to my grandmother, then 95, for guidance. Her response: "You can do anything you set your mind to. Just make sure you have two other girls with you." I approached my sister Amity Robichaud, proposing to commemorate our grandmother's achievement with a re-enactment. Other friends and family joined us for sections, maintaining a trio.

Amity and I were also embarking on a pilgrimage to forge deeper connections with each other along the way. I was 34, and Amity, 20; neither had ever experienced long-distance backpacking. Hiking and camping, yes, but carrying everything needed on our back for what could be a **month** was a new challenge.

We sought further guidance from the Green Mountain Club, which provided invaluable advice on gear, essentials, and planning. Bob Northrop (a seven-time end-to-end hiker and legendary GMC volunteer) helped plan an itinerary similar to the original Three Musketeers' hike. Our parents, Kerry and Seth Clifford, would deliver food and supplies at planned road crossings. We set out on July 20, 1997.

As I laced up my hiking boots I could see the landscape had evolved, but the essence remained. Pines stood sentinel, their needles whispering tales of a bygone era, and unbeknownst to us, a new family awaited us.

Hiking in 1997 differed starkly from my grandmother's era. For one thing, there were many more people on the trail, and as many women as men! Gear had evolved from heavy woolen pants, leather-soled boots, and canvas rucksacks to lightweight, moisture-wicking fabrics, grippy rubber-soled boots, and ergonomic backpacks. But camaraderie endured.

The trail unfolded like a living history book, revealing chapters of our family's legacy with each rocky ascent and lush green valley. The challenging terrain deepened our connection to the Three Musketeers, and other hikers became our trail family. The journey was communion with the past, a bridge spanning the decades, and the Long Trail served as our sacred conduit.

Every hiker was on their own journey, a lesson as relevant in 1997 as in 1927. Then Hilda was the tallest, and hiked up front to set the pace. Kathleen had the shortest legs and always



Elizabeth Sears, Amity Robichaud, Bob Northrop and Cara Nelson at the end of their 1997 commemorative hike.



Cara, standing, compares photos from her 1997 hike with her 96-year-old grandmother, Catherine Robbins, one of the "Three Musketeers" who hiked the trail in 1927. Catherine's brother, Rodney Robbins, looks on. Catherine passed away in 1998 at 96. Photo courtesy: Cara Nelson.

walked in the middle. My grandmother, Catherine, took up the rear to keep them sandwiched together.

Amity was much like Hilda: she took the daily lead, and always waited for me. I was more of a dawdler, checking out every view and chatting with the many hikers I encountered. Family



Cara Nelson (L) and her sister Amity Robichaud followed in their grandmother's footsteps to thru-hike the Long Trail 70 years apart.



Cara (center), Amity (right), are joined by their mother (left) for a section of the trail.

members hiked with us at various energy levels, including my Aunt Liz (Elizabeth Sears, Catherine's daughter), who was slower but quickly created her own adventure.

We reached the Canadian border in 26 days. It was exciting and, at the same time, depressing. We did not want our newfound love for backpacking and adventure to end. As my mom says, Amity never left the trail that August. In the spring of 1998, she hiked the AT.

A year later, at 96, my grandmother's health was declining. On a quiet morning, we sat together, flipping through her Long Trail scrapbook and my hike photos, intertwining our two Long Trail stories. In the afternoon, bathed in a soft glow, she, the last surviving Musketeer, departed this world with a serene smile, embarking on a heavenly hike.

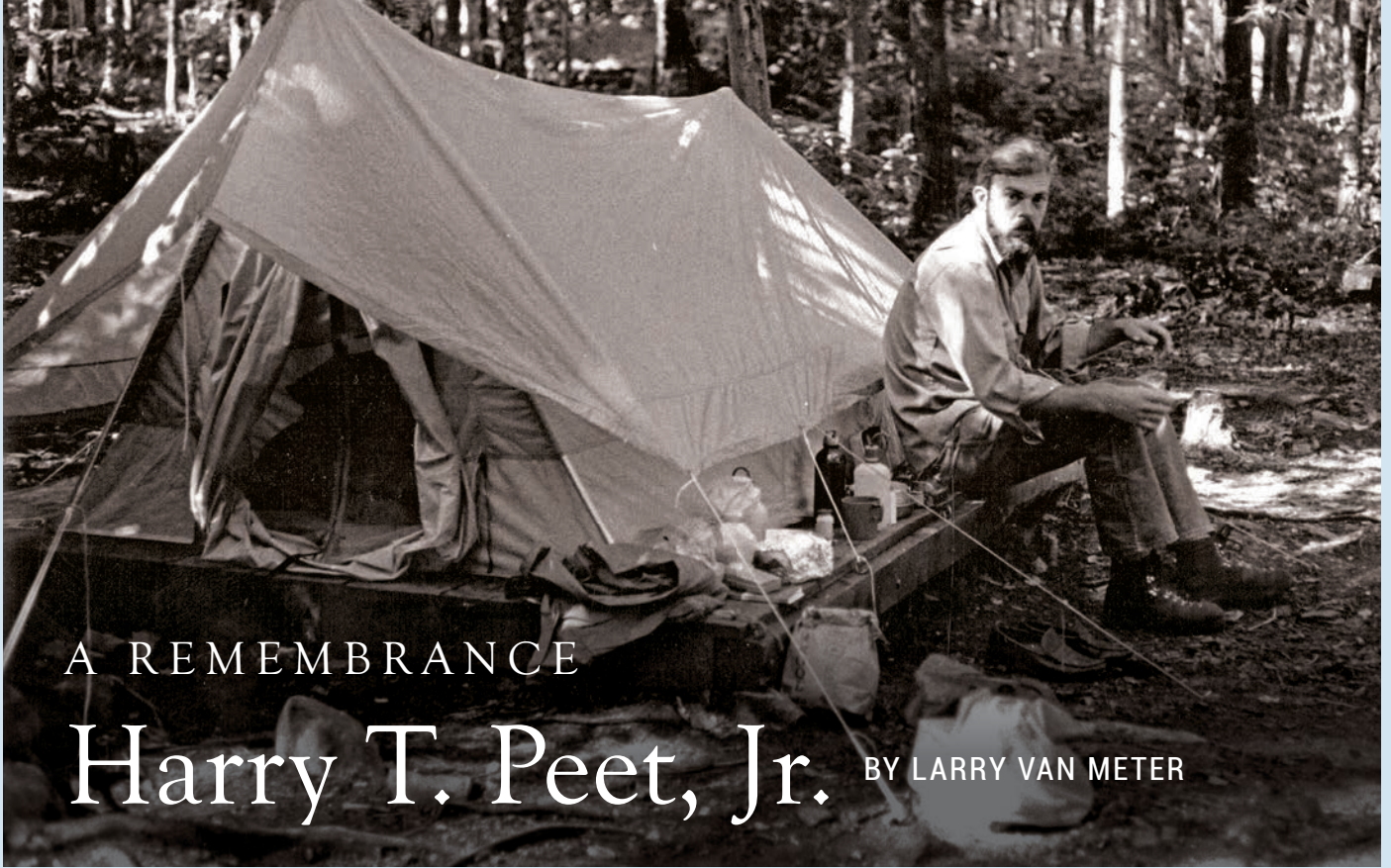
In 2013, for my 50th birthday and as a summer vacation for my 10-year-old son Carl, I began my second thru hike. The family tradition of carrying on the Three Musketeers trail name continued. The hike with my son is a story of its own, but the lessons he learned, which I see him carry today in college, mirror the character of the Musketeers' journey: adaptability, resilience, and discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary.

My grandmother's 1927 adventure inspired countless women to seek new opportunities, and strengthened the bonds that tie generations of my family together.

Retracing her journey imparted invaluable lessons to generations of my family, emphasizing the significance of creating one's adventure, fostering camaraderie among family and friends, nurturing perseverance and unity, and instilling a profound love for nature – treasures we carry with our backpacks, and even without them. 🌿

CARA CATHERINE CLIFFORD NELSON grew up in Brandon, the granddaughter of Musketeer Catherine Robbins. Cara now lives in Barre, where she is a web designer, speaker, and educator. She cherishes family moments and embarks on adventurous escapades.

Cara shared stories of her grandmother's hike at GMC's recent Taylor Series talk at the Vermont Historical Society. She also expands on her connection to the trail over generations in a three-part series on GMC's blog: greenmountainclub.org/three-musketeers



A REMEMBRANCE

Harry T. Peet, Jr. BY LARRY VAN METER

HARRY PEET played many important roles in the Green Mountain Club's transition from an almost wholly volunteer organization to a much larger one with a professional staff working with a strong board of directors on an array of programs.

Trained as an engineer, Harry spent several years working on jet engine design at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft. Souring on the defense industry, he took a job as the Little Rock Pond caretaker in 1972. Harry had his hands full with angry locals who had long accessed the area on off-road vehicles, as well as with occasional visitors who decided it would be fun to move into a nice Long Trail shelter for a week or two. He handled those challenges with aplomb, and in 1973, working closely with Ken and Alice Boyd (founders of the modern backcountry caretaker program), took on responsibility for the caretaker program.

When I became the club's first executive director in 1975, Harry continued in the minimally paid position of caretaker supervisor. He also took on the unpaid role of editor of the *Guidebook of the Long Trail*, and oversaw a major revision to the maps therein. The iconic guidebook retained its traditional vest-pocket size, but the tiny maps were redrawn and produced in color, and much of the artwork and educational



information was new. In 1978, when the club moved to a small office in Montpelier, Harry's nearby apartment took on the appearance of a second-hand camping supply store, stocked floor-to-ceiling with the field staff inventory of tents, shovels, axes, and mattocks.

In 1980 Harry was named the club's third executive director. During his tenure, the GMC budget doubled, field programs greatly expanded, and the Long Trail Protection Campaign launched. A division of labor evolved in club leadership, with the volunteer president (former caretaker Preston Bristow for much of that time) taking on external relations with agency partners, donors, and the rapidly expanding Appalachian Trail Project of the National Park Service, while Harry oversaw the club's field programs, finances, and major trails and shelters maintenance projects.

Harry served as executive director for nine years. Whip smart and incredibly funny, he was passionate and protective of the trail. His leadership in a time of transition was central to the emergence of today's GMC. He was my close friend, but I never doubted that his greatest attachment was to the Long Trail. Perhaps no one knew every shelter, every privy, every washout, and every quagmire better than Harry. He was the right person at the right time. 🍷

LARRY VAN METER was GMC's first executive director, serving from 1975-77.

VIC HENNINGSEN contributed to this piece.



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Don't Let the Eclipse Overshadow Your Safety

Guidelines and Reminders from the Green Mountain Club

-  Even for experienced hikers, early April can present challenging weather conditions in the mountains. Hiking to view the eclipse is not recommended.
-  It's mud season, when hiking is generally discouraged and many trails are closed.
-  We're expecting tens of thousands of visitors to Vermont for the eclipse – our wild spaces and fragile alpine zones are not designed for that much foot traffic and impact.
-  Expect highly congested roads. Travel, especially in event of emergency, will be challenging to impossible.
-  You must wear approved solar eclipse viewing glasses with an ISO standard of 12312-2 to look directly at the eclipse.
-  We suggest town parks, lakefront areas, and open fields for the best viewing. Anywhere you can see the sun, you can see the eclipse. (Still no promises on cloud cover!)
-  Have fun: Attend eclipse-viewing events in Burlington, St. Albans, state parks, St. Johnsbury, or your own backyard.



**TOTAL
SOLAR ECLIPSE
COMING
APRIL 8**



greenmountainclub.org/eclipse