

# Highland Sojourner

Volume IV, Issue V

Newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc.

November 2003

[www.pinemountaintrail.com](http://www.pinemountaintrail.com)

## **Bulletin Board**

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### **Volunteer Vacations**

**May 16-22, 2004**

**May 30-June 5, 2004 PMTC Alumni Outing** \*Alumni will be contacted directly by the PMTC

**September 12-18, 2004**

**October 10-16, 2004**

(Contact Shirley Hearn at the American Hiking Society (301) 565-6704 or at [www.americanhiking.org](http://www.americanhiking.org) The PMTC can waive the fee for those volunteering directly thru the PMTC.)

### **Weekend Getaways**

**May 29, 2004**

**September 11, 2004**

**October 9, 2004**

*(Weekend Getaways are designed for those who work a full time job. Volunteers come in on Friday evening; camp at a site we have prepared, work on Saturday, and return home on Sunday. For more information, contact the PMTC, P.O. Box 784, Whitesburg, KY 41858. \*There is no fee and food is provided.)*

### **Pine Mountain Trail Conference Meeting**

**December 1, 2003 at 1 PM** at the Letcher County Cooperative Extension Service office in Whitesburg, KY. For more info, call (606) 633-2362.



*Bad Branch Falls, Letcher County, KY*

## **Words From the Woods** by Shad Baker

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It is the season of crying trees on Pine Mountain. Haven't heard of trees crying? I hadn't either until this year. I was perched in a tree stand near the top of Pine Mountain, waiting to see what would come along. It was a crisp morning and the sun was just beginning to warm the earth when I noticed a glistening to my left.

I quickly looked to spy the culprit, but it was already gone. Another glisten and I was curious. This time I kept looking southeast along the ridge and eventually saw it. The tips of a maple tree near me were actually *spitting* sap. The warm sun was causing the leaf scars to bleed I suppose. Each fine droplet shot from the tip of the limb and twinkled in the ray as it fell.

I initially guessed that this tearful display came only from the maples, but then I started to observe it happening to all the trees around me. The low sunlight reflected this very fine rain of tree tears.

The timber truly has cause to cry. The warmth of summer has ended and they know that the cold gray of a barren winter is upon them. They know that the season of production, the season to produce fruit, to labor, and to grow has passed. It puts me in mind of a verse. **“The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.” Jeremiah 8:20.**

It will be five long months before the green returns in earnest. Until then, they'll cry awhile longer, and then slumber; dozing while the chill of winter stalks the woods.

## **Story-telling a Success** by Shad Baker

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On a dark, star-lit night, spectators made their way along the trail down to the Killing Rock. They followed oil lanterns hung in trees and shuffled their feet while whispering about this fear or that. The destination was a storytelling event hosted by the PMTC and told by Mavis and Leonard Sowards.

The first night was warm, with nearly 50 people ranging from four to eighty one years of age. Leonard did a nice job of recreating the setting and detailing the facts surrounding the event. The following Monday was much colder, with a group of twenty college-age folks present for the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The PMTC wishes to extend a very special thank you to Mavis and Leonard Sowards for their special story-telling gifts, Appalshop for recording the event, Kenny Mullins and Dee Roberts for making the toasty-warm campfires and other preparations, and the Kentucky Arts Council for helping to fund the project with a generous \$2,000 grant.

## **Mountain Nostalgia** by Pam Baker

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I grew up in eastern Kentucky in the 50's with practical parents who had endured the depression and who worked hard to provide for our family on the single income of a union coal miner. We weren't an "Ozzie & Harriet" family of the TV sitcom days—our family was real. My mother wore aprons and housedresses of printed cotton. She didn't *own* a pair of high heels. She washed aluminum foil after use and frequently re-used bread wrappers. There were no such conveniences as plastic bags that zipped or plastic-ware you had to 'burp' to seal. Our drinking glasses were a mismatched set of recycled peanut butter and mayonnaise jars. Many of our washcloths were free 'prizes' that came packed inside each box of *Silver Dust* detergent. Our silverware, like our dishes, was collected a piece at a time from the weekly features at the A & P grocery store.

Our best friends lived across an open fence from us; the same fence that was well bent from frequent crossings by children. Everyone in our neighborhood AND town knew each other. Neighbors sat out on their porches on swings in the summer evenings and chit-chatted while they strung green beans to dry and waved away the flies with a swatter—in the era before air conditioning and cable TV. I remember when mosquito bites were only a nuisance and there was no West Nile virus. I remember screened-in windows in the summer and nights too hot to sleep.

I remember my daddy chopping wood with an axe, kindling boxes full of wood, *Warm Morning* stoves, *Browning* cook stoves and carrying buckets of coal indoors in the evening to fuel our fires in the winter. I remember ice and tiny icicles being frozen on the insides of our windows and soot balls, fallen from the chimney, whirled on our front porch when we opened the door to go outside.

I can almost smell my Daddy's fresh pipe tobacco...and times when he would light his pipe to keep mosquitoes at bay on summer evenings...and the little girl version of me begging him to blow smoke-rings so I could slide my hands through them like imaginary bracelets. I remember drinking fresh spring water from a rinsed out Prince Albert can. Once cooled by the the clear spring water, we swung from nearby grapevines.

I remember when transportation didn't cost so much. Our family's first car, a '47 Oldsmobile, was purchased on the exchange of a gun and \$50. My dad didn't learn to drive until he was almost 45 years old, because everything we really needed was right there in our small little town...a town so small we didn't have (or need) traffic lights.

I remember the Union Hall at the mouth of Brickyard Hill in Jenkins where, to this very day, a monument to my mother's driving has endured the test of time. There near a deliberate concrete monument and plaque, stands a three-foot now-bent section of a metal railroad beam, jutting up out of the asphalt. My uncle was teaching my mother to drive. We had been to the grocery store and she was rapidly approaching the turn off to our home. I was a passenger in the backseat and scarcely five years old. My nervous uncle decided she was not braking properly, so he took his own foot to put on top of hers—which was still firmly planted on the accelerator. We climbed half those Union Hall steps that day in dad's '47 Olds.

My dad's skill as an expert knife-sharpener was legendary. The coal company he worked for would call him in to do nothing but sharpen coal-bits. Later, the company would have visiting engineers observe his sharpening skills so they could obtain a patent. His reward was his usual

wage, overtime pay, and the knowledge that, with only a 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, he had such a skill that engineers sought to mimic him. Legacies can be left in even small ways. This is a life lesson; there is no task so small that you should not take pride in doing your very best.

## **Loss of Leg Doesn't Stop Hiker from Covering the AT     Associated Press**

Washburn, Tenn. (AP) – Scott Rogers, whose daily journey begins with a single step on a bionic leg, is preparing for a hike up the 2,168-mile Appalachian Trail.

“I have been told I can't do it, that I won't make it. But how do you know?” the 34-year-old says.

Rogers hikes with the help of the “C-leg” – a prosthetic powered by a battery, driven by hydraulics and controlled by microprocessors that monitor his movement 50 times a second to create a natural, stable gait.

The affable Georgia native, whose web and e-mail addresses say “onelegwonder”, finished a grueling seven-day, 65-mile practice hike on the Laurel Highlands Trails in Pennsylvania.

Next April, he plans to start a seven-month trip along the Appalachian Trail, walking from Georgia to Maine. “If I fail at it,” he says, “at least I tried.”

Rogers lost his left leg below the knee in 1998 when he accidentally shot himself while hunting a snake. He says the accident, unexpectedly, made him stronger.

“What can hurt worse than being shot by a shotgun and surviving?” he asks.

With only one leg, he learned to water-ski, bought an ultra-light aircraft and returned to work as a paramedic. Wearing a below-the-knee prosthesis was “no more of a chore than putting on a shoe.”

But when chronic pain got worse two years ago, Rogers had to quit his job. He sold his house and moved his family from Milledgeville, GA, to Washburn, about 50 miles north of Knoxville, just to be closer to the mountains.

The leg was amputated in March 2002, and he faced the prospect of spending the rest of his life on crutches and in a wheelchair. But four months later, Medicare helped pay for a \$48,000 “C-leg”, an artificial knee, shin and foot made by the German company Otto Bock Orthopedic and available in the United States since 1999.

“Science will never be able to replace what God gave me, but they came close with this,” says Rogers.

Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics in Kingsport fitted the artificial leg on Rogers, but even the specialists there are amazed by his plans for the Appalachian Trail.

“You've got to have somebody who's got the nerve to do all this,” says prosthetist Paul Meyer. “I am not sure I would walk 65 miles on a trail, and I have both of my God-given legs. He's a real gutsy guy.”

On the practice hike in Pennsylvania, Rogers drained all the power from the battery on his bionic leg after the first day, and found he'd left his back-up battery at home on the kitchen counter. Otto Bock had specially designed a soft panel, solar-powered battery charger, but Rogers was hiking in a steady downpour.

Without power, the C-leg goes into a fail-safe mode – the leg stiffens, although the knee continues to flex. Rogers walked for three more days before a charger that Meyer shipped from Kansas City reached a ranger station along the trail.

“I was hoping he would succeed because I didn't want to live with him if he didn't,” his wife Leisa, says with a laugh. “I figured if he didn't do it he was going to be miserable...he did really good.”

She paralleled his route in the family van and left love notes along the trail to encourage him. The oldest of their six children, Tyler, 12, and Hannah, 11, walked with him part of the way.

Around 2,400 backpackers each year set out on the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Springer Mountain in Georgia to the summit of Mount Katahdin in Maine.

Fewer than one in five completes the journey. A few have used crutches. At least one was blind. But none so far had an artificial leg, says Brian King, spokesman for the Appalachian Trail Conference in Blacksburg, VA.

“Its tough for anybody,” King says. “There are hard places. Especially coming down hills, even if you have two original legs.”

With technical support and a backup leg from Otto Bock and Hanger Prosthetics, Rogers is ready to try. He hopes to raise money for a motor home so Leisa and the children can meet him at various points along the trail.

Paddy Rossbach, president and CEO of the Amputee Coalition of America, finds Rogers' plans exciting. Her home in Salisbury, Conn., overlooks the Appalachian Trail.

An amputee athlete herself, Rossbach says, “I think it is absolutely wonderful...to hear about people taking on things that people who are able-bodied find difficult anyway.”

“I have a lot of friends that are disabled,” Rogers says. “If what I do motivates one of them, I guess that is what it is all about.”

“And I guess also to prove to myself: ‘Yeah, you can do it, Scotty.’”

## **Official Dedication of Pine Mountain Trail State Park**

On December 1, 2003, Governor Paul Patton will be making a formal dedication of the Pine Mountain Trail State Park. The event will occur at 9:30 AM at the Pine Mountain Grill in Whitesburg, KY. The PMTC wishes to invite everyone interested in the trail to come participate in this special moment.



*Governor Patton at Bill Signing of Pine Mountain Trail State Park*

## **Trail Volunteers to Benefit from New Trailer**

During the last meeting of the PMTC, the Board authorized the purchase of a trailer for use in storing trail construction tools and volunteer-related supplies. After a little work and some help from the Letcher County Judge-Executive and the Letcher County Parks & Recreation Advisory Council, the PMTC was able to buy a 7X14 tandem trailer. The trailer was purchased entirely with county funds and is already loaded with supplies.



*Pine Mountain Trail Trailer*

Shelving is planned for the interior, along with a logo or artwork on the exterior. The trailer will serve as a visible promoter for the trail and will serve our trail volunteers for years to come. A very special thanks to Letcher County Judge-Executive Carroll Smith, Magistrate Trey Narramore, and the good folks of the Letcher County Parks and Recreation Council for making this happen.

## **Closing Thoughts**

As 2003 comes to a close, I reflect back on our many successes. This year has seen an increase in the number of volunteers, an increase in membership, a 30% increase in trail construction, the acquisition of land for the trail, increased visibility in our local area and state-wide, and an embracing of the project by folks in a way I'm not sure anyone thought possible.

As I go throughout our local counties, I encounter folks who talk about the trail as though it has always been there. They refer to it as an attraction in the county and not simply as an after-thought...It genuinely comes to their minds first. They are beginning to view it affectionately, and see possibilities for the future. This is no small feat for an area that has historically had little in the way of future promise. We, as a group, should take the time to congratulate each other. The hard work of many people has made this project take on a life of its own. Well done PMTC members and supporters! Best of Wishes to you and yours in 2004.

**Membership**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Volunteer Class</b>   | \$0, at least one day spent doing trail work     |
| <b>Individual Class</b>  | \$25-49  |
| <b>Trailblazer Class</b> | \$50-99, free cap                                |
| <b>Highlander Class</b>  | \$100-499, cap and fleece jacket                 |
| <b>Pinnacle Class</b>    | \$500-999, cap, fleece jacket, & button-up shirt |
| <b>Legacy Class</b>      | \$1,000-4,999, 2 caps, 2 jackets, & 2 shirts     |
| <b>Foundation Class</b>  | \$5,000+   |

\*Membership entitles you to a one- year subscription to the *Highland Sojourner*, the bimonthly newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc. and an embroidered patch.

Please *circle* the membership class you are requesting.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ordering Merchandise**

Please allow 2-3 weeks delivery for items in stock. Out of stock items require 4 weeks. **Please specify size and color!**

| Item                | Price   | Qty. | Color      | Size | Total |
|---------------------|---------|------|------------|------|-------|
| Trail Guide         | \$10.00 |      | N/A        |      |       |
| Map                 | \$9.95  |      | N/A        |      |       |
| Long Sleeve T-Shirt | \$22.00 |      | Navy       |      |       |
| T-Shirt             | \$16.00 |      | Gray/Green |      |       |
| Button-Up Shirt     | \$30.00 |      | Dk. Green  |      |       |
| Fleece Jacket       | \$75.00 |      | Gray       |      |       |
| Cap                 | \$12.00 |      | Tan/Gray   |      |       |
| Patch               | \$4.00  |      | N/A        |      |       |

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