

Wine, Cheese, Swim Hikes and More
Kathleen Hannigan Has Been A Faithful
CMC Leader, Member Since 1986

Interview By Kathy Kyle

Kathleen Hannigan adds color to every hike. Her favorite color is purple so in honor of that I put her answers in purple, which is how she submitted them.



When and how did you find out about the Carolina Mountain Club?

I read about it in the Asheville Citizen-Times. I didn't know anyone in the club and had never heard about it before, but the ad said to meet at the south end of the Federal Building (now the Grove Arcade). There was plenty of parking because downtown wasn't the popular place it is today. So I went there, climbed into a car with 3 elderly strangers and took off to hike. That was in 1986. Wait a minute, I said elderly strangers - those people were only my age!!!!

What inspired you to come back to CMC after so many years after raising your daughter?

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And I didn't let hiking go easily even then. I remember them lifting me down the back side of Blue Ridge Pinnacle when I was 7 months pregnant and pretty big. And I even took Jessica on a few hikes when she was tiny in a baby backpack. However, the responsibilities of new motherhood eventually took over and I traded hiking for sewing baby dresses. But I never forgot how much I loved to wander the trails of our beautiful area and I knew someday I would be back.

What do you like about CMC?

I, of course, love the outdoors and being able to explore remote places safely with a group. But I really love the laughter and conversation that my hiking friends and I share while we are enjoying something we all love to do.

What is your ideal hike?

8-10 miles long, 1500' 2000' or so gain in elevation, including both a stroll beside a beautiful stream, and at some point incredible views, and done during rhododendron season. One hike I can think of that would mostly fit this bill is Grassy Ridge up in the Black Balsam area.

How long has your family been in this area? How has it changed since you were growing up?

Well, I know for sure that my mother's mother (who is 102) was born in Fairview and moved with her parents and siblings to Swannanoa in a horse and wagon to work at the new plant that opened in 1929 Beacon.

My father's mother was born in 1900 in Greenlee in the Old Fort area. I have lots of cousins all over the area. You were growing up here before the completion of Interstate 40. What are your memories of that road project?

Well my first memory is kind of unpleasant. My father had built a house overlooking the Swannanoa valley and then it was condemned for the interstate to come through. We had to move but found a really pretty place about 1 mile from there up in Patton Cove. But my father always regretted giving up the sunset view. A better memory is riding our bicycles from Swannanoa to Black Mountain when the highway was mostly completed but not open yet.

What are some of the more memorable CMC hikes?

I, of course, remember the first one with Les and Katherine when I came back to the club after my daughter got her driver's license. It was at Huntfish Falls. And I remember one with Jim Reel that I think was on the stretch of trail he maintains at Garenflo Gap it rained SO MUCH! But it was still fun. My swim hike to Horsepasture is always a blast, and I also remember the one at Tanawha when we lost Carroll (not forever).

How did you decide to host the wine and cheese hike? When is it this year?

It will be on Saturday, June 1 this year. I love to garden so I enjoy sharing what I have done at my house with others, I love to hike, and I love to drink wine, so this was a way to combine all these things I enjoy so much! I live very close to the Folk Art Center / MST which makes the logistics easy.

Well, they are usually easy. There was that year I lost Bob for a while.

You bring the best hiking treats on hikes. What is the favorite treat you make? What is the recipe?

I think my current favorite is Blueberry Almond Bars but past faves have been Mocha Cappuccino Bars, Apple Pie Bars and Pumpkin Bread. Just email me at kathannigan@gmail.com and I will be happy to send you the recipe for whichever treat you prefer.

The swim hike in Gorges State Park, how did you discover this hike? When did you first lead the hike?

It was so long ago but I think my husband took me there when we were first married. He learned of it from a friend. And then a bunch of us at the church I attended would rent Kuykendall campsite (where Ted's first Camporee will be in May) and we would drive over to Horsepasture to swim. Gorges State Park was not there at that time so the path into the place was much different.

When you are not hiking what are you doing?

Working, gardening, singing, sewing, reading, knitting, crocheting, and of course, drinking wine.

How has CMC changed since you started hiking?

I don't know that it has changed as much as is just always doing something new and different the Camporees, the challenges, meetup. I was also not aware when I first started hiking of how maintenance and conservation are such an important part of the club. My friends and I balk when the club is called "venerable" (why not sexy?) but it is really because of the enormous respect the club is due. It is certainly not hard to understand how an organization like this has stood the test of time.