

Meet Steve Pierce November 2016 By Danny Bernstein



Steve Pierce is a map nerd and a geography enthusiast; he's also a very strong and avid hiker.

Born and raised in Wilmington, Delaware, Steve chose to attend North Carolina Wesleyan College, a small college in Rocky Mount in the Coastal Plains, where he majored in history.

He became a teacher. His first elementary school post job was in the northeast corner of NC, near the Virginia border where he met his wife, Janice.

"It's flat there," Steve says. "I first saw the mountains when I visited Janice's family in Marion,"

Steve and Janice soon moved to Marion where they taught school. Steve's particular love is geography, now a part of social studies. "In the 1960s and 1970s, geography became part of social studies. They teach history in high school but geography might just be an elective."

Like almost all CMC members that I've interviewed, Steve was not on a sports team in high school. "I wasn't that athletic," he says. "I've notice that kids that did team sports don't do life sports as adults."

He and Janice have one son, Ben, a Deputy County Attorney in Alamance County. With two grandchildren close by in Burlington, Janice and Steve visit quite frequently.

While Steve and Janice worked, they went on short hikes and visited national parks on vacation but Steve's serious hiking started after he retired in 2004. He found CMC online.



"I didn't know the network of trails around here until I joined CMC. That's one of the benefits of joining a hiking club."

Steve did his first club hike with Tom Sanders. "I had met Tom in a World Affairs Council meeting. This is where I learned about the SB6K."

Since then, Steve completed the SB6K, the CMC MST challenge, and recently the [Smokies 900M](#), walking all the trails in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

According to Steve, I (your author) should take credit for getting him to consider the Smokies 900M.

We were in the car driving back from a [Friends of the Smokies](#) hike and I said, “You really ought to do the 900M.”

We stopped at Oconaluftee Visitor Center where I suggested that he buy [Hiking Trails of the Smokies](#), the Smokies National Geographic map and [Day Hiker’s Guide to all the Trails in the Smoky Mountains](#) by Liz Etnier. But he also relied on the Margaret Stevenson Hikers for logistics.

The Smokies 900M challenge is perfect for someone like Steve who likes studying maps. “I always look at the Smokies map to see how I can get more miles or another way to do the same hike.”

With his love of maps and CMC, Steve led the effort to create the map for the *100 Favorite Hikes of WNC and the Smokies*. Over forty CMC members were involved in this group project by hiking, taking a GPS trace, editing and reviewing the finished work. [Great Smoky Mountains Association](#) will publish the map. CMC has already received an advance on the royalties that the map will generate. For this effort, Steve received the CMC Award of Appreciation in April 2016.

Steve walked his first [Camino](#) de Santiago this past spring (2016). He chose to walk from Porto in Portugal because it fit within his three-week time frame. His sister, Priscilla Richter, wanted to walk the Camino Frances, the most popular route to Santiago, on her own. Then they met in Santiago and walked together to Finisterre, “the end of the earth,” and beyond.

He attends the monthly Camino meetings at REI. “Tom Sanders brought the knowledge of the Camino to CMC. It’s one thing to hear about the Camino and another to know people who’ve walked it.”

For his next adventure, the Camino Norte has captured his attention because he wants to see the views of the water while he walks.

“I appreciate CMC and the Margaret Stevenson group. It’s good to meet new people to hike with. I’ve hiked by myself but hiking with others is more fun.” He’s also so grateful for trail maintainers. Steve is finishing his first year as a CMC Councilor at large and has another year in that position.

However, Steve’s life isn’t built completely around hiking. He’s been active in the Rotary Club and will be president of the Marion chapter starting in July 2017. His Rotary Club colleagues sponsored part of his Smokies 900M hike by donating to the Rotary “End Polio Now” campaign. He’s also been active in his Baptist church and has gone on mission trips to Belize.

So if Steve had only one day to take people on a hike in the Southern Appalachians, where would he take them?

“It would have to be the Black Balsam, Sam Knob area in Pisgah National Forest,” Steve says. You’re in views instead of in a forest. The first time I saw this view, it blew me away.”