



Sherman Stambaugh

An interview

When Lenny and I first adopted a piece of the MST, Sherman went out with us to teach us the CMC way of trail maintenance. We walked the two miles while Sherman pointed out the flaws in the trail, particularly the water bars.

I talked to Sherman a few weeks ago.

Sherman, originally from Pennsylvania, moved to Asheville in 1960. He joined CMC in 1973 when Gerry McNabb was President of the club, the first time around. Sherman lives in a large white house in the Weaver section of North Asheville.” Too big for me now,” he said, “but not too big when my wife, Dorothy, and I were raising six children.

Why did you join CMC?

“I wanted to take my son backpacking when he was 15. We went to Shining Rock and there I learned about CMC.” His son, Tim, a musician still backpacks.

What were the highlights of your hiking life?

“My 25 years of friendship with Alan Barton. We took many trips together and developed new hikes. Alan was a shopkeeper and we took trips in November just before the Xmas shopping season started.” Sherman remembers trips to Fontana, Eagle Creek, Bone Valley and through the tunnel. When I asked him about the Road to Nowhere, he said, “All my life, it seems, I’ve heard of the Road to Nowhere. I supported whatever CMC wanted to do.”

Sherman was in the automobile business. He managed a Dodge/Plymouth dealership and also sold Buicks for many years. He enlisted in the Navy during WW II. Most of that time, he was in Washington as a medic. “I never got to go to sea.” That’s where he met his wife, a Navy nurse. When he retired in 1983, he worked for CMC and traveled around with Alan Barton and Ed Dunn. “We tried to do all the canyons out west in 40 days.

“Barton was a great organizer. I want to give credit to Alan Barton. He’s the one that kept me going all those years.” He remembers that some of their best backpacking trips were on the Florida Trail and Cumberland Island, Georgia.

Trail Maintenance

Sherman helped develop the Saturday workdays with Les Love for people who could not come out to work on trails in the middle of the week. He was trail supervisor of the MST from Pisgah to the Folk Art Center before Les took that over. Together, they developed it into a successful Saturday

program. Sherman has been on every Saturday workday except when he was out of town. "Les is a good P.R. person. Going to the Moose Café was Les' idea."

"Sherman was instrumental in getting the Saturday work day started," Les Love said. He was and still is our mentor on how to make the trail perfect. He devoted a lot of time scouting where we could have our next workday. Through the years, when we have a problem with the trail, we all said 'Now how would Sherman fix it?' "

In the early years, Sherman was more involved in hiking. Later on, he balanced his time between hiking and trail maintenance

For 20 years, Sherman maintained the A.T. section from Max Patch to Brown Gap. Now he helps Carol and Ken Deal with their section. Sherman was on the trail crew for 22 years. "But now I can't drive anymore. So I go occasionally with Ken and Carol."

"I always felt that the most important part of maintenance is drainage – get water off the trail. At one time, people cut down trees to make a water bar. But if you make a ditch, you don't need to use logs. Now we do coves and dips."

"We're so fortunate to be so close to the A.T. So many people volunteer."

Sherman received several awards for his outdoor work. At the CMC Annual Banquet in 2000, he received an award for his many years of trail supervision. "So many people did more than I did," Sherman said. The American Hiking Society named him the NC Volunteer of the year in 2002. He also received an award from A.T.C. for 25 years of trail maintenance

New Adventures

Sherman's new passion is the High Points Club. "Since I've turned 80, I've been to 20 highpoints including New Mexico at 13,181 feet." He emphasizes that "the High Points club is not just for people doing the high points in every state. Some people do the easy ones, some like to travel." Unlike the SB6K, you don't have to hike the high points; you just need to get there. In 2006, the High Pointer club will have their annual meeting in Asheville.

Almost 85 years old, Sherman walks 2-3 miles a day, every day. "If I miss a day here and there, I won't be fit to hike anymore." Ruth Hartzler says that " Sherman hikes up Cherokee Road and then Town Mountain Road. Sometimes, he stops at my house for tea. I really enjoy that."

Suggestion for a new activity

Sherman would like to see a one-day social get-together, maybe in May. The old timers would really appreciate it so they wouldn't have to wait a whole year for the annual dinner. Maybe a picnic, some entertainment. Any volunteer to start this new tradition?

Danny Bernstein

danny@hikertohiker.org