

# Meet Carroll Koeplinger- December 2010

Danny Bernstein



Carroll Koeplinger is the oldest active all-day Sunday CMC hiker. Having just turned 81, he can be found acting as sweep and encouraging those people who may be a little slower than the rest of the group.

"I've been inspired by Sherman Stambaugh, who just celebrated his 90th birthday," Carroll says. "I was on a CMC hike a few years ago with Sherman. We had reached the top of a mountain. I pulled out my cell phone and called my sister who's a few years older than me and said 'Hey, I'm on a mountain with a guy who's 82.' "The implication was "What's wrong with you?"

## **How did you get involved with CMC?**

In 1999, I was a volunteer for [Habitat for Humanity](#). I had been hiking and mountain biking on my own, more mountain biking than hiking at that time. I met Ken and Carol Deal at Habitat and they told me about CMC. They gave me a copy of *Let's Go* which they kept in their car.

I called up Boyd Brasington, the hike leader, and went on his hike, somewhere on the MST. Boyd was so solicitous, like a mother hen.

He put me in the middle of the group. He asked others to take care of me. He checked on me a few times. "How are you doing?" he asked.

The atmosphere was new because I hadn't hiked with others before. I enjoyed the people and the possibilities of shuttle hikes.

CMC clicked with me and I started going regularly. I learned about new trails. I've always liked the outdoors and I like the weather here.

## **How did you find yourself in Asheville?**

I moved to Asheville in 1995.

Jane, my wife at the time, was doing a PhD in Orlando, Florida. I was living in the Quad Cities (Davenport, IA, Moline, IL, Rock Island, IL, and Bettendorf, IA). I made several trips to Orlando but I wanted to move closer to Florida.

I felt I had no real roots in the Quad Cities, even though I'd lived there for 32 years. I needed a change. I looked at other areas, including Knoxville, but I liked the topography of the area. One of my daughters had told me that Asheville was a good place to live. So on a whim, I rented an apartment here, went back to the Quad Cities, threw all my stuff in a van and moved here. When Jane died in a car accident, I just stayed here.

One of my daughters, Elizabeth, came down three years later. She liked the paramedic program at A-B Tech and lived with me for five years. She still lives and works in the city.

### **Tell me about your life before Asheville**

I grew up on a farm in Minnesota during World War II.

While my older brothers were in the service, I had to take care of a 40 acre farm. After high school, I went to work in a print shop for Northwest Airlines. Then I got a union job in the same profession.



I learned that union jobs were better jobs. I ran printing presses for 15 years and then moved to the Quad Cities to become a union organizer. I stayed for 32 years as full time president of a local printer's union. I had to run for election first every two years, then every three years. [How would you like to have to run for election your whole career to keep your job? - Ed]

Being a union president got me involved in many civic and political activities such as the Model City program, part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty, United Way and training programs at the community college.

### **What are your thoughts about unions, today?**

Unions are as important now as ever, maybe even more so with free trade agreements and corporate power. The decline of union power came when President Regan fired the air traffic controllers in the early 1980s.

If I had to do it all over again, I'd do the same union work.

## **You're still working?**

I like the structure of work.

I've almost always worked in Asheville. I started at the Toyota dealer as a customer rep working with customer pre and post sales. Now I'm a driver for Pensky Truck Rental. I move cars and trucks to their various locations.

I love to drive. I've gone as far as St. Louis and New Orleans delivering vehicles. The job keeps me financially able to go on overseas trips.

## **Even with working, you're active in CMC**

I was CMC treasurer for five years.

I maintain two sections of the MST, one a 4.4 mile section. Don Walton talked me into the second section.

I'm a hike leader and on the hiking committee. I'm also one of two CMC representatives on the 2013 ATC committee. CMC is a family. We take care of each other.

I've been a volunteer at the [Mediation Center](#) for about 10 years. The Center provides conflict resolution. Cases are sometimes referred by the court. It could be a problem with a neighbor, a bad construction job.

I never liked adversarial situations. Even as a boy, I didn't fight much; I just walked away.

## **If you could take a visitor anywhere in our mountains, without worrying about the difficulty of the hike, where would you go?**

I have several favorite hikes:

In the Smokies, the Jumpoff and Charlies Bunion on the A.T., and down to Kephart Prong  
East Fork of the Pigeon River  
Green Knob from Sunburst campground. It's a steep challenging climb.  
Yellow Mountain. I've led that a couple of times.

There's never had a bad hike. I don't care how wet I get, it's all good. At the end, as I pour water out of my boots, it's still good.

## **You've been very health conscious for a long while**

Yes, I limit the amount of food I eat. When I eat out, I always split an entree and ask for a box. I was one of six siblings. Two of us are still living. We may have good genes but having good genes doesn't mean you shouldn't take care of yourself.

After my second wife passed away leaving me with a nine-year old daughter, I started taking care of myself. I had a physical, the first in a long time. I switched to skim milk.

I was not an exerciser until I came here. I started going to a fitness center when I moved down here.

You need to think positive. "I have good health. Take care of it."

I credit hiking and mountain biking for my current good health. If you don't have good health, what do you have?

I ski, I mountain bike. Over the holidays, I'll be skiing in Park City, UT. I've also had four memorable vacations in Europe with several CMC members. We call ourselves the Pilgrims.

I have four beautiful daughters, all over the country and two adopted children. I want to stay healthy for them. They're proud of what I do. They provide more motivation to stay active and healthy.