

Hike • Save Trails • Make Friends
Carolina Mountain Club eNews



September 2024

**Rediscovering George Masa, Smoky Mountains photographer:
Iconic photo's location identified** By David Huff Special to Citizen Time July 13, 2024



In an exciting discovery, the true location of one of the most iconic photographs of George Masa has been accurately identified. The photograph, depicting Masa on a rock outcrop with his camera and a companion, was previously believed to have been taken at Graybeard Mountain in Montreat, North Carolina. Recent findings confirm the actual location is Blackstack Cliffs in the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee.

At the recent The Lobby-Photography Meetup, a gathering of photographers revealing the world through different lenses by sharing samples of their work and process, Charlie Boss, an Asheville-based photographer originally from Greeneville, Tennessee, approached David Huff, founder of the George Masa Foundation, with an exciting possibility. Boss, who had been to Blackstack Cliffs many times growing up, attended Huff's presentation at the Meetup. During this event, which introduced many attendees to Masa's work for the first time, Charlie recognized the location of the misnamed photograph as Blackstack Cliffs

Intrigued by this idea, Huff grabbed his own camera and set out to investigate. "When I stepped out onto the cliffs, I knew immediately that this was the spot," said Huff.

"This discovery is incredibly meaningful," said Huff. "As far as we know, this is the only photo of George Masa in the field where we can now definitively identify the exact location. Standing on the same rock that Masa stood on over 90 years ago was an intimate and profound experience. It not only connects us to his work but also reinforces the importance of conservation in preserving these beautiful landscapes for future generations. We are so fortunate that Charlie was in the audience and recognized the location. Their keen eye and knowledge made this discovery possible. Mystery solved!"

Huff recreated the shot by guessing where the person who took the photo, most likely Hugo Strongmiller, a landscape architect, had stood, successfully capturing the same perspective as the original photograph. The companion on the rock with Masa was most likely Roger Morrow, a Carolina Mountain Club member and frequent hiking companion of Masa.

"We knew it was not Graybeard Mountain, but we could not find this historic overlook. But we figured it had to be a fairly accessible spot and many people have been looking, but like all things Masa, it took the right person at the right place to find the answer," said Paul Bonesteel, Masa's documentarian.

George Masa arrived in Asheville in 1915 as Masahara Iizuka, a Japanese immigrant whose work was instrumental in mapping the Appalachian Trail and advocating for the preservation of the Great Smoky Mountains. His dedication to capturing the natural beauty of the region and his conservation efforts have left an indelible mark on American landscape photography and environmental advocacy.

"Masa's photographs were more than just pictures; they were powerful tools for conservation," said Bonesteel. "This newly identified location at Blackstack Cliffs provides a tangible connection to Masa's work and underscores the importance of accurate historical research. It allows us to stand where he once stood and see the world through his eyes."

Bonesteel, who previously produced "The Mystery of George Masa," is currently working on a new documentary and book about George Masa, delving deeper into the life and legacy of this remarkable photographer and conservationist.

Paul Bonesteel is the founder of Bonesteel Films, a production company known for its engaging and thought-provoking documentaries. Bonesteel Films has a strong reputation for crafting compelling narratives that explore historical and cultural topics. More information about their work can be found at [Bonesteel Films](#).

David Huff emphasized the excitement of still discovering new things about Masa. "It's thrilling to know that we can continue to uncover more about George Masa's life and work. This photo connects him to his work on the A.T. in a very real way, bringing his contributions to light in ways we hadn't fully appreciated before."

Masa may have visited Blackstack Cliffs during his original mapping of the Appalachian Trail. Located a few hundred feet off the trail, Blackstack Cliffs offers a breathtaking view that Masa likely sought to document in his extensive work.

For those inspired by Masa's legacy, visiting Blackstack Cliffs offers a unique opportunity to connect with the past and appreciate the natural beauty that Masa so vividly documented. As we honor his memory, it is crucial to continue advocating for the conservation of our natural landscapes and preserving the history of those who fought to protect them.



The George Masa Foundation is dedicated to encouraging young people to engage in conservation, climate adaptation and innovation, inspired by the work and legacy of George Masa. The foundation aims to preserve the natural beauty of our landscapes and honor the contributions of those who have worked tirelessly to protect them

David Huff *David Huff/George Masa Foundation*

Volunteer to Staff CMC Booth at 2024 Blue Ridge Pride Festival

Saturday, September 21st, 11am-6pm
Pack Square Park

This year CMC will join dozens of our fellow community organizations and businesses in support of our LGBTQ members and neighbors at the Blue Ridge Pride Festival in downtown Asheville. [Blue Ridge Pride](#) seeks "to promote equality, safety, and quality of life for western North Carolina's LGBTQ and allied communities". If you'd like to help

promote inclusivity within the club and can speak to how CMC has contributed to your quality of life, please consider donating an hour or two to help staff our booth by signing up [here](#).

This year CMC will join dozens of our fellow community organizations and businesses in support of our LGBTQ members and neighbors at the Blue Ridge Pride Festival in downtown Asheville. [Blue Ridge Pride](#) seeks "to promote equality, safety, and quality of life for western North Carolina's LGBTQ and allied communities". If you'd like to help promote inclusivity within the club and can speak to how CMC has contributed to your quality of life, please consider donating an hour or two to help staff our booth by signing up [here](#).

MAX PATCH
6th Annual Workday

SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday September 28
National Public Lands Day

Carolina Mountain Club
100 YEARS
1923 - 2023
CLUB

Appalachian Trail Conference
US Forest Service
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AllTrails Sawyer

Monday Trail Maintenance Crew

by Jayne Carbone



The Monday crew is unique for several reasons including its rich history. It began with a synergy that combined the original Asheville Monday crew with the North Carolina High Peaks Trail Association (NCHPTA founded in Burnsville in 2010). Joining the two crews expanded the geography to include both the Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) trails in Yancey county and also the MST from Graybeard Overlook to Black Mountain Campground, the Big Butt Trail, and the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) from Devils Fork Gap to Spivey Gap. The fusion also added 60 more miles of trails in Yancey County including the Black Mountain Crest Trail, and all the trails that connect to it from the valley below, the Lost Cove Trail, the trails along the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) like Green Knob and Blue Ridge Pinnacle Trails. It's a diverse 100-mile blend of trails.

The Monday crew is also distinctive because it includes the majestic Black Mountains with the highest peak in Eastern North America at 6,684 feet and its sister 6K peaks. Through the NCHPTA, it partners with the US Forest Service (USFS), Mount Mitchell State Park as the Friends of Mount Mitchell State Park, and the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST). In 2020, it received the distinguished **Locke Craig Award** for its dedication to public service and commitment to conservation in support of the state parks, and its connection to the state's natural resources. For more on NCHPTA, check out <https://nchighpeaks.org/>.

On a typical Monday morning, you'll see 10 to 15 members working on tread repair, removing downed trees, brushing and weed eating the trails. Ages range from 51 to 84. Members love working together, sharing trust and friendship, giving back to this beautiful area, and it's cheaper than a gym membership! Sandy Whitehouse's muffins, breads, cookies, and other treats add a special start to the morning.

As an example of one of our active crew members, Mike Williams is a retired journalist, reporter and foreign correspondent for Cox Newspapers, the Atlanta Journal Constitution and the Miami Herald. His speciality was both domestic and foreign news stories including articles from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mike joined CMC after buying land outside Burnsville in 2004. The Monday crew was the best fit for him when his family moved here full-time in 2011. He has remained an active member ever since.

Mike was influenced by his experiences in the Boy Scouts and was lucky enough to have a Scoutmaster who took him backpacking. Trail work with the CMC Monday crew was a natural path. Mike also worked on the Konnarock and the Smokies Wilderness Elite A.T. (SWEAT) crews for multiple weeks one summer.

Mike is our crew co-leader and says the Monday crew has become a big part of his life and routine. "Like many folks, I never actively 'planned' my retirement and feel very lucky that I stumbled onto trail work. I enjoy physical work, being outdoors and the beauty of the woods, so, again, it's a good fit. The thing I did not anticipate about retirement was how important it is to have a sense of purpose. Trail work fits the bill because it is meaningful work that accomplishes a definite 'good.' It makes hiking more enjoyable, which might lead to more people hiking and becoming aware of the peace and beauty of the woods and mountains, which in turn may lead to more support for preserving and protecting these unspoiled areas."



Mike also notes that the crew is important to him because of the camaraderie. "We have a wide spectrum of folks with diverse backgrounds and opinions about pretty much everything, but we are respectful of each other and manage to get along, united by our shared purpose. That's rare and important today because the country is so divided on so many topics."

Mike is especially proud of a 25-foot locust bridge we built over Neal's Creek for a relocation of the MST. This bridge moved the trail to the woods from a busy, dusty gravel road. "It was really fun to build."

He is also pleased by the crib we built across a rock ledge on the Green Knob Trail. “A big tree and root-ball peeled off and exposed the ledge, leaving the trail a slippery scramble pitched down at about 35 degrees. We cut several large locusts that we pinned to the ledge with the rock drill and rebar, filled it with crush and created a stable, welcoming tread. The structure is still rock-solid years after we installed it, as is our Neal's Creek bridge.”

Mike is “tremendously proud of the improvement our crew has made on the trails of the Black Mountains. We have about 60 miles of unassigned trails on the range, much of it straight up ridgelines or accessible after long, steep trips to 6,000-plus feet. The Blacks get about 100 inches of rain a year and after decades of neglect most of the trails were grown shut with rhododendron, laurel and giant blackberry canes 10-12 feet tall!. The range stays swathed in cloud much of the time, so any hike could leave you soaked from sopping-wet, chest-high growth and dripping overhead branches, not to mention bleeding from cuts from the briars and sharp branches. It took several years of tremendous effort to hack open a corridor on these trails using bladed weed-eaters (If you've used one, you know how exhausting it can be to flail at a wall of rhodo branches with that heavy tool and tiny blade.)”

Those trails are now pleasant to walk on. “Many have become shady corridors with a ground cover of nearly maintenance-free Galax. It's a huge pleasure to walk these tracks and remember how they once looked. We often get compliments from hikers who say they've hiked the Black Mountain Crest Trail for decades and have never seen it looking better-maintained.”

To join our Monday crew contact John Whitehouse at johnwhitehouse@icloud.com.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to all the members that responded to the questionnaire for providing material for this article.



Rugby Middle School Expands Cross-Country Trail with Support from Carolina Mountain Club

by Jan Onan

Hendersonville, NC, July 14, 2024 – Rugby Middle School is excited to announce the expansion of its cross-country trail, thanks to the invaluable support from the Carolina Mountain Club (CMC). This initiative, spearheaded by West Henderson Cross Country Coach Aaron Saft, aims to revive high school cross-country meets at Rugby with a unique route winding through the woods. Unlike the flatter, grassy trails that have become common in recent years, Rugby's new trail emphasizes the experience of running through wooded terrain and hills.

Coach Saft initially sought assistance from fellow runner and CMC member Victor Marino. Realizing the scale of the project, they reached out to CMC President Les Love for additional support. Les enlisted CMC crew leaders Madison Evans and Jan Onan to assess the trail, and Onan collaborated with Paul Curtin to coordinate several CMC crews to begin work post-school term.

Preparation for the community workday on June 22 involved extensive mapping and clearing of thick rhododendron areas. The community day was a success, clearing half

the route. Subsequent CMC efforts have focused on trail brushing, dead tree removal, and marking the 1.3-mile addition with flags and ribbons.



On July 12, the Asheville and Pisgah Friday Crews, along with other teams, completed cutting through the rhododendrons and continued the tread work. Under the supervision of Tom Weaver, CMC Trail Facilitator Supervisor, a crew started installing a bridge for stream erosion control and runner safety.

Looking ahead, CMC will continue scheduling their crews until the trail is complete, including the Thursday Crew joining for the first time on July 18. Coach Saft extends his heartfelt gratitude to the crew leaders and their members for bringing his vision closer to reality.

Crew Leaders Involved in Organizing, Planning, and Implementation:

- Paul Curtin, Asheville Friday Crew Leader and Appalachian Trail Supervisor
- Tom Weaver, Trails Facilities Manager and Past CMC President
- Les Love, CMC President and Secondary Trail Supervisor
- Jan Onan and Madison Evans, Section Rovers Co-Crew Leaders
- David Pizzolato and Ken Hummel, Asheville Thursday Co-Crew Leaders
- Rob Bolt, Pisgah Friday Co-Crew Leader
- Don Cooper, Pisgah Friday Co-Crew Leader

For more information, please visit the Carolina Mountain Club website at carolinamountainclub.org.

Asking again . . .

Award Nominations Needed

by Tom Weaver

Each year, a CMC Awards Committee reviews nominations for two special awards given by the club. Tom Weaver is the 2023 Committee Chairperson and has assembled a committee from last years award winners, including members from both hiking and trail maintenance.

If you know of a club member who you would like to nominate, please send their name, which of the awards you feel they should receive, and a brief reason why you feel they qualify for the award to Tom at tomjweaver@gmail.com. This year's recipients, will be announced at our annual meeting and dinner on November 2nd.

The nominations need to be submitted before October 1, 2024.

Further details on these awards can be found on the CMC website. See the link below.
<https://www.carolinamountainclub.org/index.cfm/do/pages.view/id/42/page/Service-Awards>

The Award of Appreciation can go to any member who, during the year prior to the Annual Meeting, has rendered such exceptional service to the operation of Carolina Mountain Club that its goals were significantly advanced.

The Award of Distinction can go to a member who, during his/her membership, has made consistent and cumulative extraordinary contributions to the operation of the Club and to the achievement of its goals.

We are also looking for nominations for the Honorary Lifetime Award - nominations will be reviewed and decided on by the CMC Leadership Council.

We encourage CMC members to recognize your peers in their outstanding volunteer efforts in trail maintenance, hiking and conservation efforts.



NEW BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Volunteers Appointed Through July

TRAIL SECTION MAINTAINERS:

Paul Witty—One Tree Access to Two Trees Access, MST
Tara and Chris Wu—Tanyard Gap to Roundtop Ridge, AT
Dennis Boone—Roundtop Ridge to Hurricane Gap, AT
Bryson and Kelly Walker--Brown Gap to Max Patch Road, AT
Jayne Carbone—Rice Gap to Sams Gap, AT

THANK YOU!

Help Wanted: Section Maintainers Needed!



The Club needs section maintainers for the sections listed below. Section Maintainers “adopt” a section of trail. Adoption includes (but is not limited to) quarterly walk-throughs, routine maintenance (tread, trimming, water diversions), and noting downed trees and other trail blockers. For complete adoption guidelines, see the Members’ Section of CMC’s webpage. Click on “Trail Work,” then “Trail Maintenance,” then “Extras.” If interested, please contact the Supervisors listed below. Thanks!

SECTION MAINTAINERS NEEDED!

1. Mountains to Sea Trail / Oconaluftee River to Three Trees - Supervisor: Chris Werbylo, jcw402@aol.com
--One Tree Access to two Trees Access, 2.1 miles
2. Mountains to Sea Trail / Three Trees to Hwy 215 - Supervisor: Robert Bolt, Jr., otherob@inbox.com
-- Cowee Overlook Access to Reinhart Gap, 3.8 miles
-- Reinhart Gap to Bear Pen Gap Trail, 3.0 miles
3. Mountains to Sea Trail / Hwy 215 to Big Ridge O/L – Supervisor: Joseph Bange, joseph.bange@gmail.com
-- BRP 417 (Bridges Camp Gap) to Bennett Gap, 2.4 miles
4. Pisgah Ranger District / Art Loeb - Supervisor: Les Love, lesrlove55@gmail.com
-- Art Loeb Trail - Ivestor Gap to Black Balsam Rd 816, 2.6 miles
-- Art Loeb Trail - Farlow Gap to Deep Gap (S), 1.4 miles
5. Pisgah Ranger District / Bad Fork to Mt Pisgah - Supervisor: Les Love, lesrlove55@gmail.com
--Courthouse Falls - FS Rd 140 to Falls. 0.3 mile
-- Case Camp Ridge Trail - BRP to Seniard Ridge Tr., 1.7 miles
-- Bridges Camp Gap Trail - Greasy Cove Tr. to MST, 1.0 mile
-- Graveyard Fields Loop - BRP to Upper Falls Tr. to BRP. 2.0 miles
-- Upper Falls Trail - Graveyard Fields Loop to Upper Falls. 0.8 mile
-- MST Access Trail - MST to Graveyard Fields Loop. 0.2 mile
6. Pisgah Ranger District / Mt Pisgah to Haywood Gap - Supervisor: Les Love, lesrlove55@gmail.com
-- Little Sam - MST to Flat Laurel Crk Tr., 1.3 miles
-- Big East Fork Tr - Big East Fork Parking to Greasy Cove Tr., 3.4 miles
-- Greasy Cove Trail - Bridges Camp Tr. to Art Loeb Tr., 3.2 miles
--Green Mountain Tr - MST to Hwy 215 at Sunburst Cmpgrnd, 5.0 miles
7. Appalachian Ranger District / Standard ARD - Supervisor: Les Love, lesrlove55@gmail.com
-- Fork Ridge Tr in Shelton Laurel - FS Rd 111 to AT, 2.0 miles
--Hickey Fork Tr in Sheltn Lrl - FS Rd 465 to Pounding Mill Tr., 2.3 miles
-- Van Cliff Trail - Hot Springs Park, 2.6 miles

--White Oak Tr in Shelton Laurel - FS Rd 465 to Poundg Mill Tr., 2.3 miles

8. CMC Secondary Trails – Supervisor: Les Love, lesrlove55@gmail.com

--Art Loeb Trail - Deep Gap (N) to Shining Rock Gap, 2.9 miles

--Courthouse Falls - FS Rd. 140 to Falls, 0.3 mile

--Bridges Camp Gap Trail - Greasy Cove Trail to MST, 1.0 mile

--Upper Falls - Graveyard Fields Loop to Upper Falls, 0.8 mile

--MST Access Trls. - MST to Graveyard Fields Loop, 0.2 mile

--Sam Knob Summit - Sam Knob Trail to Sam Knob, 0.7 mile

--Little Sam - MST to Flat Laurel Creek Tr., 1.3 miles

--Big East Fork - Big East Fork Parking to Greasy Cove Tr., 3.4 miles

--Greasy Cove - Bridges Camp Tr. to Art Loeb Tr., 3.2 miles

--Fork Ridge Trail in Shelton Laurel - FS Rd. 111 to AT, 2.0 miles

--Hickory Fork Trail in Shelton Laurel - FS Rd. 465 to Pounding Mill Tr., 2.3 miles

--Jack Branch - River Ridge Loop to FS Rd. 422, 2.4 miles

--Pounding Mill Tr. in Shelton Laurel - AT at Camp Creek Bald to Hickey Fork Tr., 2.3 miles

--Van Cliff Tr. in Hot Springs Park - Rocky Bluff Picnic Area South, 2.6 miles

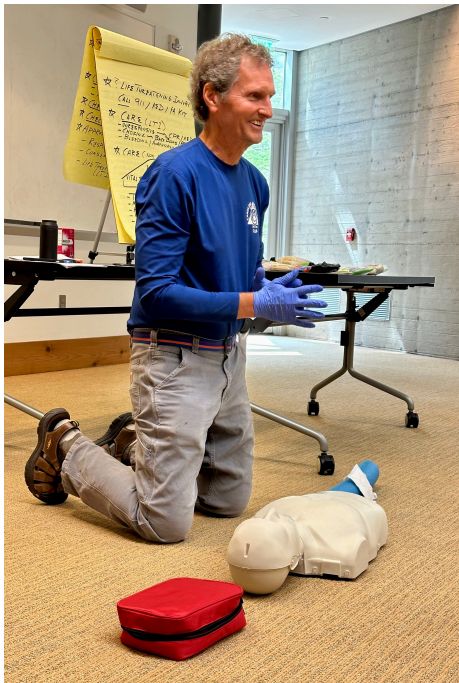
--White Oak Tr. in Shelton Laurel - FS Rd. 465 to Pounding Mill Tr., 2.3 miles

--Grassy Knob - Sleepy Gap Parking to Grassy Knob summit, 0.4 mile

For Trail maintenance map, see the Members' Section of CMC's webpage. Click on "Trail Work," then "Trail Maintenance," then "Lists."

DR. TOM BELT LEADS CMC FIRST AID TRAINING

by Kit Ogburn



The Carolina Mountain Club is very fortunate to have retired physician Tom Belt as the leader of its First Aid training. Tom became a CMC member in 2020, shortly after retiring. In Asheville and previously in Tyler, Texas, Tom's career spanned over three decades, specializing in geriatric and internal medicine. Tom grew up in Austin, Texas, where he attended the University of Texas and later medical school at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, followed by residency training in Augusta at the Medical College of Georgia. Tom says that he and his wife Donna were happy to eventually land in Weaverville in 2017 after over thirty years of practice in Texas.

Tom assumed leadership of the CMC's First Aid program three years ago in 2021. At that time, he was already a dedicated member of the Asheville Thursday Trail Maintenance Crew and the maintainer

of an adopted trail, the scenic Laurel River Trail near Hot Springs, so he understood the environment where CMC members work and hike, and he knew the importance of CMC members learning first aid skills. Tom brings a physician's perspective and a wealth of professional and practical knowledge to this role.

CMC First Aid training begins with a prerequisite and self-paced online American Red Cross course, "Adult First Aid/CPR/AED." (CPR stands for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation; AED stands for Automated External Defibrillator.) The Red Cross course takes 2-3 hours. A two-year certificate is earned after the successful completion of the course.

After completing the online Red Cross course, Tom teaches a customized class that highlights some of the material from that course, and he broadens and emphasizes certain training, often with demonstrations. Students learn or refresh skills pertaining to a variety of first aid emergencies, including bleeding, breathing, and cardiac emergencies. The class even includes components of wilderness first aid, training that Tom passes on from having taken a National Outdoor Leadership School Wilderness first aid training course. Very importantly, the class gives attendees a chance to practice life-saving skills in a low key and supportive environment.

Currently Tom offers his class four or five times a year to sawyers, trail maintainers, and members of the CMC Search and Rescue team. This training is required for sawyers who must maintain certain credentials, so sawyers are given enrollment priority. Tom keeps the class size small so waiting for an opening is a possibility. The class is offered on a Saturday, and it takes place at the BRP Visitors Center at Milepost 384 (199 Hemphill Knob Road, Asheville).

Tom has already taught over one hundred CMC members. He hopes to expand his class with more frequent offerings in the future. Watch the CMC website for future developments. He strongly believes "the more people trained, the better," making us all safer. Tom invites and encourages anyone who wishes to learn or refresh first aid skills to consider this offering.



Here is a sampling of comments from a few past attendees of Tom's class:

Tom does such good work putting these CPR/First Aid classes together. We are so lucky to have him and his willingness to step up and make these available on a regular basis - they benefit so many people. Hats off to you, Tom! Les Love

I find Tom's handling of the material sure-handed and confident. He's a retired physician, so we know that he's emphasizing what's most important and giving us the benefit of his long experience. Mike Williams

As a sawyer I have attended CMC sponsored First Aid/CPR classes for almost 20 years. Tom has taken the training to a new level. By utilizing online Red Cross training for the basic information he has freed up class time for topics much more relevant to our trail work. This has made the class more interesting and relevant. As a retired doctor who has actually performed CPR, he brings first-hand knowledge and medical insights to the class. John Whitehouse

It was nice to attend a training on first aid that was tailored to the actual situation that I may be faced with in my work on a trail, but also fitting to a possible daily life experience. Tom is a very knowledgeable and relatable presenter on the topic. Richard McDanel

The training class hosted by Tom Belt was very professional and informative. He covered many potential first aid scenarios that could occur on the trail. I highly recommend the class. Reid Nasholds

I have attended Tom's class. I feel that the class that Tom teaches is good for any CMC member that is doing trail work even if they are not a sawyer. Being able to attend these small (attendee wise) classes through CMC is a plus because Tom can provide more hands on with each individual as needed. In addition, it is a great opportunity for CMC members to get to know one another. Tom is highly knowledgeable and does a wonderful job teaching vs. telling, so attendees learn the subject matter. Victor Mariano

The Joy of Hiking Challenges: Beyond the Familiar Path

By Marielle DeJong



From ages seven to seventeen, I hiked Looking Glass Rock trail more times than I can count. It was my home trail and where my earliest memories in Pisgah National Forest were made. However, I rarely thought of the 400+ miles of other trails in the Pisgah Ranger District waiting to be explored.

Fortunately, knowing and loving just one trail was enough to spark and nurture my love of Western North Carolina's expansive public lands. After high school, life took me to many other places, but my heart was always firmly rooted in the Southern Appalachians. Sometimes it takes leaving a place to truly understand how special it is.

One spring break, I came home and hiked a new trail every day with my dad. I have no idea how or why we decided to do this. Neither our record keeping nor our memories are precise, but we believe this was the list:

- Rainbow and Turtle Back Falls
- Bracken Preserve (brand new at the time!)
- Big East Fork
- Pilot Mountain
- Cedar Rock
- Big Rock in DuPont State Forest
- A waterfall tour of Panthertown Valley

I like to think of this as my first hiking challenge!

A few years later, I took a job at Friends of the Smokies. One of my responsibilities was to be the staff lead for the Classic Hikes of the Smokies, founded by CMC member Danny Bernstein. How lucky can you be?

She educated me about the Smokies 900 and introduced me to other CMC members who had successfully completed the challenge. These interactions and all the stories of success on the trail helped me realize that a challenge of this size was attainable for someone like me and something I wanted to do. Let the research begin.

Although someone new to the concept might assume the word ‘challenge’ refers only to the actual hiking, seasoned CMC members know that’s only half the battle. Logistics (traveling, route planning, etc.) can be just as consuming as the time on the trail.

But the support and resources available to me by connecting with CMC members were incredibly empowering and encouraging.

Eight years later, the Smokies 900 and the Pisgah 400 have led me to friends and memories that will last a lifetime.

Rather than taking up too much of the e-news with more personal anecdotes, I’ve put together a few thoughts that I hope might encourage you to take on one of the CMC challenges—plus a suggestion or two on how to get started. Having completed two, here’s what I learned along the way and things I wish I knew:



- It’s a great way to meet people and make friends. Joining challenges fosters connections and builds lasting relationships.
- Completing a challenge can be a personal journey, but it also has a communal aspect. Hearing others' motivations is heartwarming; some hike in honor of loved ones, while some, after aiding others, find themselves finishing a map—or a second map, or a third!

- Ask for help and be ready to assist. Key swaps and shuttles enhance efficiency and foster camaraderie among hikers.
- Check the CMC schedule to find hikes that fill your missing trails—it's always more enjoyable with friends.
- No time limits make it welcoming for everyone, whether you seek a speed challenge or a lifelong project. Take as long as you need; the finish will always be gratifying. Plus, there might be cake!
- When you start highlighting your trails, choose a marker that's your favorite color—you'll be so happy when you decide to frame your worn, torn, taped together (still somehow torn), coffee-stained, much-loved, priceless, family heirloom, COMPLETED MAP!

Hiking is a beautiful way to know a place. You immerse yourself and learn the literal ups and downs of the trails. And a hiking **challenge** builds on this by offering the perfect blend of structure and variety, guiding you with a clear goal while allowing the freedom to explore diverse terrains and environments. It leaves you with a more complete and connected understanding of these mountains. Each step is an opportunity to experience a new place or revisit an old favorite, making the journey as rewarding as the destination.

I am currently halfway through the 100 Favorite Hikes and have a goal of completing the South Beyond 6,000 before I turn 40 (eight years, four months, 26 days to get it done!).

Hope to see you on the trail!

Carolina Mountain Club eNews is published on the first Friday of each month. Members can send your news to eNews@carolinamountainclub.org. **Articles are due on the last Friday of the previous month.** Please limit articles to no more than 1,000 words. You may send up to two photos as jpg attachments. For members' address and email changes, log in, select "Modify Profile", make changes and click on "Update Member" or email Dennis Bass at dbass3607@gmail.com. Your email changes will be automatically reflected in eNews delivery.

About Carolina Mountain Club:

Hiking. CMC leads about 200 group hikes per year. Hikes are open to all, and we welcome guests (though please contact hike leader first). Hike information—including dates, times, meeting locations, scout reports, and leader contact information—can be found on the CMC website [here](#). Additional information about hiking can be found [here](#).

Trail maintenance. CMC maintains over 440 miles of trail in western NC. Individuals of all ages and groups/organizations are invited to participate. CMC membership is not required, and all required tools are provided. We have weekly crews every day of the week from Monday-Saturday, quarterly Saturday crews, and other special events. For those with busy or unpredictable schedules, we also have section maintainers who maintain a short portion of trail and/or report issues that require a larger work crew. To volunteer, please email volunteer@carolinamountainclub.org or visit [here](#) for more information.

Conservation. The CMC Conservation Committee advocates for the sustained natural beauty and access to our hiking areas. More information can be found [here](#) or by emailing Conservation@carolinamountainclub.org.

How to join the CMC

For just \$20 (\$30 Family) per year, you can join western North Carolina's oldest and largest hiking trail club. CMC members receive the *Let's Go!* quarterly hike schedule via email and have full access to member services on the CMC website. There is a link to join on the [CMC website](#).

Carolina Mountain Club - P.O. Box 68
Asheville, NC 28802
www.carolinamountainclub.org