



Ann Gleason: Interview with a Hike Scheduler

By Stuart English

Many things happen behind the scenes to make our hiking club function. Probably the most unnoticed and therefore unappreciated is that of the hike scheduler. We don't just schedule 200 or more hikes a year by accident. One of our long time schedulers has retired. Ann Gleason had scheduled hikes since 2004. Recently we asked Ann about her years scheduling hikes.

I'm not sure when I joined CMC but it must have been in the late 90's. Don Walton was president and he asked me about doing the 2nd and 4th quarter Wednesday scheduling while several of us were camping at Elkmont in the Smokies, seeing the synchronous fireflies. I had been hiking on my own and with a neighbor a lot before then.

One of my first CMC hikes was with Tom Bindrim and Joan Lemire. Bernard Elias was also on that hike. I was really impressed with their knowledge of trails and the area. Tom could bushwhack anywhere and you'd end up where you wanted, it seemed. Bernard was very sweet and oddly one of the things I remember about him was he seemed to be hiking in worn dress shoes rather than boots and also, though well up in age, he could hike the pants off most anyone.

I started scheduling the Wednesday hikes in the fourth quarter of 2004. Bruce Bente was and is a major part of the process then as he still is now. We have seen many changes and new people leading and scheduling hikes, as well as changes in the technology. I finally decided that it was someone else's turn to take my spot as I'd gotten very busy with community work here in town.

I was fortunate to have what I consider the two best hiking quarters of the year to schedule: spring and fall. Hike leaders were generally quick to grab up their favorite

dates and the best ones sent you the complete hike information right off the web site along with their personal additions. Some folks just gave you a hike number and others would just say "I'm doing the hike that got canceled last fall". So those took more time and digging around to complete. The down side to scheduling for me was that it always seemed to hit when I was swamped with work but that might just be my own tendency to procrastinate. All in all I enjoyed doing it and when I had some health issues that prevented me from being able to do any hikes the last few years; it was nice to vicariously take part by doing the scheduling.

I've been a professional potter and teacher here in Tryon, NC since 1985. I grew up on Long Island, NY, lived in NYC after college (and worked in the Empire State Building). After that, it was Montana, graduate school in Utah, and working for a potter in Kentucky before moving to Tryon, NC to help my ailing parents. I set up shop in their basement, and never left, so to speak, eventually buying this place from them. Though I love what I do, like many self-employed businesses, it is all consuming and free time is not easily had. Working alone is also quite isolating and that is another reason I sought out CMC to get out in the woods and get rejuvenated with some active nature lovers. I have met several hike leaders while doing the annual Southern Highland Craft Guild shows in Asheville over the years. They'd see my name on the banner and introduce themselves, if I hadn't met them before. Danny and Lenny Bernstein were almost always regulars at the show and always stopped by to say "Hello".

It is good to see so many new hiker leaders on the schedules now. I hope to get back on the trail this fall with CMC again.