



Carolina Mountain Club

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CMC Combines Business and Pleasure at the Doubletree

By Stuart English

This was a special Annual Dinner/Meeting on November 3, 2018. It was held at a new venue, the Doubletree Hotel in Biltmore Village. It marked the culmination of Walt Weber's 3rd Edition of his Trail Profile book for the MST. It allowed 100 CMC friends to connect and socialize wearing their "nice clothes." The CMC council for 2019 was announced. Awards were given for various achievements. Challenge Completers were recognized (see separate article). CMC president Randy Fluharty spoke on the flourishing state of our club. Our long time friend and member Jennifer Pharr Davis spoke about "why we hike."

The Doubletree Hotel was built at the former location of the Biltmore Dairy and approaching the banquet room is a hallway filled with old pictures of Biltmore estate history. This was appreciated by Walt Weber who had a long-standing relationship with George Cecil. Walt maintained the Buck Spring Lodge site for years and his profile books contain much of Vanderbilt history in WNC. The first edition came out in 1999. So this has been a 20-year-plus project with Walt doing most of the work including pushing a distance measuring wheel over most of the MST in Western North Carolina. Les Love organized a group several years ago to measure the new completed parts of the trail. We were called "the gang". Richard Thornburg, District Ranger for the Appalachian Ranger district spoke and praised our maintenance crews for all the hours we spent and all the money it saved them. Members of the 2019 CMC Council: CMC Council l-r, Judy Magura returning Technology Councilor, Chris Koebelin returning Councilor at Large, Debby Jones returning Vice President, George Bauernfeind returning Treasurer, Randy Fluharty returning President, Barbara Morgan returning Past President, Hugh Hensleigh upcoming 2019 Councilor at Large, Stuart English upcoming 2019 Communications Councilor, Ruth Hartzler outgoing Conservation Councilor, Jan Onan returning Education and Outreach Councilor, Kathy Kyle Outgoing Communications Councilor. Not pictured: Paula Massey outgoing Secretary, Kathy McAuley upcoming 2019 Secretary, Mike Fisher upcoming 2019 Conservation Councilor, Gregory Bechtel returning 2019 Hiking Councilor, Ron Navik returning 2019 Trail Maintenance Councilor, Lynn Saul returning 2019 Membership Councilor.

Previously at a Trail Maintenance function, Ann Hendrickson was awarded the Distinguished Service

Award for her energetic efforts for the club. Tonight former Asheville Friday Crew leader Skip Sheldon was awarded the Life Membership Award for his years of leading the maintenance crew. "The Gang": Walt Weber, Les Love, Bob Beach, Richard Evans, and Stuart English were given the Award of Appreciation. Jennifer Davis is a published author and motivational speaker, who has hiked all over the world and for a time held the speed record for the Appalachian Trail. Jenn asked the question, "Why we hike?" She is a mother of two young children and hikes for solitude now. But she listed other reasons as the community of other hikers, discovery (what was around the next bend), the challenge, the empowerment and level playing field it offered. "Your gear won't get you there." The fittest do not always finish. "Hikers are realists" at the end of the day. So, it seemed that this was a special occasion for our club of hikers who may not accomplish what Walt or Jenn have, but understand perfectly why they did it.

Challenge Finishers for 2018 Annual Dinner Presented by Chris Koebelin A.T.-MST Challenge (2): Received Certificates at dinner (0): Other Completers (2): Ramsay Roth, Cindy Spangler Waterfall 100 (6): Received Certificates at dinner (2): Robert McCammon, Donald Gardner Other Completers (4): Dee Gee English, Grace Iovine, Stephanie Lovell, Kimberly T. Strike Pisgah 400 (4): Received Certificates at dinner (1): Paul Benson Other Completers (3): Jonathan Perry, Ginny Waggener, Vance Waggener Lookout Tower Challenge (3): Received Certificates at dinner (2): Zachary Robbins, John Cansler Other Completers (1): Lance Harlin South Beyond 6000 (11): Received Certificates at dinner (7): Zachary Robbins, Stephanie Wallace, Robert DeBrecht, John Cansle, Judy Magura, Jim Magura, Sharon Smith Other Completers (4): Eric Bruce, Dianna Morris, Jonathan Perry, Todd Fischer

Jennifer and Brew Pharr Davis Sponsor Friendraiser for CMC

Jennifer Pharr Davis and her husband Brew held a friendraiser for CMC at the Catawba Brewery on the South Slope following the Asheville Christmas Parade on November 17.

The event, a brainchild of Jennifer and Brew, grew out of their attachment to CMC where both are members. Their goal was to provide an opportunity to build awareness and interest in the club among younger adults.

Free food and beer were provided by Jennifer and Brew, and Brew performed a set on his guitar during the afternoon. A table was set up to provide information about CMC to attendees and gather names of those interested in becoming involved. The table also had an optional donation box. Kathy McCauley, Jan Onan, Barbara Morgan, Hugh Hensleigh, Kathy Kyle, Michael Corn, and Randy Fluharty helped work the table, and several other CMC members attended as well.

The afternoon resulted in a sizable list of names of people interested in hiking with the club or doing trail work. And, in addition to the contribution of Jennifer and Brew, the club collected \$575 in donations.

Many thanks go out to Jennifer and Brew, who are true friends and great members of CMC!
Randy Fluharty

Historic Rich Mountain Fire Lookout Tower Restored

Submitted by Peter Barr

A partnership comprised of the US Forest Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Forest Fire Lookout Association, and Carolina Mountain Club joined forces to complete restoration of the historic fire lookout tower atop Rich Mountain near Hot Springs, NC.

The restoration of the tower was made possible by funding from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) License Plate Grant Program. Both North Carolina and Tennessee offer motorists ATC specialty license plates, and ATC grant committees from both states award funding from proceeds of plate sales.



Because the Rich Mountain lookout tower rests half in each North Carolina and Tennessee-- both state's license plate grant programs contributed to the project. The ATC's Tennessee committee awarded \$5,000 and North Carolina's awarded \$3,500.

"The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's seek to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail to ensure that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come," said Morgan S. Ommerville, ATC Southern Regional Director. "Restoring the fire tower at Rich Mountain preserves an important component of the Appalachian Trail's cultural heritage, while making it safe for hiker to climb also enables an opportunity to enjoy the surrounding natural beauty."

The Forest Fire Lookout Association's (FFLA) North Carolina chapter was the recipient of both grant awards, and contributed an additional \$1,000 to the project. The FFLA is a national non-profit organization that seeks to preserve, restore, and interpret historic fire lookout towers.

"The FFLA was elated to facilitate this collection of partnerships among agencies and non-profit to achieve success that honors the tower's past and makes it accessible to so many visitors who will enjoy it in the future," said Peter Barr, coordinator of the NC chapter for the FFLA.

"Fire towers enable an appreciation of important local history as well as breathtaking views." Barr is also the author of the history and trail guidebook *Hiking North Carolina's Lookout Towers*, which he penned to raise

awareness of the cultural heritage, outdoor recreation opportunities, and need for rehabilitation of western NC's remaining fire towers.

Funding from the FFLA and ATC leveraged an additional \$101,158 from the US Forest Service to complete the project. Barry Jones,

Engineering, Heritage, Recreation, Lands and Special Uses Staff Officer for National Forests in North Carolina, initiated the project among these several partners.

The Rich Mountain fire tower straddles the state line and boundaries of North Carolina's Pisgah National Forest and Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest. The 31-foot tower was erected by the USFS in 1932 and utilized for fire detection for six decades.

Likewise, most look out towers in the region, regular use for fire detection atop Rich Mountain ceased in the 1990s. Aerial detection by

planes and later, reporting by the public via cell phones, became more cost effective and time efficient. While the majority of fire towers across North Carolina were dismantled following their decommissioning, several

—including at Rich Mountain—still remain as historic structures that portray a bygone era of natural resource protection methodology. Many look out

towers are now incorporated into recreational trail networks and open to the public to enable an elevated, scenic viewpoint.

The Rich Mountain fire tower had been located directly on the route of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) until the 1980s when the trail was rerouted nearby. Hikers can now reach it by a short side trail from the AT. Visitors can also access it by vehicle using gravel roads FS 467 (Hurricane Gap Road) from either North Carolina or Tennessee, and FS 467A (Rich Mountain Road).

The lookout tower at Rich Mountain had fallen into disrepair in recent years, suffering from stresses of weather extremes at its elevation of 3,670 feet, as well as sustained vandalism. The tower last saw significant rehabilitation more than two decades ago, in 1995. Suffering from large holes in its floor, decking, and roof of its cab and catwalk, the structure was deemed unsafe for climbing and closed to the public in autumn of 2017. Restoration of the fire tower began in spring 2018 and was completed this summer with a full structural overhaul including new roofing, wood encab walls and deck railings, lightning rods and grounding wiring, fresh paint, and installation of durable, vandal-proof metal-grate flooring and stairs.

"Fire towers formerly played an important role in safeguarding our forests and the surrounding communities," said Richard Thornburgh, District Ranger of the Pisgah National Forest's Appalachian Ranger District. "Now they can serve as outdoor recreation destinations by offering unsurpassed views of those natural lands that they used to protect. The USFS is proud to have invested in preserving its past while ensuring a memorable experience for everyone who visits our national forests today by restoring the Rich Mountain lookout tower."

The USFS contracted Williams Construction Inc. from Robbinsville to perform the restoration work. The Carolina Mountain Club—whomaintainsthe93-milesectionoftheAppalachianTrailthatincludesRichMountain—also constructed a log staircase leading to the base of the tower and performed tree work around its perimeter to preserve the scenic view. A decade ago, the NC chapter of the FFLA advocated for the rehabilitation of several other fire towers in the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests, which ultimately led to the restoration of seven other lookouts in 2008 utilizing funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Among the restored towers were Wayah Bald and Albert Mountain, also located on the Appalachian Trail.

From its stop, the Rich Mountain lookout tower enables visitors to enjoy a 360-degree panoramic view of the surrounding southern Appalachian mountains. Iconic summits of Roan Mountain and Max Patch—also crossed by the AT—are visible to the northeast and southeast, respectively. Mt. Mitchell and the Black Mountains can be seen to the east.

Rich Mountain is one of six remaining fire lookout towers on the Appalachian Trail within North Carolina and Tennessee. The others include Camp Creek Bald, as well as Mt. Cammerer and Shuckstack in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Save the date! - Hike Leader's Dinner

Hike Leader's Dinner will be Friday, February 22, 2019! Those phenomenal individuals who facilitated a hike with CMC anytime in 2018 or the first quarter of 2019 are eligible for the dinner. If you haven't led a hike, let Bruce, Brenda or Lee know ASAP and they will find a hike commensurate with your experience and skills. Formal invites will arrive in your e-mail box early January.

As some of you know, the EPA, FDA and CDC confiscated the remaining chickalmon from last year so unfortunately that will not be an option. I know many of you are incredibly disappointed but nonetheless we promise a fine dining and educational experience worthy of your accomplishments!

Hiking Committee

More Help Needed to Maintain Secondary Trails

by Les Love

We've gotten some folks since last month who have stepped up to adopt a few of CMC's secondary trails, so check out the spreadsheet and see if there is a trail you would like to adopt.

The spreadsheet shows all the trails that CMC is responsible for maintaining in the Pisgah National Forest and on the Blue Ridge Parkway that are not part of the Appalachian Trail or the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

We are looking for people who would like to adopt these sections and walk them 3 to 4 times per year as either:

1) A non-tool carrying maintainer who is only scouting the trail to report issues on the website for the weekly crews to address. If they don't know about it, they can't fix it.

OR

2) A maintainer who walks the trail with hand tools, cleaning ditches, lopping branches, and sawing small trees that have fallen across the trail. Anything requiring a chainsaw would be reported on the website. You would also be responsible for string trimming (swing blading in wilderness areas) the weeds and grass once or twice per season, as well as keeping the blazing fresh. CMC provides all the tools.

We need more eyes and boots out on these "secondary" trails to help us keep them open and enjoyable for everyone to hike.

If you would like to step up and get involved, please email Les Love at lesrlove55@gmail.com

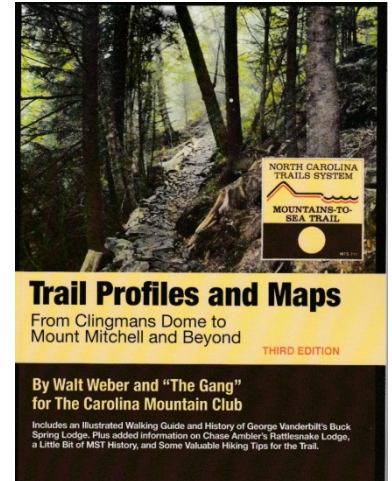
Trail Profiles and Maps from Clingmans Dome to Mountain Mitchell and Beyond
By Walt Weber and "The Gang" 978-0692106952 \$19.95
(discounted for CMC members if you buy it directly from CMC)

Reviewed by Danny Bernstein

At the last annual dinner, Walt Weber and the Gang unveiled the new (third edition) Trail Profiles and Maps for the mountain section of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. If you have the last two editions, it's time to donate them to a library or keep them as CMC historical artifacts.

The third edition of the MST book is a vast improvement.

The new (current) book covers a lot more territory. The trail description starts at Clingmans Dome on the border of Tennessee and North Carolina in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The transition from the Smokies to the Blue Ridge Parkway has always been problematic.



First, when MST hikers left the Smokies, they walked on the Parkway road but that included walking through tunnels. When the BRP officials said that hikers could not walk through the tunnels, two circuitous routes were devised. One was a three to four-day backpack through the park and the second was a road walk coming out of Bryson City. Now the trail has changed again and goes around the tunnels; very ingenious. All of that is documented in the new edition. The book covers some extra distance on the eastern end of our section. Instead of stopping at Black Mountain Campground, it goes to NC 80, a much easier trailhead to find. Walt has edited and upgraded the text. There are more history and stories which make hiking the MST more exciting. The reader may know where Clingmans Dome is, but Walt also includes Mingus Mill, Mile High Campground, Graveyard Field. There are more color photos. The B&W historic pictures are more vivid. Look at the new printing of the historic Rattlesnake Lodge. I don't know what the book editors did but the photos are richer and show more details.

Kudos to Rich Evans, Stu English, Bob Beach, Les Love and Walt Weber for their time, effort and passion.

The book is sold at most high-quality outfitters including Just Running and Foot Rx in Asheville, REI in Biltmore Park, Mast (all the branches), Bullwinkle in Brevard, Highland Books in Brevard, and the Pisgah Ranger Station. And of course, online



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