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New Members

Zachary Beatty, Milford
Olivia Lindquist, Bridgeport

Mattabesett Trail Maintenance June 3

On this maintenance trip we worked the 2 miles from Paug Gap to Rt. 17 making for a 4 mile round trip. While on a maintenance trip in the fall of 1999 we noticed most of the blazes on the hemlock were bad because many of trees were dying from a blight. This was the first chance we had to reblaze this section. About one third of the blazes had to be repositioned onto hardwoods.

*Workers: Mary Horne, John O'Neill, John Bensenhaver, Sarah O'Hare, Jason Smith, Cynthia Peck
Leader Dick Krompegal*

Conn. River Canoe June 10

Despite the torrential downpours of the previous week, 11 hardy people dared to pit themselves against the mighty raging river. They had hundreds of miles to go and barely enough food to last the day. OK, enough about that group, now I'll explain what happened to our group. We assembled at the Wethersfield cove. Loaded up the canoes, there were 5 of them, and one kayak. We then transported everything up to Enfield.

From here things begin to go downhill. After taking the correct exit, the local guide (me) proceeded to head the wrong direction on Route 220. Luckily his innate sense of direction kicked in. Upon turning around, he skillfully lead us to the wrong boat ramp. More on that later.

We pull up the boat ramp, and since we are running late, there is flurry of activity. Canoes are coming off the trailer at record speed. Coolers are being prepared, life jackets donned. A uniformed police officer (wildlife conservation officer) casually strolls over. Checks the equipment and the water knowledge of the group. He asks how far NORTH (up river) we are headed. As the local guide (I speak the local language) I tell him we are headed SOUTH (down river) to Wethersfield.

This is highly amusing to the officer, since he informs us that there is DAM between us and our destination. He looks over our group, and barely containing his laughter, suggests that we not "shoot the dam". At this point the group is ready to mutiny. Quick thinking is definitely called for. I promptly tell the group, we will shorten the journey. Since we are late getting started (being lost doesn't really count), this sounds like a good idea.

The canoes are loaded in record time. We now have a police escort down to the next boat launch. Once again we unload all the boats. After a brief lecture on water safety, the officer has one more trick up his sleeve. Seems some of the group talked him into writing out a phony ticket; he presents it to me (just remember I have your names and addresses).

Well, we finally launch around 11:00 a.m. This is my first real trip with my new kayak. It takes me several minutes (about 20) to get my waterproof skirt on (no I'm not a cross dresser). It isn't made any easier by all the "helpful" suggestions and taunts by the rest of the crew.

No sooner am I fully dressed, than it's lunch time. We pull over to a small island with a sandy looking beach. Dave and Regina are the first ones there. Dave steps out of the canoe and sinks up to his ankles in mud and just about falls down. This is the slickest mud ever. We cautiously make our way up the island, have lunch and do a little exploring. There is a fairly good shelter on the island. Someone dug a fort, and made a nice weekend shelter.

We float down the river, enjoying the sunshine, the breeze, the cool water. Life is good. We stop at the Bissell bridge in South Windsor around 2:00 p.m. to stretch our legs and use the facilities. So far the river has been very quiet. Almost no boat traffic.

As we head into Hartford, the river becomes more turbulent. There is a strong wind blowing up the river. I think the tide is going out. As we enter Hartford, the group begins to stretch out. By the time we are through Hartford, we have lost the last two canoes. 10% is considered an acceptable loss on any GMC outing. I have now lost about 40% of the group. This won't look good on my permanent

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record.

It's now about 5:00 p.m. I have another command decision to make. Trying to paddle up stream is futile. About 10 minutes of effort gains me about 10 feet. We leave one canoe south of Hartford to wait for the other two canoes. Meanwhile we continue onto our destination (down to 2 canoes and 1 kayak).

We arrive about 5:30 p.m. Leave one group with the equipment and head back to Enfield to retrieve our vehicles. By the time we return, 6:15 p.m., the entire group is reunited. The kids are exhausted. Josh is just about asleep, having helped his mom paddle all day.

Some people head for home, the rest of the group headed for On The Border, a Mexican restaurant in Wethersfield. They serve margarita's in a fish bowl sized goblet. I heard that some people in our group actually had two. We finished up our supper around 10:30 p.m and reluctantly called it a day.

One last note. I think we did about 15 miles. The rest of the group threatened to keel haul me unless I gave the credit for 20 miles. So here it is in print. They all did 20 miles :)

Intrepid crew: Josh, Nan and a Rotherberg to be named later. (Sorry, I forgot your youngest son's name), Don, Brian, Harvey, Regina, Dave, Karen, Ken and yours truly, Jack Sanga.

Heublein Tower Hike June 11

On a warm afternoon with threatening skies we started up the Heublein Tower trail from Route 185 in Simsbury. The air was still and muggy as we trod up the old road that serves as a trail, but soon we felt the refreshing west winds as we reached the ridgeline. Horses and riders filled a field just below the cliffs. By the time we reached the tower and climbed to the observation platform, skies to the north had turned an ugly grayish-blue, forewarning of thunderstorms. Lightning started to crack to the north along the ridge, directly in our return path. We descended the stairs, planning to wait out the storm, but the volunteer staff suggested that the best observation point was at the top of the tower, so we climbed the stairs again to watch some impressive electrical bursts. After the storm cell passed, we headed back down the trail. Unfortunately, we did not reach the cars before the next wave of rain and lightning began. A simultaneous flash and crack, just as we left the ridgeline, hastened our steps. By the time we reached the parking area, we were all fairly well soaked.

Hikers: Jim, Kerry, and Jimmy Robertson, Relver Fernandes

Rock Spring June 17

Despite the leader's attempts to lead the group through the Nature Conservancy Preserve in Scotland, Olivia and Drew, with their youthful enthusiasm, bounded down the trail ahead of everyone. To ensure we were on the right path they pointed out each blaze. Our first destination was Indian Spring. Although hidden by a stone structure erected in an effort to keep the water pure, the spring was observed bubbling up from the sand just down stream from the structure.

Following the youngsters, we hiked through a pine grove and along Little River. Evidence of beaver activity was present. The trail, bending away from Little River, followed stone walls to a side trail which we hiked to the end. A massive stone bench awaited us facing a view of Little River Valley. We rested there, snacking on Dick's blueberries and watched the vultures and hawks soaring. Retracing our steps to the main trail, Olivia and Drew eventually tired and decided the three mile trail was long enough. We headed back to the parking area where we all departed. It was a pleasant morning walk in a delightful nature preserve.

Leader: Sarah O' Hare

Hikers: Jack Sanga, his children Olivia and Drew, Dick Krompegal, Ginny Waller, Beth Moriarty

Vermont Long Trail Maintenance June 23 - 25

For three days Connecticut Section GMCers worked and partied without rain, but black and deer flies were in abundance. Leader Dick Krompegal and Bill Brodnitzki blazed from the Story Spring Shelter to Forest Service Rd. 71 while Bill's wife Gerry, her first backpack, and Marge Hackbarth trimmed and cleared waterbars. Later in the day Sarah O'Hare, Jack Sanga, Norm Sills, President Ken Williamson and his sister Jody McPherson from Landrum, S.C. arrived. Frank Maine came in after dark. We had cleared the fire

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ring and gathered wood in the afternoon so we enjoyed roasting hot dogs and dining on wine and munchies. Jack carried in a watermelon which he spiked with rum for Saturday night's feast.

Marge shared the shelter with a party of young people and their teacher from a Vermont school. Their aim was Canada but we heard two had already dropped out and two more left in the morning. Toward evening two AT end-to-enders, who left Georgia in March, showed up. The tents were more comfortable than Marge who was in the crowded shelter.

Saturday, Norm and Frank blazed from the Wardsboro Rd. to Forest Service Rd. 71 while Marge chopped briars. Thanks to the trail adopter, Brad Moloney, the section going north from Story Spring is in fine shape. The rest of the crew worked the trail south about 3 1/2 miles to the vista. The GMC Southern Field Supervisor, Val Stori, and her friend David Ettleman, joined the crew working south of the shelter. The Robertsons, Jim and young daughters Kerry and Brenna arrived about 3:00 p.m.

After a hard day's work more partying necessitated a refreshment run to the Wardsboro General Store. Retiring president Jim Robertson presented Dick Krompegal the President's Award for exceptional service to the Long Trail. This included a certificate and a Swiss Army knife engraved with his name. For the occasion Sarah baked a cake decorated in green and gold icing with Dick's name and the GMC Logo. This and the watermelon, which we shared with two hikers, made the party.

Sunday morning the Robertsons, Bill, Gerry and Frank left for home. Dick, Sarah, Jack and Norm climbed Stratton Mt. where they got a grand view and talked with the resident naturalist about the endangered Bicknell's thrush project. Marge waited for the group in the parking lot and was eaten alive. Special thanks is extended to Jody for spending the last days of her visit to her brother in the woods with the horrendous black flies. She said Dick's loan of his head net saved her life. Ken rigged a shower for his sister so she could be ready for her trip home. When they left camp they headed for Bradley Field for Jody's flight to S.C. Four of the last hikers to leave VT enjoyed a sit-down meal at Bickford's in Greenfield, MA. Thus ended one of our most successful trips to Vermont.

Reported by: Marge Hackbarth

*Workers: Jack Sanga, Sarah O'Hare, Bill and Gerry Brodnitzki, Frank Maine, Jim Robertson and daughters, Kerry and Brenna, Norm Sills, Ken Williamson, Jody McPherson, GMC Southern Field Supervisor Val Stori and friend David Ettleman
Leader: Dick Krompegal*

Climbing Stratton Mountain June 25

On Sunday morning our trail boss said we didn't have to work any more. So, after breakfast, most packed up and left for, presumably, home. Jack, Norm, Sarah and Dick decided to climb Stratton Mtn. We did this by an abandoned trail known only to Dick, formerly called the Ross Trail which predated the new route for the AT up Stratton (about 1987). It was overgrown, wet and with only an occasional blue blaze to show us we were on the right track, not a bit like our immaculately groomed section south of Story Spring. We arrived on the summit about noon, climbed the tower for the hazy view, ate our lunch and spent almost an hour talking with the very interesting retired couple, Hugh and Jeanne Joudry, who were the summit caretakers. They had also been fire spotters at the same location back when the tower was used for that (1960s and 70s).

After an uneventful hike down the AT we called it a day and a very successful weekend.

*Reported By: Norm Sills
Hikers; Sarah O'Hare, Jack Sanga, Dick Krompegal*

Massachusetts AT July 15

Reaching the summit of Mt. Everett, at 2,602 feet, was not difficult. However, the descent became a challenge as the rocks were slick. We all made it down without incident, but it did give us pause for thought regarding climbing Race Mountain, our next section of the trail. We decided against ascending yet another mountain with no views at the summit and only to descend again on slippery terrain. Instead, we shortened our hike and left the AT on Race Brook Falls Trail. The two mile trail followed Race Brook which led us to the waterfall. Despite the rain, the cascade was worth pausing by for a brief rest.

Upon reaching the parking area Ken produced his "man made" snickerdoodles. Delicious! Some even were reminiscent of our maintenance trips to Vermont as they were sprinkled with apple cider mix! Ken claimed he ran out of cinnamon. After changing into warm, dry clothes we then headed for home after first stopping at Kent Pizza for the traditional pizza and libations.

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Leader: Sarah O' Hare

Hikers: Dick Krompegal, Ken Williamson, Allen Freeman

Ten Mile River Backpacking August 5 & 6

We had a record turnout of 16 people - eight adults and eight kids - and near perfect weather for our annual trip to the Ten Mile River campsite on the Appalachian Trail in Kent/Sherman. In addition to current members, we were joined by former long-time member and newsletter editor Carol Langley. Heading south from the Bulls Bridge area shortly after noon, we quickly covered the mile of trail along the Housatonic River. Upon crossing the Ned Anderson foot bridge, I spotted Sarah O' Hare having lunch at the small rock beach below on the Ten Mile River. Sarah had spent the morning hiking St. John' s Ledges, then hiked south to join us for part of the afternoon.

After setting up camp, the kids changed into bathing suits and water shoes and headed for the small beach. Dick unpacked his fishing gear and went off angling. The rivers were as high as we have ever seen them in summer, thanks to the plentiful rain. The usual wading, slipping and rock-skipping (difficult with the swift current) kept us entertained until the kids' hunger alarms went off and we returned to the campsite. Snack time gradually transformed into dinner time, punctuated by trips to check out Ten Mile Shelter, exploration of the river banks, where lots of caterpillars and a few dead crawfish were found, and running in the field (mowed a week earlier by Bob Schoff and an AMC crew). Anju, Ava, and Kerry held secret pre-teen girl discussions in one tent.

As the afternoon and evening moved on, the campsite filled with more people, including a large group of thru-hikers. The AMC ridgerunner told us at one point that 41 people were camped in the area. More arrived later and the number grew to at least 50. A photojournalist from the Danbury newspaper, whom we had met earlier at the trailhead, came by with her husband and two children to take more pictures and interview several of us for a prospective article. By 9:00 p.m., the sky was dark, and most of us were heading to our tents.

Sunday morning dawned with refreshing coolness. Dick headed out to sacrifice some more worms and hooks in the river. The kids stoked up on breakfast - consisting heavily of chocolate donuts and brownies left over from the night before. They did some final exploration around the river - a black snake sunning on a rock was a major curiosity - as the adults packed up the site. We took some final photos, then headed back up the trail to the cars. Some of us drove north to Kent for ice cream at Stosh' s before traveling home.

Campers: Jim, Kerry, Brenna and Jimmy Robertson, Kevin Karl, Kathy Steffens, Alison Karl and Cody the dog, Allen and Anju Freeman, Ava Velez, Jack, Olivia and Drew Sanga, Carol Langley, Dick Krompegal, Sarah O' Hare.

Sea Kayaking August 12-13

There is only one word for this trip. Awesome. The trip was the culmination of years of planning and professional execution. OK, so there was some missed communications. Only two of the three people showed up at the designated meeting area in Manchester, CT. We tracked the third person down in Boston, MA. The trip to Bar Harbor was uneventful, if you don' t count getting lost in Manchester, zipping past exits on the Mass. Pike, and backing up. The trip was uneventful and traffic was moderate.

We showed up at Coastal at 8:00 a.m., Saturday morning. By the time everything was packed and we were transported to the starting location, it was about 10:30 a.m. Doreen and Grace were in a tandem kayak, and I was able to paddle solo. We launched from Seal Harbor, paddled around Moose Head Island and then to Bartletts Island (owned by the Rockefellers). We had the usual rough trail food, smoked salmon, fresh tuna, crackers, goat cheese, crispy bagel chips, and apples. We then paddled to our camp site on Long Island. Yes we traveled 8 hours from CT only to end up on Long Island (Maine). After setting up camp, we took walks on the beach, naps, read books, whatever we wanted to do.

Our guides, Jerry and Jessica were busy preparing supper. Again we had to rough it. Linguini with fresh mushrooms, basil, sun dried tomatoes, and olives. 4 different choices of wines were provided for our enjoyment. I sampled the Merlot, and a local blueberry wine. Doreen tried the other two, and Grace didn' t have any (she was the designated paddler). Dessert was 5 different kinds of Pepperidge Farm cookies.

After supper, about half the group paddled around the west end of the island to watch a spectacular sunset. Paddling back in the dark was interesting. The wind had died down, and the bay was as smooth as glass. There was a full moon that was playing hide and seek

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with the clouds. When it was out, it was extremely bright. When it was behind the clouds, it was DARK. There is an interesting phenomenon. When paddling, you can see sparks. Apparently there are bio-luminescent organisms, and when disturbed by the paddling, they glow, almost like fire-flies in the water.

Upon returning to camp, we sat around and star gazed for awhile. One by one we drifted back to our tents for a night's sleep. Some of us slept like babies, while others had less than a restful night. One editorial comment on the skill of my fellow paddlers. During the morning they zigzagged all over the place. To say they steered like drunken sailors would be to disparage drunken sailors everywhere. Grace redeemed herself by paddling solo after lunch, and did a great job. Grace had never been in a kayak prior to the trip. Doreen was the seasoned veteran, having logged an extensive 2 hours kayak time before the trip. Doreen was my paddling companion for the afternoon and evening. By then the "drunken sailor had sobered up" and we were able to maintain a straight line.

Breakfast was blueberry pancakes with maple syrup, fresh cantaloupe, excellent fresh coffee, again prepared by our guides. We then packed up our boats and proceeded to paddle around other islands, stopping from time to time to regroup. Jerry showed us how to do an Eskimo Roll in a kayak, twice. Not bad when you consider the water temperature was a balmy 58 degrees.

We were back at Seal Harbor around 1:30 p.m. and had our final lunch. Fresh peaches, summer sausage, cheese, bagels, humus, onions, pita bread, cucumbers and cookies. We left Bar Harbor around 3:15 p.m. and were home around 10:30 p.m. Traffic was nonexistent on the way home.

Space prevents me from mentioning the porpoises, harbor seals, bald eagles, cormorants, king fishers and other wild life we got to see.

Some final reflections. Bar Harbor is the shopping mecca for women. Walking down Main Street with two certified shop-aholics, guaranteed that I got to watch snails whiz by. Two days in Bar Harbor just isn' t enough time. A week would be the minimum recommended time, and a summer would be just about right. I never knew a 7 hour car ride could encompass an hour long discussion on panty hose.

After braving the grueling paddling, tough weather, and limited rations, the three of us are now contemplating a trans-Atlantic kayak trip for next summer.

*Paddlers: Doreen S., Grace K.
Leader: Jack Sanga.*

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE September - November 2000

Saturday, September 2 (Labor Day Weekend) - Day Hike, Spiderweed, a Nature Conservancy Preserve, Middletown. Start time 9:00 a.m., 3 - 4 miles.

Leader: Sarah O' Hare (860) 5637018, e-mail: SEOHARE@aol.com

Saturday, September 9 - Canoe/Kayak. Canoe on the CT River from Wethersfield to Portland. Start time based on high tide.

Leader Jack Sanga (860) 648-9614, e-mail: jsanga@aol.com

Sunday, September 10 - Cycling. Riding location to be determined by leader. Start time 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Mary Horne (860) 871-6436, e-mail: MHorne@fando.com

Friday - Sunday, September 15 - 17 - Long Trail Maintenance in VT. Will work 2+ miles north and south of the Story Spring Shelter. Gain experience with primitive camping. Non-working visitors welcome to come along to day hike and share in a potluck picnic Saturday evening. Bad weather cancels picnic. Call or e-mail by September 13. For directions and questions regarding the weekend maintenance trip, contact the leader.

Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com

To participate in the potluck picnic, contact Sarah O' Hare (860) 5637018, e-mail: SEOHARE@aol.com.

Friday - Sunday, September 22 - 24 - Backpacking, Massachusetts AT. Upper Goose Pond to Benedict Pond. Approximately 18 miles. Recommended for experienced backpackers only. Contact leader for details.

Leader: Mandi Brink (860) 535-0744, e-mail: Trekeragb@aol.com

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Friday - Sunday, September 29 - October 1 - Long Trail Maintenance in VT. Will stay at the Kid Gore Shelter, 3 miles from where we park. Will determine work to be done throughout the summer. Weather permitting, view a great sunrise from the shelter. This is in a remote area - participants must be experienced backpackers. Call or e-mail leader by September 27.

Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com

Sunday, October 8 - Mattabesett Trail Maintenance Work. Meet at Guida' s on Rte. 66 in Meriden at 9:45 a.m.

Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com

Saturday, October 15 - Day Hike, Devil's Den Nature Preserve, Weston. Start time 9:30 a.m. Hike in the state' s largest nature preserve.

Leader: Sarah O' Hare (860) 5637018, e-mail: SEOHARE@aol.com

Saturday - Sunday, October 21 - 22, Silver Hill A.T. Overnight. Less than 1 mile walk to scenic camping area. Pumped water, picnic pavillion, outhouse. Good for families.

Leader: Jim Robertson (860) 633-7279 (home), (860) 285-4688 (work), e-mail: jrobert685@aol.com, james.e.robertson@us.westinghouse.com

Sunday, October 29 - Heublein Tower on Talcott Mountain. 4 - 7 mile walk depending on the group. Park at MDC Reservoir #6 off of Rte. 44 in West Hartford. Meet at 10:00 a.m. in lower parking lot. Bad weather cancels.

Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com

Saturday, November 4 - Day Hike, Wadsworth Falls State Park. Start time 9:00 a.m. Meet at entrance on Rte. 157, Middletown. 3 miles.

Leader: Marge Hackbarth (203) 237-0560

Sunday, November 12 - Day Hike, Tunxis Trail. Start time 9:30 a.m. Approx. 8 miles.

Leader: Sarah O' Hare (860) 5637018, e-mail: SEOHARE@aol.com

Saturday, November 18 - Day Hike, Mattabasset Trail. Distance 6 miles. Location to be determined. Start time 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Jack Sanga (860) 648-9614, e-mail: jsanga@aol.com