

# TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Spring 2022

*The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is a recreational hiking association of volunteers who preserve and improve the Appalachian Trail as the nation's premier, continuous, long-distance footpath.*

## The road more traveled...

*The Catawba Mountain fire road at McAfee Knob gets a face lift*  
by Pete Irvine

I became one of the RATC maintainers of the Catawba Mountain fire road (actually 2.6 miles of road plus 21 linear feet of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail ...I am proud of that AT crossing...) in the summer of 2021. As luck would have it, RATC Trail Supervisor Mike Vaughn and several other members of the "Mountain Goats" crew were using the fire road to access an AT work project on the same day I walked it last May before deciding whether to officially become a maintainer. Mike and I had corresponded several times and he had explained that my main duties would include brushing, lopping, and blowdown removal - very much like regular trail work, except wider so that emergency and administrative vehicles could travel it, along with hikers.

Those of you who have walked the fire road as one leg of a hike to McAfee Knob in recent years know that it was "showing its age" - rutted, entrenched, rocky, eroded. Degradation was not unexpected, given that the road had received very little attention as a roadway following National Park Service (NPS) acquisition of local lands to protect the AT in the 1970s and 1980s. Prior to that, for many years, it had been well-maintained as the private road and driveway access for several properties and houses along the ridge, as well as an AEP power line access route.



**In a foretaste of the upcoming project to build an AT bridge over route 311, the ever-popular parking lot at McAfee Knob was closed for a few days to accommodate the equipment and supplies used to repair the Catawba Mountain fire road. John, Diana, and Susan were among a large group of RATC volunteers tasked with engaging hikers during this project.**

Mike and I chatted on the road that day last May agreeing that, in addition to brushing and cutting out, the fire road was in serious need of a large dose of "heavy maintenance" to get water off of the roadway, stabilize it to prevent or reduce future deterioration, and "do something" about the steepest, rockiest segments. If it had been a section of AT, it would have been a good candidate for handwork by the Monday Crew, the Mountain Goats, or perhaps even the Konnarock Crew. However, this was a developed roadbed - originally constructed (date unknown) with a 10-12' wide road surface, crowned centerline, full ditch lines, and multiple metal culverts. It was deeply entrenched in some areas - with the road cen-

terline 18-24" lower than the berm on the road shoulder - and down to bedrock in other, steeper areas. Culverts were non-functional (buried or plugged or collapsed), and prior work to drain water off the road were mostly silted in. In many places, the road had become a rather large ditch. We agreed that handwork would be futile, and equipment work was needed.

Mike knew that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), at the urging of the club, had developed a "capital-plan" project proposal for significant future reworking and reconstruction of the fire road; and that it was a top candidate for future NPS funding. The funding was not guaranteed however, and it was several



years away, at best. The fire road needed attention much sooner than that - not only to eliminate the need for a major reconstruction project, but so that it would still be drivable and hirable in the meantime. The overall goal was to focus on getting water off of the road and making it more drivable by high-clearance, 4-wheel-drive emergency vehicles (i.e. Roanoke County fire and rescue responding to hiker distress 911-calls), administrative vehicles (RATC and NPS use), and to improve its condition for use by the many hikers, dog-walkers, boulderers, trail runners, and other visitors to McAfee Knob and beyond.

Mike tasked me with coming up with a solid proposal, while he engaged with ATC, Appalachian Trail Park Office (NPS-APPA), and club leadership about the road condition, the need for some quick work, and possible funding options. I have some limited background with forest roads, so over a couple of months I wheeled the road, identified the areas most in need of immediate work, and researched contract equipment options. NPS, as the federal public land manager for this area, performed the necessary environmental compliance work and approved the project. ATC approved

a club grant proposal for Virginia AT Specialty License Plate funding. The RATC Board of Directors approved additional funding (which was later offset with a successful grant application by RATC Counselor Brendle Wolf to the Roanoke Outdoors Foundation). We selected contractor Scott Whittaker of Callaway and planned to begin work in early January 2022. As a retired federal employee, I am still amazed that all of required pieces for this unique project came together at all, and I am especially



amazed that they came together so quickly. This could easily have taken much, much longer - years instead of 8 months.

We needed significant volunteer help for this project to be safe and successful - primarily as "spotters" to inform hikers, direct them away from the fire road, staff key locations during active work operations to ensure all visitors stayed clear of the equipment, and work alongside the equipment. The RATC response was incredible

- thirty individual RATC club members stepped up to work one or more 5-6 hour shifts, in a variety of winter weather conditions. Some were super-busy at the parking area, and some were super-solitary at "Conjunction Junction" where the AT, the fire road, and the new Catawba Greenway almost co-align. They were patient and flexible during many delays and changes. Their efforts enabled us to maximize the available funding - 96% of the "hard-dollar" funding for the project was used directly for contracted heavy equipment. Special recognition goes to volunteer Mark Farrell, for being on-site in a variety of capacities for 20 of the 24 shifts, including channeling his family's coal-mining heritage in hand-excavating to recover several functioning culverts. One outlet he recovered was buried more than 6-feet deep.



Mother Nature gave us a healthy and long-lasting dose of snow and ice just as we prepared to start. After several delays, conditions finally allowed us to begin on February 7. We worked a total of 12 long days, finishing in the dark on February 21. Contractor Scott Whittaker quickly proved to be an excellent operator with the right equipment for the work - a Kobelco SK45SRX mini-excavator and a Case TR450 tracked loader (skid steer). He installed 58 broad-based drainage dips (BBD) on the fire road, partially uncovered the inlets and outlets of 10 metal culverts, de-bermed and



reshaped the road surface over the entire 2.6 miles of fire road from VA-311 to the AT crossing. His skill and reasonable rates enabled us to far exceed the planned core work on 4 sections totaling about 0.9-miles of the road. He also improved the entrance road to the Dragon's Tooth trailhead parking area on nearby US Forest Service land; and he donated his labor and equipment time to spread gravel at the VA-311 AT trailhead parking area. That gravel (16.5 tons) from Rockydale Quarries was arranged by club member Dan Phlegar at a significant discount Thanks, Dan!

RATC volunteers, 30 of them, ranging in age from 20 to 78, 12 women and 18 men, directly contributed nearly 800 person-hours

to the project - valued at over \$22,600 and comprising more than two-thirds of the overall project value. Said differently, the efforts and contributions of many RATC member volunteers enabled us to accomplish 3 times as much work than if the contractor had been responsible for ensuring hiker safety during the project. They leveraged the out-of-pocket, "hard-dollar" costs of the project by more than 200 percent.

The outpouring of support and contributions, direct and indirect, by the entire RATC community is what made this unique project successful. It also made my job as volunteer project coordinator easy. The end result is a stabilized and much-improved 2.6-mile section of the Catawba Mountain fire road - improved for emergency vehicle response, for administrative vehicle use by NPS Ranger Brian Wilson and club members on work trips, and for more enjoyable use by the many visitors to this highly-used section of our public lands.



## JIMMY AND MOLLY DENTON and the RATC

Prepared for their induction into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame, 2022

By Diana Christopulos, PhD  
RATC Archivist

On behalf of the RATC, I wish to thank the AT Hall of Fame for choosing Jimmy and Molly Denton as new inductees. They were central to the second generation of leaders in the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.

The first generation helped build the 1933 trail from Roanoke (including the route close to McAfee Knob) to the Meadows of Dan and established the RATC as a hiking, social and maintaining club (1932-45). The second generation, including the Dentons along with Tom and Charlene Campbell, transformed both the Trail and the club between 1947 and 1958.

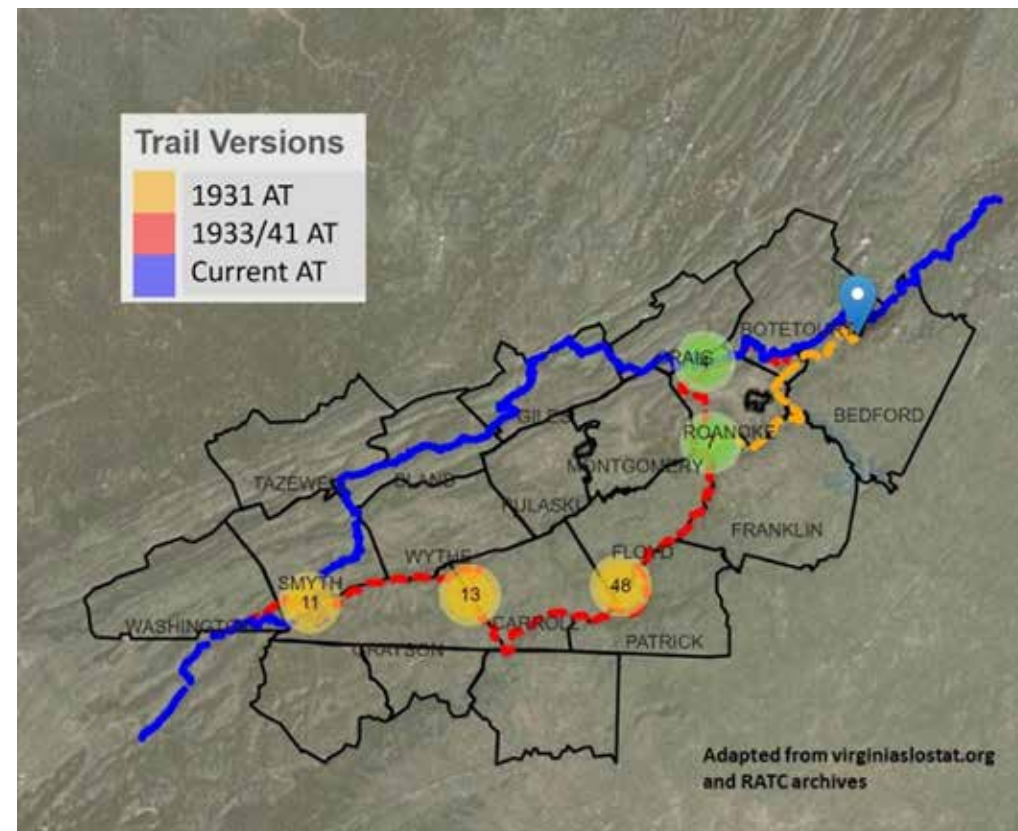
By the time the Dentons left Roanoke in 1958, they had both played key roles in:

- Rerouting about 160 miles of the AT away from the Blue Ridge Parkway and private lands to more protected locations far to the west, an alignment very similar to the current AT
- Funding the construction of the first AT shelters on the RATC section
- Coordinating RATC activities with those of the ATC
- Restoring and growing the RATC as a vibrant hiking, maintaining and socializing community

It was a team effort.

Jimmy was first elected RATC President in 1947, after his 1942-46 military service and while attending Roanoke College on the GI Bill.

After dinner at the RATC Annual Meeting where he was elected, the club's minutes show that "Molly Denton played the accordion for the members to sing a few of the old songs which was thoroughly enjoyed by all." While Jimmy would lead trail relocation efforts and coordination with the ATC, Molly participated in relocation crews and was a leader in the Photography, Entertainment, publishing and fundraising committees. She would also be the first woman to serve as RATC President.



Much of the AT was overgrown and hard to navigate after the war. Jimmy wrote to Myron Avery in August 1947 describing an effort to locate the Trail route south of Roanoke. The results were dismal, and Jimmy concluded that, "Next month we plan to make a trip to Sinking Creek mountain [far to the west]... I think it best to do as much exploring in this direction as possible in order to be ready for future developments."

He was re-elected in 1948 and appointed to the ATC Board of Managers by Avery because, as Jimmy put it, "there was no one else who would take the office." By 1949, Jimmy had concluded that there was essentially no Trail south from McAfee Knob to Iron Mountain, near Damascus. He visited with Avery and with the supervisor of the Jefferson National Forest about the plan that Avery had announced in May 1940 to relocate the AT far to the west on protected National Forest lands. This relocation would

be almost 160 miles in length, on an entirely new route. As Jimmy recalled many years later:

Myron wasn't sold on the idea, mainly because he was ill and he was afraid to give a go ahead on such a project. **I told him that the Roanoke club could do that job. [emphasis added]** To sell him on the idea I wrote up two routes for the trail in guidebook form, with estimated mileages taken from the available topo sheets. . . Myron gave the go-

ahead and appointed me as Vice-Chairman [of the ATC from 1949-58]. Fortunately I met Tom Campbell downtown in Roanoke while we were both doing some lunch time loafing. . . Without Tom's company and help the relocation would not have gone thru.

Both Molly and Jimmy served as assistant editors of the RATC newsletter (The Blazer) in 1950.

Molly became the first woman to serve as RATC President in 1952 (there have now been four). At the RATC annual meeting, Jimmy reported that the relocation of the trail between Tinker Mountain and Iron Mountain was ready to be blazed and placed on the map as part of the Appalachian Trail. Molly had participated in the trail relocation crews and was a stalwart of the Photography and Entertainment committees as well.

After serving as Trail Supervisor in 1950-51, Jimmy became RATC President again in 1952-54. Building of the new Trail route continued, with 50 miles done by 1953 and 138 by 1954. Molly played a key role in raising funds for construction of the Wilson Creek Shelter - by organizing square dances - while Jimmy famously carried an extremely heavy fireplace grate to the new Wilson Creek Shelter on an old WWII pack frame. As he reported in a 1986 talk at the ATC meeting

in Lynchburg, "That trip is probably the reason I now have an aching back."

At the 1955 ATC conference at Mt. Moosilauke, New Hampshire, Jimmy reported that the new trail was open. He was one of three RATC delegates at the conference. He became an RATC Councilor (3-year term) in 1956 and the first RATC Shelter Supervisor in 1957.



Molly Denton

Jim Denton

He and Molly served on the RATC Brochure Committee, while he continued his role as an ATC Vice President.

When the Dentons left Roanoke in 1958 due to a change in his employment, Jimmy resigned as Vice President of the ATC and recommended that Tom Campbell replace him, which Campbell did until approximately 1975. The Dentons and Campbells were organizers of the 1958 ATC meeting at Mountain Lake, near Roanoke, and they celebrated their triumphs on

hikes during the conference.

Jimmy and Molly Denton were part of what is now called the Greatest Generation. Jimmy's own parting words when he stepped down from the RATC Presidency in 1949 capture their humble and humorous yet high-achieving mentality:

As a member of the Board of Managers of the Appalachian Trail Conference it will be my purpose to work with the trail club toward the betterment and completion of the whole project. If I can find the time I promise to make myself a nuisance by continually harping on the subject. Any work which we put in is one step toward the final goal.

I will conclude by saying that I appreciate the confidence which you placed in me by making me president of the club for the last two years. To all who have cooperated in helping me put over some of my ideas I say thanks, and to those who opposed those ideas which were wrong, I also say thanks. It has been a lot of fun. This business of hiking is a wonderful hobby, and to those who take a real interest, it pays dividends.

I thank you.

And we thank the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame for honoring this very deserving couple. Thank you!



### The Green Tunnel

Interested in more history of the AT? New club member Anne Reynolds pointed me to an outstanding podcast called The Green Tunnel. The first season's episodes include some in-depth discussions of the rich history of the AT, as well as short episodes about iconic locations along the trail. The first "iconic location" presented is

McAfee Knob and features an interview with RATC Archivist Diana Christopulos! Look for more info in a subsequent edition of the Blazer.

The podcast is hosted by history professor Mills Kelly, a.k.a. "Granddaddy Spartan", who is a seasoned AT hiker and aficionado.

Ron Bradbury

## Early RATC leaders: Sally McClain Nelson

From the RATC archives  
1930s-50s

Diana Christopulos  
RATC Archivist

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club's early leaders had fun. They were avid hikers who enjoyed a meal after hikes. Most were young professionals associated with Roanoke College, Hollins College, local schools, libraries and the YMCA.

Eight of the club's seventeen founders were women, and more soon joined. One of them was Sallie/Sally McClain, who became a club leader for at least 15 years in the 1930s to 1950s.

As Sally McClain, she was Vice President (1936-37), Treasurer (1938-42) and Excursion [Hiking] Chairman (1942). She stepped up as Trail Supervisor during World War II (1943-44) and was later Membership Chairman (1945) and Councilor (1948-50).

Before the RATC had a newsletter in the late 1930s, McClain sent out postcards to all members listing the club's upcoming hikes. We don't have the postcards, but here is an example of the hike reports in the 1930s:

The Roanoke Club sent an invitation to the Natural Bridge club to hike jointly along the Tinker ridge. A large group was out from both clubs. Mr. [Myron] Avery



and David Dick hiked from Villamont to Cloverdale on Sat. April 5<sup>th</sup>. Then on Sun. Avery, Dick, Pownall, McGinniss, Perm, Phelps and Robinson hiked around the Ridge, meeting the Roanoke and Lynchburg clubs on the trail for lunch.

Club members were guests of the Natural Bridge Club at Camp Kewangee on May 16<sup>th</sup>. They hiked to Apple Orchard.

She is listed as Sallie R. McClain in the club's 1940 membership roster, living at 353 Albemarle Ave., Apt. 19 in today's Old Southwest Roanoke. By 1953 she had briefly married and was known as Sallie Nelson, Chairman of the Entertainment Committee (1953).

When club leaders were gathering the RATC history in the 1980s, Sally recalled that they enjoyed long weekend outings and that Harold Pearn, one of RATC's founders and its first Secretary, had been married four times while in the RATC! He was an alumnus of Roanoke College and recruited many new members, including young Jimmy Denton, who would go on to be one of the RATC's most significant leaders.

In the photo <below>, Sally is enjoying a hike near Mountain Lake at the big 1958 Appalachian Trail Conference Triennial meeting hosted by the RATC. Her companions are Jimmy and Molly Denton, Tom and Charlene Campbell and Preston Leech, all of them major leaders in the club. They were celebrating not only the conference but the completion of an 160-mile relocation, moving the AT away



from the Blue Ridge and on to more protected lands in the Jefferson National Forest.

## President's Report

by Bill Neilan

HAPPY 90<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY to the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club! That's right, our club is ninety years old and still going strong. You can celebrate by getting out and hiking a section of our 120 miles of AT; every hike will be like a candle on the cake.

Many of the annual group of thru-hikers have already left from Springer Mountain in Georgia and are headed this way. This year looks to be a banner year for hikers, especially given the last couple of years of lower numbers due to Covid. If you have a section of trail to maintain then it might be a good idea to get out there and hike it to see if is in good shape. Trail maintenance is an ongoing job and everyone needs to pitch in; even without an official role we can all help collect garbage we find when hiking.

We had our Annual Meeting on March 9 and the Board of Directors for the current year were voted in. We have some new members so I ask that you reach out to them and welcome them on board.

- Our new Conservation Supervisor, Tom McAvoy, retired from Virginia Tech in 2020 after 43 years in the Department of Entomology. He's maintained a 3.5 mile section south of Dragon's Tooth for the last two years and helps trail maintenance crews occasionally
- Treasurer Janice Metzger brings to her role an abundance of experience as a retired CPA
- Vice President Josh Wolsey came to love the mountains during a 2013 AT thru-hike and is dedicated to serving the club (and hiking the AT!)

The McAfee Knob Task Force held its first training session on March 12 and

will begin Ridge Running immediately. Orientation hikes for the new members have already been scheduled.

I want to remind everyone that the [RATC.ORG](http://RATC.ORG) website is full of hiking information about the AT as well as other trails to discover. The club uses the website and app [Meetup.com](http://Meetup.com) as a platform to organize groups, both for the many recreational hikes and work hikes. Club participation is a major factor in a club's success.



Spring is here! Let's get out and enjoy it.

Board Members and Officers		
President	Bill Neilan	president@ratc.org
Vice President	Josh Wolsey	vicepresident@ratc.org
Secretary	Susan Terwilliger	secretary@ratc.org
Treasurer	Janice Metzger	treasurer@ratc.org
Membership Coordinator	Cathy Butler	membership@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Homer Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Therese Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Trail Maintenance *	Mike Vaughn	trailsupervisor@ratc.org
Hikemaster	Jennifer Frye	hikemaster@ratc.org
Newsletter Editor	Ron Bradbury	blazer@ratc.org
Conservation Supervisor	Tom McAvoy	butch2410@msn.com
Land Management Supervisor	-vacant-	landmanagement@ratc.org
Counselor	Jason Thompson	counselor1@ratc.org
Counselor	Andrew Bowman	counselor2@ratc.org
Counselor	Brendle Wolfe	counselor3@ratc.org
Counselor	Julio Stephens	counselor3@ratc.org
McAfee Knob Task Force Liaison	Dee Case	casedee@sbcglobal.net
Webmaster	Jill Pennington	webmaster@ratc.org
Roanoke College Liaison	Conner McBane	cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org
RATC Archivist	Diana Christopulos	
ATC President's Leadership Circle	Diana Christopulos	

## Corridor Monitoring

By Ron Bradbury

In the one hundred years since Benton MacKaye first conceived of it, the Appalachian Trail has morphed from nascent idea to national icon. Land access granted



**Kathryn Herndon-Powell, ATC's Regional Manager-Central Virginia distributes the tools of corridor monitoring, close to the Rice Fields shelter.**

by gentleman's' handshake agreements was eventually replaced by legislation and robust Federal involvement. One of the less visible but more impactful Federal actions for the trail's preservation was the acquisition of land—the land over which the trail directly

passes as well as land adjacent to the trail. While land acquisition took many years and is largely complete, a variety of important tasks are still necessary to protect the trail from encroachment; one such duty is called “corridor monitoring.” My wife and I recently spent a day on Peter's Mountain (near Pearisburg) volunteering to mark boundaries with ATC employees Conner McBane and Kathryn Herndon-Powell, and a few other volunteers.

After meeting Conner and Kathryn, two vehicles took the group up restricted access roads to the Rice Fields shelter. Volunteers were divided into two separate groups. My role was the “map guy”; while I regularly used a paper map and a compass long ago, it had been a while. My wife's job was the “paint lady;” she managed all the hiking and conquered the terrain while carrying a small open container of red paint. One member of our group was the “saw guy”, another was the “sign guy” and ATC employee Conner was the brains of the crew.

Armed with maps, compasses, hammers, signs, and red paint, each group set out to find brass survey markers which had been placed in 1986. When the border land was acquired, brass medallions had been placed by survey crews, stuck to a rock or atop a pipe driven into the ground. Survey maps identified the latitude



and longitude of each marker, as well as the location and species type of three adjacent trees known as “witness trees.” Witness trees were originally painted with red stripes, markers had splashes of paint on or near them, and the boundary itself was identified by red paint on widely spaced trees. The entire experience was fun, but presented several challenges.

The first challenge was the terrain. While the AT is rugged and steep in places, the terrain 500 feet off the trail was much more so. Blow-downs, snow, ice and brambles were abundant. The gradient of the mountainside was steeper than a pitched roof, requiring hands and knees scrambling in places.

**Amidst the jumble of trees, a barely visible yellow sign indicates proximity to the brass survey marker. Just to the left of Conner McBane's foot, in the splash of red paint, was the object of our treasure hunt.**



A second challenge was locating the actual markers. In the 36 years since they were placed, quite a few natural changes had taken place. Witness trees had fallen, land slides had moved mountain sides, and fallen trees had covered the markers. Additionally, the original survey maps located each pin, but were not topographic in detail. We wandered around for quite a while looking for the first definite indication—in this case a splash of red paint on a tree-of our location and orientation.

A final challenge was purely physical. While we did not carry heavy packs, we did scramble up and down some of the steepest, most difficult terrain I have ever been on. We were on hands and knees

at times, often using tree branches for leverage and balance. A misstep would have resulted in a significant slide across a substantial distance.

Despite the challenges (and according to Conner not all the locations we are as rugged as what we encountered) the day was rewarding and enjoyable. Like so many volunteers along the trail and across the years, we found helping sustain the Appalachian Trail to be very, very satisfying.



**ATC's Natural Resource Specialist and club member Conner McBane (left) and our group's “sign guy” rest at the third of four boundary markers they found.**

## Trail-inspired art

*The inspirational beauty and solitude of nature featured prominently in Benton MacKaye's vision for his long trail*



**Trail-maintainer Matt Gentry doubles as an artist. He rendered his interpretation of the photo on the left as the water color painting on the right.**

*Looking closely while Winter hiking, you'll see: What's not dead, is sleeping.*

*by Emily Piontek  
Blacksburg*

# Trail Supervisor's Report

by Mike Vaughn

At our club annual meeting in March we recognized all of the trail maintainers who put in a substantial amount of work last year. All of their efforts are greatly appreciated. Their efforts are essential to keeping the trail open for hikers. Below is a list of the maintainers that worked 40 or more hours and the hours they put in:

I'd also like to thank Pete Irvine and all those volunteers who served as spotters for the recently completed McAfee fire road improvement project. RATC volunteers put in over 700 hours on this project. Most of the people who served as spotters are also



Forest Service employee. His past experience and cheerful enthusiasm were the essential ingredients in getting this much needed project completed.

<b>Tim Ligon</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Craig McNally</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Ron Butler</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Dave Horst</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Brad Clay</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Matt Gentry</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Tom McAvoy</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Sue Terwilliger</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Lee Hipp</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>Bill Floyd</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Josh Kloehn</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Greg Still</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Kelly Mulheren</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Donna Logan</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Linda Mulheren</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Terry Shipley</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Pete Irvine</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>Mark Farrell</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Theresa McDaniel</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Bill Neilan</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>Bo Carneal</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Therese Witcher</b>	<b>481</b>
<b>Georgia Shaurette</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>Homer Witcher</b>	<b>581</b>
<b>Jim Beeson</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>Jim Webb</b>	<b>612</b>

RATC trail maintainers. They are truly a dedicated group of people. Special thanks to Pete Irvine, the coordinator for the project. He put in many hours surveying the fire road for work locations and was out on the fire road for the two weeks that the road work was going on. Pete is a retired U.S.

early March. In March we worked south of Trout Creek in Roanoke County. We did a great deal of side-hill digging and installed over 100 feet of log cribbing on a steep half-mile long section of trail. In April we will do a couple more work hikes on McAfee and do some work hikes in the southern part of our section.

As you may know, the ATC's Konnarock crew has been working on a trail relocation project in the Mountain Lake area for the past three years. The project will entail the construction of 6,000 feet of new trail. No work was accomplished there in 2020 due to the pandemic. Some limited work was done in 2021. This summer, instead of the Konnarock crew the ATC will be hiring a crew from the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS). The SAWS crew has extensive experience working in wilderness areas, where only

hand tools are permitted to be used. The plan is for them to work for a total of eight weeks there this summer. This should move this large project most of the way to completion.



*Unexpected help for an unpleasant mess*

Suz Frost and Rachel Ruhlen

We are maintainers for the section from Newport Road past Dragon's Tooth. It's not ideal to do maintenance on a beautiful if chilly Saturday on the second most popular hike, but we have to work within our schedules. November 2<sup>nd</sup>, we headed up the mountain, clipping as we went. Halfway there, a couple hikers coming down were carrying bags of trash. "We picked up a lot of trash up there, bagged what we could, and piled it up," they told us. "We're asking everyone to carry something down."

Apparently, a group had carried a lot of food and drinks up the mountain but instead of bringing the empty containers down again, they threw them in the ravine.



We thanked the hikers. When we saw a couple more hikers coming down, we asked them about trash. "Oh yeah, we saw that big pile," they said. "Should we go back up and bring some down?" Wow! They had just climbed all the way up Dragon's Tooth and halfway down, and they went right back up to help carry trash down.

# Trail Maintainers' Reports

A Stihl small voice...

by Matt and Colleen Gentry

RATC volunteer trail section maintainers Tim Ligon and Matt Gentry affected positive change on the Sugar Run section with the help of a volunteer from Woods Hole Hostel Sunday March 6, 2022.

The tree canopy was severely damaged in a February 2021 ice storm, resulting in an explosion of undergrowth on the forest floor.

The big stuff gets cut, the small stuff gets whacked and the Sugar Run section is open for business!

Special shout out to Woods Hole volunteer X-Box for pitching in!

We saw more hikers carrying empty water jugs and bags of trash. Just how much trash was there?

A large group passed us, heading up the mountain. We told them about the trash and they assured us they'd help take it out. I asked what group they were with, so I could share that they helped. It was Virginia Tech's Alpha Sigma Phi, if you want to thank them!

By the time we got to the top, there wasn't much trash left. We took some and Alpha Sigma Phi got the rest. Although dismayed at the people who would create such a mess, we were touched at how everyone pitched in, particularly the first hikers who went to such effort to clean up someone else's mess.

## Shelter Supervisors Reports

*Homer and Therese Witcher*

*Jenny Knob privy move*

March 26, 2022

Participants: Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Bennett Witcher, Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Susan Terwilliger, Adam Day, Mickey Pellillo, Walter Shroyer, Paul Goodwin

On March 18, Homer, Therese, Walter & Mickey selected the site for the new privy hole and started digging. Newcomers Walter & Mickey were quickly initiated. Walter professed he loved using the digging and tamping bar and

Mickey improved the route between the privy and shelter. By the end of the day, the hole was 5 feet deep.

We left knowing we would be back on March 26<sup>th</sup> with a larger crew to move the privy.

We almost postponed the move on March 26<sup>th</sup> due to the dusting of snow and strong winds, but this group could not be deterred. After digging the hole to around 6

feet, we began the task of moving the privy to the new site. With a lot of moaning, groaning, shoving and pushing, the privy was in place. With a great crew like this, the privy move was completed by lunchtime.



*Bailey Gap shelter privy move*

March 19, 2022

Participants: Homer, Therese, Kevin, Bennett, Brenin & Darin Witcher, Alex Plunkett, Adam Day, Jim Webb

We had a fantastic work crew. The work crew consisted of Homer, his wife, 2 sons, 3 grandsons, an “adopted” son and Jim Webb, who furnished the only maturity in the

bunch. The new privy hole was dug by Homer & Therese to about 4.5 feet prior to March 19<sup>th</sup>. The morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> was spent completing the hole to a depth of 6 feet.

To work on this crew, you had to have a thick skin since the banter was constant. After lunch, the privy was successfully moved to the new site amid much moaning and groaning.



*Campbell shelter table repair*

We were at Campbell shelter on February 28<sup>th</sup> and discovered that the picnic table was broken. Since the table was getting old, we made the decision to replace rather than repair. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup>, we bought the lumber and built a new table to replace the old one.



*Lambert's Meadow bridge repair*

March 8, 2022

Participants: Homer and Therese Witcher, Debbie and Mark Davis, Kevin Witcher, Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Terry Shipley, Tom McCoy, John Grant

Due to erosion of the banks under the bridge at Lambert's Meadow, we decided that the bridge needed to be extended before it fell into the stream. The most difficult task was carrying the extremely heavy new locust stringers about 100 yards to the site.

Upon arriving, everyone set to work. The old bridge was dismantled and all of the nails were removed. The new stringers were placed, the old decking was reused and new railings were installed. The project was completed shortly after lunch.



*Sarver Hollow shelter re-staining*

March 10, 2022

Participants: Homer and Therese Witcher, Mark and Debbie Davis, Nancy Reid

On our annual inspection of Sarver Hollow shelter, we noticed that the exterior boards were showing signs of weathering and decided they needed a coat of stain to preserve them. On a cold March morning, we headed up the Sarver Hollow trail laden with 3 gallons of stain and a couple of replacement boards. Everyone set to work and the exterior of the shelter was completely stained by 2 PM.

Thanks to our friends, Mark and Debbie for driving up from Florida to assist us with a couple of trail

projects and to Nancy for volunteering to stain.



# Hikemaster Reports

Leader: Dee Case  
 Hikers: Jennifer Frye, Carol Rowlett, Adele S., Kathy Corpora, Peg Alderman, Fred Meyer (for 2 days) and Susan Webb (for one day)

Dee Case led four day hikes in Shenandoah National Park March 27<sup>th</sup> thru March 30<sup>th</sup>. We started all of our hikes off of Skyline Drive. In total, we hiked from Turks Gap to Lewis Mountain Campground, about 43 miles total.

*Jennifer Frye* On Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> we hiked about 10 miles from Blackrock Gap parking lot to Turks Gap parking lot. Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup> we hiked 11 miles from Ivy Creek Overlook to Highrock Gap parking lot. Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> we hiked 12 miles from Ivy Creek Overlook to Hightop Mountain parking lot. Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> we hiked 10.5 miles from Lewis Mountain Campground to Hightop Mountain parking lot.

It was a great adventure with the cold and the wind!! We all had a great time and are exhausted!



Leader: Molly Armistead  
 Dave Gloudemans, David Mueller

The weather changed and three hikers enjoyed 11 miles at Carvins Cove on 3/13/22. At every mile marker each hiker did 20 squats since Dave said he wanted to get in shape.

We hiked Rattlin' Run/Songbird/Enchanted Forest/Riley's Loop/Little Bell/Easy Street/Brushy/ Four Gorges.



Molly Armistead (leader)  
 Janice Metzger, Kevin Moore, Clive Hillyard, Dave Gloudemans, Gary, Annika Nelson, David Mueller

Carvins Cove: Eight hikers enjoyed the Gauntlet Trough hike in Carvins Cove. Many had not done that loop and were interested in seeing more of the Cove. Hikers came from Blacksburg, Bedford and Franklin County.



Hike: Roanoke Mountain  
 Date: February 20, 2022  
 Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Susan Terwilliger, Nancy Galvan, Terri Brancewicz, Laurel Riddle, David Riddle, Clive Hillyard, Janice Metzger, Adele Shaffer, Kathy DeCoster, Dee Case, Amy Smith

Hike: RATC hikes 7 and 8, south to north. (Route 42 to route 620)  
 Date: March 4-5, 2022  
 Hiker: Ron Bradbury

Once again relying on a paid shuttle service to take me from my planned hike terminus to back to the starting point, I logged a few miles in the car and finally got on the trail around 9 o'clock AM. The two hikes which followed were delightful with some unusual trail-side features.

Not far from the start, I passed the Keffer Oak, an oak tree purported to be the oldest on the AT. It's enormous; in the photo, my 3 foot long hiking stick is laid across the base of the trunk for scale.

After ascending to the first of two ridge lines--not a miserable ascent--I encountered some well-documented rock cairns. Opinions vary as to their origin and function, but they're impressive whatever they were. My theory is that they once housed beacons for contacting ancient aliens.

I shared the Niday shelter with thru-hiker Wolverine, a firefighter from Michigan who registered as the 42<sup>nd</sup> hiker to leave Springer Mountain, Georgia this season.

Additional highlights along the way included the Eastern Continental Divide and the Audie Murphy memorial.



We had a beautiful day for a 5-mile hike up the old Roanoke Mountain Overlook road and down the back side of the mountain. We then crossed the Blue Ridge Parkway and made our way through sometimes thick leaves along the Roanoke Valley Horse Trail on our return to Gum Springs Overlook.





TRAIL BLAZER  
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club  
PO Box 12282  
ROANOKE VA 24024-2282

# CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

---

## Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Application New and Renewal

**IF ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP, I AGREE TO:**

1. Support the objectives of the RATC
2. Abide by the rules of the national and state parks and forests
3. Respect the interests of the owner when on private property
4. Keep trails and woodlands free of litter, and
5. Abide by the instructions of the leader on group hikes and trips

Name(s)	New Member Packet Fee:	\$5	_____
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15	_____
	Family # of years	x \$20	_____
City	Individual life membership	x \$250	_____
State	Family life membership	x \$300	_____
Zip	Donation	\$	_____
Phone			
Email	<b>Total Amount Enclosed</b>		<b>\$</b> _____

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to "RATC" or use PayPal at [ratc.org](http://ratc.org)

---

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:  
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024

RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via [treasurer@ratc.org](mailto:treasurer@ratc.org) or by calling 540-521-5435