

# Smoke & Blazes

Volume 74, Number 3

Killington Section, Green Mountain Club

September 2021



Sue and a friend compare notes on their pandemic haircuts. Photo taken by Diane Bargiel on a hike to Herrick Mountain in Ira. All the alpacas had recently got a haircut.



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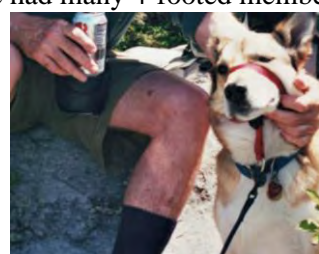
Andrew & Isaac Jones      Web Masters

**Dog's of the Killington Section, by Sue Thomas**

Over the years, we have had many 4-footed members, enthusiastic hikers all! Some are pictured below.



Burdock Parker, everyone's favorite hiker.



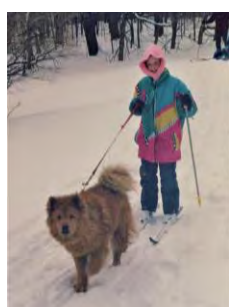
Sammy Little, tangled with a porcupine on Mt. Carmel.



Omar Hannegan, always fashion-forward.



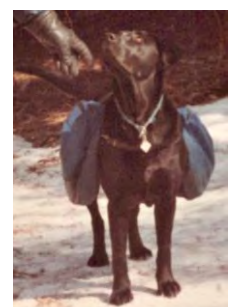
Patches Petit, our most cheerful hiker.



Lady Cary, always willing to help out.



Ivy the Terrible, always looking for adventure.



Pinon Badger, always carried her own pack.



Dude Pulling, often underfoot.



Henry Cartier, such a good boy.

## This n' That

- ▶ **TO RECEIVE SMOKE & BLAZES BY EMAIL, SEND REQUEST TO:** [vivianbebee@gmail.com](mailto:vivianbebee@gmail.com)

- ▶ **November 6, Saturday, 9:00 a.m., Put the Trails to Bed Work Day, LT/AT**

For details, call Larry Walter, 775-3855, or Dave Coppock 683-1614

Join us for our last-of-the-season work party. Bring lunch, water and work gloves. Tools will be provided.

- ▶ **When Was the Long Trail Really Completed?**

### **Long Trail News, November 1985**

#### **Author unknown, contributed by Amy Peacock**

"Ask most GMC members this question and the answer you'll receive is 1931. Ask Charles G. Doll, who was there, and the answer is 1930.

It was during the summer of 1930 that Phillips D. Carleton and Charles G. Doll cut the final portion of the Trail from Jay Peak to Line Post 592 on the Canadian border, an accomplishment duly reported in the October, 1930 issue of the *Long Trail News* (Vol. 3, No. 5):

*'We are now able to announce the completion of the Long Trail to the Canadian border. The extension from Jay Peak was finished early in September. It ends at Post 592 on the line. The new trail is thorny [sic] blazed and well cleared, and can be followed without difficulty. The blazes are partly painted, and it is expected that the remainder will be painted this fall. Much credit and the thanks of the Club are due to the men who did the final work, and thus have the honor of finally completing the great undertaking, begun nearly twenty years ago, of cutting, clearing and marking a Long Trail, suitable for pedestrians, from the Massachusetts line to the Canadian line. They are Profs. C.G. Doll and P.D. Carleton, assisted by Prof. R.O. Buchanan and Messrs. Behney and Elder, all of the University of Vermont.'*

Nearly a year later, on September 12, 1931 the Green Mountain Club conducted a gala celebration of its 21st anniversary and of the successful completion of the Long Trail.

Ever since, GMC literature has always referred to 1931 as the year of completion for the Long Trail. In fact, the north edition of the *Guide Book of the Long Trail*, published in 1932, states on page 111, "**Post 592** is the end of the Long Trail which was finally completed in 1931, the year of the 21st birthday of the Green Mountain Club."

Why 1931 rather than 1930, remains a mystery. Perhaps GMC "romantics" of that era decided the completion of the Long Trail should coincide with the Club's 21st birthday. Perhaps the Club's leaders felt 1931 was more appropriate because the final blazing was not accomplished until then, or because a suitable trail shelter on that northern-most stretch did not exist until Laura Woodward Camp was erected in 1931. Perhaps 1931 was chosen because it marked the first **complete** hiking season that one could hike the **completed** Long Trail.

In the world of sports there are official and unofficial records. It appears the completion of the Long Trail presents us with a similar situation. We may continue to accept 1931 as the "official" year of completion of the Long Trail system; but we should also remain historically accurate by recognizing 1930 as the year the last stretch of Long Trail was actually cut and marked."

- ▶ **Hiker Quotes from Governor Clement Shelter and Pico Camp, contributed by Amy Peacock**

#### **Governor Clement**

**Roo:** What a great shelter. I'm especially fond of the privy. I used to know a Mr. Snodgrass in Eugene, OR. He was well known all over the West coast for blowing glass pipes. Anyone heard of him? 10/8/96

**Digger:** Hello Governor. How are ya? Just in for a spot of tea on my way to see the lovely Minerva! 10/16/96

**John Boy:** Just throwin' some jelly in the belly! Off to Cooper. 5/30/97

**Aleph & Abby:** Loving the emerging summer on the trail! So many cool plants and flowers, so many smells to smell! It's good to feel alive and feel my body.

#### **Pico Camp**

**Georgia:** This place is really cool. I'm hiking with my class and, even though we aren't staying here, I really like it! 6/5/03

**Uncle John:** Breaking in some young ones to the joys of the trail. 6/23/03

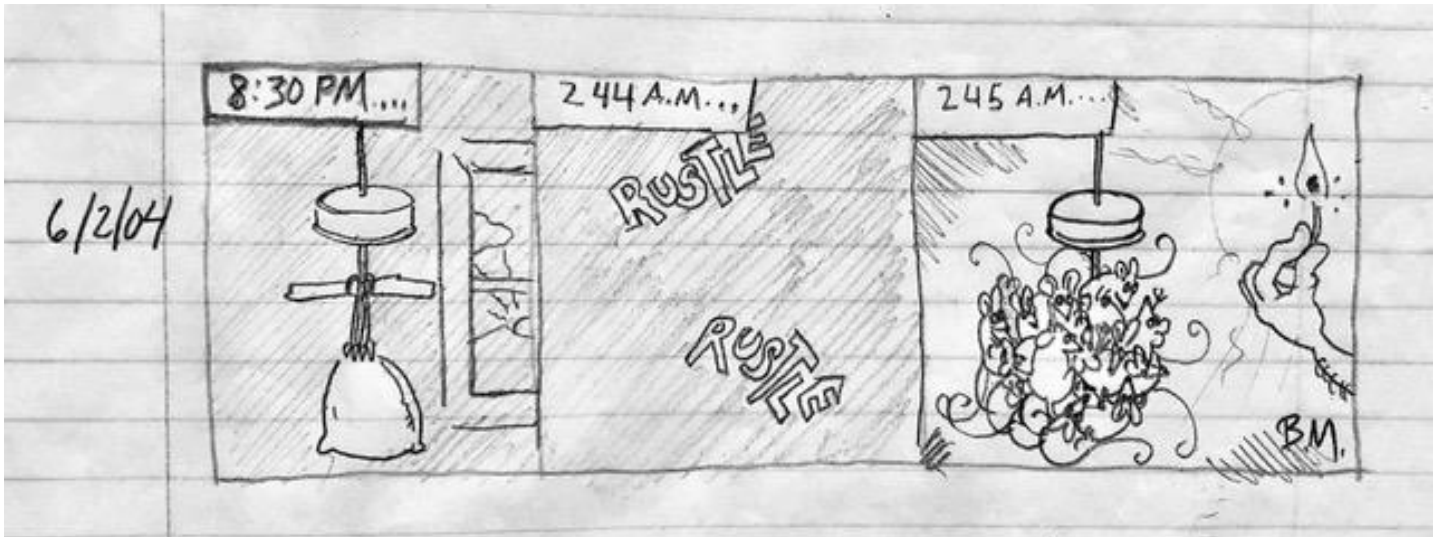
**Chinga Vermont Girls:** Hike group from Chingachgook on Lake George, NY. Rocking out on Pico Mtn! We are having a dance party right now. Gotta go! 8/4/03

**Mike & Eric:** A great weekend. The hills are ablaze with color. A truly great day to be alive! 10/11/03

**Seaweed Sally:** Out for a jaunt on a glorious sunny day. Broke trail, such beautiful powder, shadows on the snow, magic. 12/27/03

**The Admiral:** Day hike from Rt 4 to Killington. Awesome thus far. Not sure this Florida boy could handle the winter hikes. Off and running. 5/5/04

See beginning of next page for a drawing that was in the Pico Camp journal on June 2, 2004.



## Outing Reports

Due to the pandemic, we still don't have any official outings to report. However, the following articles and pictures reflect what some of our members have been doing this summer for outdoor adventures.

### Green Mountain Grinched, by Herb Ogden

On 17 July, the Killington Section was going to enjoy its first social outing since COVID-19 ended our outings in March 2020. We have had small work parties, but no just-for-fun hikes. Unfortunately, rain was predicted, no one called the leader for information, and the leader saw no reason to go out and get drenched just so we could say we had resumed our scheduled hikes. This is a really nice hike, however, so I will describe it and urge folks to try it on their own. I prefer to do the loop counterclockwise because it's easier to climb the ledges above Little Rock Pond than it is to descend them. You can park at either the Big Branch Overlook parking lot, across Forest Road 10 from the Green Mountain Trail trailhead, or the Long Trail crossing of Forest Road 10, the partly paved road from Mt. Tabor to Peru. A 0.6 mile trail roughly parallel to and above Forest Road 10 connects the Green Mountain Trail and the Long Trail.

Head north on the Long Trail to Little Rock Pond. This part of the LT is heavily trafficked and the footway is not as smooth as on the less used Green Mountain Trail. But the view of Little Rock Pond from the LT is beautiful. The northern end of the Green Mountain Trail is at the north end of Little Rock Pond. The Homer Stone Brook Trail heads north, the Little Rock Pond Loop heads south, and the Green Mountain Trail heads west. Climbing, it soon passes a long, humped ledge that looks like the back of some enormous beast. After a bit of a scramble up some ledges, there is a spur trail to some fine east views. Farther along, there is another spur to more views. Descending a little, the trail enters one of my favorite areas, a dry ridge with sparse evergreens growing between a lot of rocks. The trail then mostly follows old wood roads south through pleasant forest with limited views west before a steep descent to Forest Road 10. The round trip is seven miles.

### VTXL, by Dave Coppock

The VTXL is a six-day, 300-mile-long, dirt road bike route from Canada to Massachusetts. It climbs a total of 30,000 vertical feet over this distance, or a little more than going from sea level to the highest point on earth. The VTXL website describes the tour this way: "Expect abundant climbing with frequent steep pitches and then quick descents to face another rise." This rather understates the truth. It would be more accurate if they inserted words like "brutal," or "soul crushing" to describe the nature of this beast.

We decided to take six days to ride the whole thing. This meant we had to carry around 35 pounds of gear on our bikes for camping, cooking, etc., which also made the hills that much more difficult to ascend.

Steve Lulek, owner of the Green Mountain Rock Climbing Center, ferried us and our bikes in a large van with a trailer to the Canadian border at Beecher Falls. Our first day featured a brutal series of climbs, often in the rain, with one particularly grueling pitch that follows a power line.

That night, we had the great fortune of staying at a friend's cabin in Newark, VT. It rained heavily that night, into the morning. This would have been miserable if we'd been camping. After that, the weather cleared and it never rained again for the duration of the trek. We camped out every night thereafter and enjoyed pleasant evenings and crisp mornings. Every day took us into new, uncharted territory (for us) with a treasure trove of lovely scenery in the most remote hollows of our beloved State. The cost for this exceptional experience came in the form of soul-crushing climbs, one after another, on some of the gnarliest roads we'd ever seen.



Perhaps the worst example of this lies between the hamlets of East and West Topsham. The VTXL there follows what can only be described as a vertical pigsty. We dismounted and pushed our bikes grimly down this sluiceway, until after a mile or so, it popped back onto a fourth-class road.

But as the natives say, "what don't kill ya, makes ya strongah." We soldiered on every day, making it to our planned destinations with just enough energy to prepare dinner and put up our tents. At first light each morning, we rose to face another day. Along the way, we'd occasionally find general stores where we'd purchase ungodly quantities of sugary snacks, coffee and chips. When we were lucky, the store might actually make sandwiches. Our dinners often consisted of pasta and breakfasts were oatmeal.

The most striking thing about this ride is how it forces the participant to examine closely the underbelly of Vermont. Nature is thrust right in your face at every turn. Cows approach closely. Hawks flutter past with rodents in their talons. You can stop and talk to anyone you see because you're going slow and they're curious to see long distance bikers on these back roads. Though this ride is not for the faint-hearted, it is a balm for one's psyche and soul.

Our last day featured a 30-minute descent down the closest thing Vermont has to a Grand Canyon, followed by sandwiches and an hour of chit-chat with an English fellow from the Cotswolds. Then on to our friend, Rachel's, house for a long, pleasant siesta over watermelon. Here, we also met her tabby cat, Jo Jo. Larry was smitten.

Our last challenge was the climb over the shoulder of Mt. Anthony, a deed we'd been dreading all day. Once over this obstacle, we pushed on with renewed vigor until we reached the MA border, just south of Pownal.

Our celebratory beers and food in Williamstown felt well deserved. We talked openly about doing another border-to-border dirt route next summer. To this I say, "God willin' an' the creek don't rise."

#### DAY 4



Wayne & Larry on Queen Victoria Road, West Windsor, VT.

#### **GMC Upper Elevation Trail Maintenance on 6/5/21 and Mill River Cleanup on 6/6/21, by Larry Walter**

On Saturday the fifth, Dave Coppock and myself, as Co-Chairmen of the Trails & Shelters Committee, decided to break into two crews and do 'the loop,' including Sherburne Pass trail to Jungle Junction and back out to Route 4 on the LT. Special thanks to the following guest stars: Miriam's Akervall, from the Main Club (long commute), and KSAR volunteers, Joel Blumenthal and Kristin Brodie. Killington Section members, Wayne Krevetski and Herb Ogden, rounded out our manifest. We all put in about 7.5 hours, save for Wayne who had 4 hours and Kristin who put in 5. Dave, Wayne, Kristin and Joel made their way up from the AT/LT parking lot on Route 4 armed with Barb's 42" D-handle Champion-Tooth, single buck saw, axe, a combi and some hoes. They cleaned out all of the fallen vegetation and clogged waterbars to and beyond Churchill Scott Shelter, stopping to check out the latter. They didn't get down to the water source, so anyone who gets up that way should wander down to see if it's running clean and isn't all mucked up.

Meanwhile, my crew, including Miriam and Herb walked up from the Inn at Long Trail outfitted with a trusty Silky

Sugoi 420, a combi, Herb's 1950's era hoe and a dangerous looking hazel hoe. We only had to chop out one stem, about a 4 incher. Pico looked pretty good, although Herb and I could have sworn the floor was listing even more downhill. We checked the footings, and they seemed fine. I guess our sense of balance is just more sensitive now? Our hardware cloth is holding strong and no porcupines had breached the walls. The outhouse is good. Lots of wood shavings on the floor (it's a composter), so I swept that out. The crew had stashed the shovel and forks underneath, out of the weather. Well done!

On Sunday the sixth, I waited for someone to show up at the park. No comers, so I headed out to the swinging bridge illegal campground and started picking up old chairs, blowup mattresses, tables, and other assorted junk. Someone had tried to melt everything in a big fire pit. Wonderful. Bill Cooke arrived around 10am and we worked together to get about 4 really heavy construction bags of trash out. There was a good pile behind the kiosk (see below) when we left at noon. When I got home, I looked at the gazette and noticed that place is actually in Shrewsbury, so I called up Barry and he agreed to meet me there with his pickup (the Impreza was strictly off limits for trash, as per orders from Smoke & Blazed editor lady - aka my wife). We loaded all of the stuff into Barry's pickup and he drove back up to their recycling center (open on Sundays!). I counted about \$1.50 worth of deposits from the Bud Lite and Mt. Dew cans when I got home, so will chip into the tipping fee at Barry's end. Good weekend all told . . . we got a lot done. It's time for me to order some new combi tools for the K-Section.



**Close Encounter of the Almost Kind, by Sue Thomas**

Sunghee and I set out for an early morning hike on the AT, hoping to beat the crowds. We parked on River Road and set off on the boardwalk to Thundering Brook Falls, which after our frequent hard rains was indeed thundering. From there, we climbed to the next road crossing and looped around on the road to Kent Pond, checking out the new bike trails and enjoyed the views from the causeway. Following the AT past the new and improved (?) Mountain Meadows Lodge, we wound around the pond to the smaller, but equally beautiful, falls. We then returned via the trail, past the impressive boulders and met up with the Youth Conservation Corps crew moving rocks that seemed like boulders to me! Thank goodness for strong backs and youthful enthusiasm.

Back at the top of the falls, we decided for variety and crowd avoidance to walk down the dirt road rather than the trail. As we stood by the cars talking, a man drove up from the direction we had just walked and rolled down his window. "There's a bear coming," he said. "It should be here in a couple minutes." And off he went. Just then a young through-hiker stepped off the boardwalk, so I made her take out her earbuds and warned her. She thanked me, crossed the road, and continued east. At that moment, I glanced over Sunghee's shoulder and there was the bear, just rounding the bend where we had been about 3 minutes before (see picture top of next page) . The backpacker heard my "There it is!" and scurried back. The three of us watched the bear saunter along toward us, til it thought better of it and disappeared into the marsh. It made my day, though I was glad we hadn't dawdled while walking down that road!

I stopped on the way back to warn the YCC crew, as it was headed their way, hope they stashed their snacks!



**Canada geese checking out the causeway on Kent Pond.**





“... there was the bear, just rounding the bend ...”

**Family Albums, by Barry Griffith**

Going through old family albums, I came across this photograph. My best guess is that it was taken at Sherburne Pass in the 1920s or 1930s. The Griffith family lived in East Dorset at the time. It seems that the gentleman in the photo owned an automobile and took the ladies out for a Sunday drive. My aunt was able to identify them. Family members are still posing for photos on the Long Trail a century later!



## PAINTING BLAZES—GOOFS I HAVE MADE

By Dick Blake

I have had a rare opportunity for a trail maintainer. I started blazing trails before I knew anything about trail maintenance. I made almost every mistake possible and have learned to correct many of them. I should like to share some of these so that other trail maintainers might correct errors before painting them into a trail.

1. I thinned the paint quite a bit. This made it run into the crevices of the bark and made the paint go a lot further.

**Problem:** It also made the paint run down the crevices so that the blazes had small beards. The blazes also faded rapidly so I had the fun of painting them again the next season.

**Solution:** Do not thin the paint.

2. I used a two inch brush so that I could make a neat 2" blaze in one easy stroke.

**Problem:** When one paints with a two inch brush it spreads to 3" with just a bit of pressure on the tree. Furthermore, since trees are curved, the brush hits in the middle first and the edges touched further down the tree making an oval blaze.

**Solution:** Use a 1" or 1½" brush.

3. I am six feet tall so it was easy to place blazes 7 feet from the ground. This height made them easy to see from a distance and kept them above the undergrowth.

**Problem:** Many hikers are women, children, or little old men who get sore necks looking up. Furthermore, lots of hikers have to watch where they put their feet.

**Solution:** Put blazes at about eye level, a little lower on steep uphill slopes and a little higher on downhill slopes.

4. I found it very convenient to put blazes on both sides of a tree. I only needed to stop half as often and the blazes were about the same distance apart from both directions.

**Problem:** A tree that is conspicuous going north is often screened by another tree or bend in the trail when going south. I have also realized that it is comforting to look back when in doubt and see the blaze for the other direction at some intermediate point. Furthermore, when a tree with two blazes falls, I have a double loss.

**Solution:** Paint the northerly blazes when going north and the southerly blazes when going south. Ditto for east and west.

5. I put lots of blazes on the trail so that a beginner would not get lost.

**Problem:** My trail looked like a picket fence.

**Solution:** Limit blazes so that you can see just one blaze ahead. When it is impossible to get off a trail, blazes are needed less often. In areas of turns, side trails, or other confusing places it is reassuring to see two blazes.

6. I saved paint, left the woods looking more natural and blazed the trail quickly by putting blazes only where they were really needed.

**Problem:** My friends (both of them) told me that they followed my trail for quite a way but then lost it and had to find another way back.

**Solution:** See #5.

7. I put some blazes on the rocks and ledges under foot. These are good and permanent and I could put the blaze right in the middle of the trail to avoid confusion.

**Problem:** Even the lightest snow hid these blazes completely. By the way, a bit of moisture on a paint blaze makes it as slippery as ice. (I have the bruises to prove it!)

**Solution:** Put blazes on vertical surfaces at about eye level.

8. In a particular forest I wanted to avoid confusion and identify the forest with a standard color blaze for the several trails.

**Problem:** Some hikers became confused when two trails crossed and the trail appeared to go in four directions. Some hikers were disappointed to end up on the opposite side of the forest from their car when they thought that they were on a loop trail.

**Solution:** Use different paints or distinctively different shapes for different trails. For access trails or short side trails, use the same blaze with a contrasting 1" dot in the center.

9. One of my trails led to a spectacular waterfall deep in the forest. After arriving at the waterfall and enjoying it for as long as he wished the hiker was expected to return by the way he came.

**Problem:** Some hikers spent much time trying to find where the trail went from there. Some became frustrated and returned by the same trail. Some got lost!

**Solution:** Use three blazes, two above and one below, to mark the end of a trail.

10. Occasionally as I reblazed a trail I became aware that there was a long distance between blazes and added one to improve hiker confidence.

**Problem:** Often, a few more steps made the next blaze obvious so I had two blazes in a very short distance.

**Solution:** Always walk until you find the next blaze and then go back if another blaze seems needed. Or, have a friend who will keep some distance ahead to identify blazes that will appear shortly.

11. Occasionally I found a better route and made relocations and covered up the old trail and blazes. It made me feel good to improve the trail.

**Problem:** Sometimes I came back and found that someone had reopened the old trail. They had seen an old blaze down in the woods and had "helpfully" cleared a way to it.

**Solution:** Eliminate all old blazes by scraping or by covering with a black-brown paint or flat black from a spray can.

12. I found it much easier to blaze a trail in the late fall or winter when I could see the trail direction for some distance.

**Problem:** In the late spring and summer many of the blazes that were so clear in the winter were completely hidden by leaves.

**Solution:** Check every trail in the late spring and replace hidden blazes with others in better locations or trim the brush to make all blazes visible.

I intend to continue maintaining trails and will undoubtedly make new goofs. Many who read this article maintain trails and have made clever and original goofs. If you share them, and your solutions with me, I should be pleased to put them together and write a sequel to this list. Either way, we maintainers should keep on working, for "the person who never made a mistake, never did anything else either."

—Dick Blake, 11 Argyle Road, Milford, CT 06460



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## KILLINGTON SECTION

### Your Invitation to Join Killington Section, Green Mountain Club

The Killington Section, based in Rutland, VT, is a chapter of the statewide Green Mountain Club. Membership in the Section includes membership in the Club. Members receive a membership card, the Club quarterly *Long Trail News*, and the Section quarterly *Smoke & Blazes* including a schedule of outings, trail work parties, and social events. Members also receive reduced rates on items from the Club bookstore and at most overnight sites served by caretakers. Membership dues help to maintain trails and shelters in the Killington Section (Route 140 to Route 4) and the Long Trail system throughout Vermont.

**ANNUAL DUES:**

Individual .....\$45  
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I also enclose a contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Kirk Trails and Shelters Fund supporting the Killington Section's maintenance and preservation of trails and shelters.

I would like information on volunteering for:

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Make check payable to "GMC" and mail with this application to:

Green Mountain Club, 4711 Waterbury – Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677