

“A PATH IN THE WOODS”: THE WEST VIRGINIA SCENIC TRAILS ASSOCIATION’S FIRST 50 YEARS

Research and recollections by Doug Wood, December 2020 and January 1, 2024.

Without the assistance of Bob Tabor, Nick Lozano, Charlie Dundas, Carolyn Welcker, Shirley Schweizer, Bruce Bond, and Arthur Foley, this compilation of memories would be sparse and suspect. Watch for updated versions in the future.

In 1958, members of Explorer Scout Post 4, sponsored by Kanawha Presbyterian Church in Charleston, West Virginia was backpacking on the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains. The Post Advisor, Doug McGrew was an inspiring leader of young men. McGrew was a Union Carbide chemical engineer. One Explorer Scout in particular, remembers the positive influence McGrew had on his charges. Nicolas (correct spelling) B. Lozano, who was 15 years old at the time and is now a retired insurance executive, refers to his former Post Advisor as “the Grandfather of the Allegheny Trail.” According to Lozano, McGrew’s leadership inspired his Scouts and led them into life-changing outdoor experiences, such as that backpack trip in 1958. Nick remembers thinking upon his return home to West Virginia after that trip, “Why should we West Virginia scouts have to travel to other states to experience the adventure of long-distance backpacking? We have the Allegheny Mountains with all their natural splendor and wildness to rival the Great Smoky Mountains. Why can’t we have a trail like the Appalachian Trail running through the mountains of The Mountain State?” So, Doug McGrew is the “Grandfather” of the Allegheny Trail, because Nick Lozano is one of the “Founding Fathers” of the Allegheny Trail.



The right-most standing scout is Nicolas B. Lozano, the first of two “Fathers” of the Allegheny Trail. Kneeling beside him is Doug McGrew, whom Nick calls the “Grandfather” of the Allegheny Trail. (Unknown photographer).

Other dreams of long-distance trails in West Virginia’s high country were older than Nick’s 1950’s dream. In 1945, the Kanawha Trail Club (KTC) began lobbying the WV Conservation Commission to develop an extension of the Appalachian Trail (AT) called the Mountaineer Trail from Cacapon State Park to Babcock State Park. The KTC effort was recorded in a document written by two club members, Miss Gertrude Slutsky and Mrs. Barbara Randall in 1947. Another Club Member, Charles (Charley) Carlson edited the document. Carlson, an electrician among other pursuits, and Lozano would cross paths later. During the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the high country, long-distance trail in West Virginia got a federal boost. Johnson supported and

Congress passed several key pieces of legislation that promoted outdoor recreation, including establishing the National Trails System and funding, at the state level, outdoor recreation planning efforts. Professor Robert Dolgener at Marshall University taught a class in outdoor recreation during this exciting decade of the 1960s. Before establishment of the National Trails System in 1968, he became involved in the National Trails System planning effort in the Mountain State. One of his students was a Cabell County West Virginia native, Charles (Charlie) Dundas. Dundas, now a retired U. S. Marine Corps Colonel who runs Tri-State Company (trail construction and consultation), recalls how Prof. Dolgener encouraged students to become involved in statewide trails planning efforts. In 1963, some of his students canoed up Kanawha River from Winfield, others bicycled east on US-60 from Huntington, while Charlie's group backpacked eastward, all converging upon the state Capitol to show support for trail development. They promoted the concept of a long-distance trail through the Allegheny Highlands of West Virginia. Public wills and political agendas were aligning in favor of fulfilling trail dreams.

The KTC lobbying effort in the 1940s, as well as the federal push for outdoor recreation in the 1960s resulted in a 1966 initiative by WV Governor Hulett C. Smith to appoint a committee to explore the possibility of creating a hiking trail from Charleston to Blackwater Falls State Park. Charley Carlson served on that committee. The next governor, Arch A. Moore, Jr. did not re-appoint the committee, but action was taken under his long administration to put the trail on the ground.



(L) WV Governor Hulett C. Smith had an interest in developing a long-distance trail in WV in 1966 (photo from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_governors_of_West_Virginia#/media/File:Hulett_C._Smith.jpg). (R) President Lyndon Johnson studies a national trail system proposal map in 1968 (photo from <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/feds/40yearsexperiment.html>).

Then, a chance encounter at an Izaak Walton League meeting at the old United Fuels (later Columbia Gas Transmission) building at South Ruffner in Charleston in October of 1971 pushed the Allegheny Trail (ALT) dream into the realm of the awakened. Lozano was in attendance, as was another trails enthusiast named Robert (Bob) J. Tabor, Jr. Bob had been President of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club, one of the AT maintaining clubs, before moving his family to West Virginia (WV). Bob had served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, and upon discharge, he pursued a business career, eventually becoming a sales representative for Royal McBee Litton, a large business systems developer, which led to his assignment to West Virginia. Trail talk was part of the Izaak Walton League meeting and afterwards, Bob and Nick spent a long evening in the parking lot discussing Nick's dream of the Allegheny Trail and Bob's dream of establishing in Monroe County WV a connecting trail to the Appalachian Trail, which was being relocated westward to the West Virginia – Virginia border. It made perfect sense that the ALT should connect with the AT. Lozano and Tabor, both adult supporters of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), had now formed a friendship around the concept of the Allegheny Trail, thus becoming the first Fathers of the ALT. With some advice from state park recreation official Robert (Bob) Mathis, these trail enthusiasts headed to Pocahontas County in June 1972 to scout a potential portion of the ALT between BSA Buckskin Council's reservation at Dilleys Mill and Seneca State Forest. Lozano tied the first strip of plastic flagging to a shrub branch, then untied it in order to retie it to his daypack. He explained this ritual to his trail mates, "When the trail is completed, I'll remove this flagging from my pack." Later, in April or May of 1975, the three returned and completed flagging between the reservation and Seneca State Forest. In that very same month's issue of *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine, Ira S. Latimer, Governor Arch Moore's pick for Director of the WV Dept. of Natural Resources wrote: "Hiking, the most inexpensive and wholesome kind of recreation, is also restricted nationally because trails for the walkers are relatively scarce. Incredibly, tiny Wales and England have more miles of rural footpaths than all of the United States. Obviously, there is a tremendous recreational need for those citizens who seek only the simplest of outdoor fun...[family tent camping, trailer hookup camping,...and the hardy backpacker

who wishes to carry his shelter and bedroll to the deep woods to get away from it all.” The stars were aligning for the Allegheny Trail.

In October of 1972, the early organizers established the postal address of the West Virginia Scenic Trails CONFERENCE (WVSTC) as P.O. Box 4042 Chas. WV 25304. Other than a zip code change to 25364 by the USPS, that is still the official mailing address of the organization. The following month, Nov. 17 & 18, 1972, an organizational meeting was held at Christ Church United Methodist (CCUM) in Charleston, WV to consider formation of the (WVSTC). The meeting was sponsored by Mid-Appalachian Environmental Services of Charleston. In December 1972, the first newsletter of the new club reported on the results of the organizational meeting:

“As a result of the 2 day meeting the West Virginia Scenic Trails Conference was officially organized and steps were taken to establish by-laws, elect officers, and to determine goals.

“Officers elected to form the Board of Directors were Mr. Nick Lozano as President, Mr. Robert Tabor as Vice—President, Mr. Bruce Bond as Secretary-Treasurer, and Mrs. Virginia McNeely [actually Virginia Neely McTeer] as Member-at-Large.

“Goals for the Conference include development of the Allegheny trail as a showcase model to be used in the future development of scenic trails in West Virginia and dramatization of the need for legislative protection.”

The potential location of the Allegheny Trail was revealed in this article,

“According to oriental philosophy even the longest journey begins with the first step. Accordingly, the newly formed West Virginia Scenic Trails Conference has taken a number of steps in a process that is hoped will allow hikers to place their footsteps on a scenic trail from Peter’s Mountain in Monroe County, West Virginia to the Blackwater State Park area and perhaps beyond. The trail is to be known as the Allegheny Trail.”

Attendees at the organizational meeting included Les Holmes, Executive Director of the Appalachian Trail Conference, as well as at least three recruits from the Kanawha Trail Club; KTC President Charley Carlson, Carolyn Welcker, and Shirley Schweizer. At this early stage of development, other “Founding Mothers” of the Allegheny Trail threw their talents behind the effort. Besides McNeely, Welcker, & Schweizer, Nina Damron of Greenbrier County was one of the earliest female supporters of the Allegheny Trail. The WVSTA was an inclusive organization from the “git-go”, never a “good ol’ boys club.”

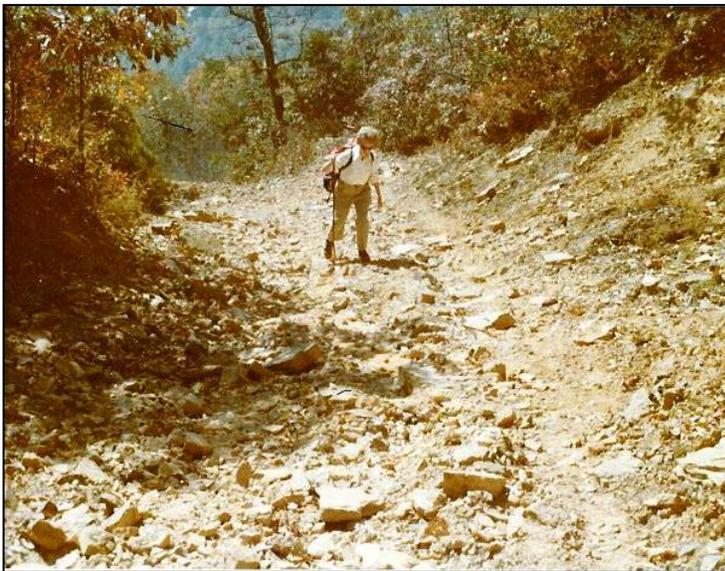


(L) Nick Lozano’s orange pack adorned with the 1972 pink flagging at a Mary Ingles Trail Blazers hike in Kanawha State Forest led by Charley Carlson in the mid 1980s (Doug Wood photo). (R) Christ Church United Methodist in Charleston WV, early home of the fledgling WVSTA (From <http://www.ship-of-fools.com/mystery/2005/952.html>).

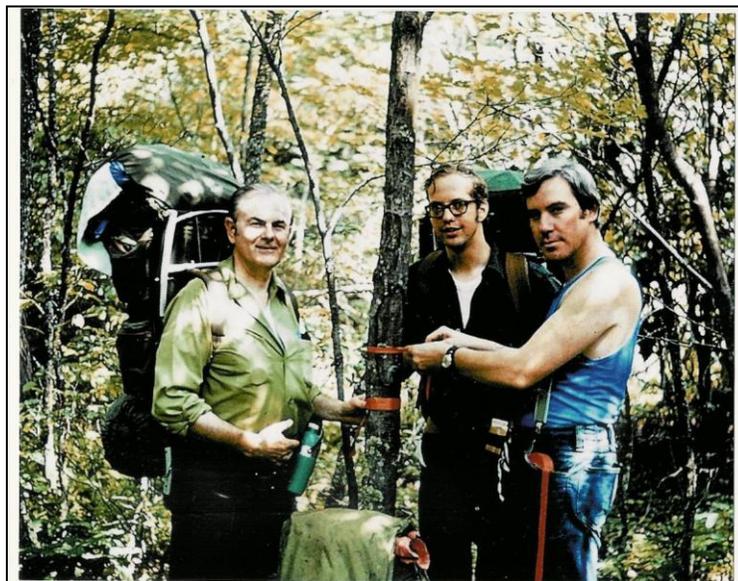
During the winter and spring after the WVSTC’s organizational meeting, the enthusiastic volunteers had explored a number of potential trail locations and had conducted several meetings with state and federal officials who oversaw the administration of

public properties in West Virginia and Virginia. They had also discussed how to further develop the WVSTC organization. Also, at this meeting, Arthur P. Foley, another avid ATC supporter and backpacker joined the ranks of WVSTA volunteers and “hit the ground running” according to Bruce Bond. Foley was a financial officer in the WV higher education system who brought his organizational and networking skills to the Association. He served as the ipso facto executive administrator of the WVSTA in the period 1973-1976, pooling ideas, guidance, and assistance from other government agencies to earn the WVSTA good standing in the halls of government and to put the Allegheny Trail on the ground.

On April 5-6, 1973, the first annual membership meeting (after the 1972 organizational meeting) of the WVSTC was held again at CCUM. Then, on the weekend of May 4-6, 1973, the first scouting trip to the Appalachian Trail atop Peters Mountain near Lindside, WV was taken and included participants Carlson, Tabor, and Lozano. Bond was on his honeymoon with his bride Brenda. During an exploratory hike on August 2-5, 1973, WVSTA volunteers held a mountaintop ceremony at the junction of the AT and the proposed ALT as they tied the first plastic flagging on the latter trail just north of Pine Swamp on Peters Mountain and then flagged the ALT northward in Jefferson National Forest to the Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike and surveyed 2 miles beyond. Attendees included Tabor, Bond, Lozano, Shirley Schweizer, Carolyn Welcker, and one other member (presently unknown). In the October 1973 newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 3), President Nick Lozano proclaimed “As of the trip in August, the trail has now actually begun.” Also in August, 1973, the second newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 2) contained a description compiled by Bruce Bond of the first proposed ALT route between the AT and Blackwater Falls State Park.



(L) Shirley Schweizer on the Peters Mountain exploratory hike August 2-5, 1973 (Carolyn Welcker photo). (R) Shirley Schweizer’s daypack (Doug Wood photo).



Trail flagging ceremony atop Peters Mtn. during the August 2-5, 1973 effort. L-R: Bob Tabor, Bruce Bond, & Nick Lozano (Unknown photographer).

An attempted meeting in January 1974 had to be changed, so on April 5 & 6, 1974, the WVSTC held its second annual membership meeting at CCUM, with guest speakers and workshops. At this meeting, the board of directors approved a name change from the WVSTC to the West Virginia Scenic Trails ASSOCIATION.



(L) The April 6, 1974 Kanawha State Forest outing after the second WVSTA annual membership meeting (Unknown photographer). L-R: Shirley Schweizer, Carolyn Welcker, Arthur Foley, Tommy Carr, Charley Carlson, Virginia Neely McTeer, and Tabor family members: Daniel, Becky & Father Bob holding hands, and another unidentified hiker (possibly Nina Damron). (R) Arthur Foley also served as treasurer for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for 18 years and volunteered for the ATC for 47 years. He hiked to the summit of Mount Katahdin with a torn rotator cuff. Ouch! He continues hiking to this day, but not usually with torn body parts. (Photo courtesy of Arthur).

On July 12, 1974 Nick Lozano, Bob Tabor, and Bruce Bond met with Monongahela National Forest (MNF) personnel at the Forest Headquarters in Elkins. The meeting was coordinated by John Ballantyne, Forest Recreation Officer. Following introductory remarks, Mr. Ballantyne suggested the meeting dispense with trail generalities and concentrate upon an exact routing. Discussion for the remainder of the morning centered upon the WVSTA proposal versus the route suggested by MNF personnel. By lunch time substantial portions of trail locations were settled and the agreed upon location deviated only slightly from the original WVSTA proposal. The WVSTA delegation was highly pleased with the route selected. A second point of discussion at the meeting was the need for a distinctive blaze color. The WVSTA's first choice was "International Orange." However, the delegation learned that color was recently given national designation for trail use by "Off Road Vehicles." Given the limited colors for trail blazing, the next logical choice was yellow.

In 1974, when the group was ready to incorporate, the members composed by-laws and filled out the necessary paperwork to file at the WV Secretary of State's Office. Foley and Carlson joined original officers Lozano, Bond, and Tabor in signing the official articles of incorporation for the WVSTA and on August 19, 1974, after receiving a \$20 filing fee from Carlson, the Secretary's Office issued the articles. On the weekend of November 2-3, 1974, the first WVSTA "membership" work hike was held on Peters Mountain. This was a joint effort between the WVSTA, the KTC, and Jefferson National Forest. It involved an AT relocation around Pine Swamp Branch as well as reflagging the junction with the proposed ALT. Over 20 adult volunteers were present, along with a contingent of Girl Scouts. The WVSTA leaders of the effort were the five original incorporators; Lozano, Tabor, Bond, Carlson, and Foley. One of the WV locals who showed up at this work hike was Nina Damron and she helped for several years thereafter, extending the ALT into eastern Greenbrier County and southern Pocahontas County, WV.

"A path through the woods" Tabor, nicknamed "Pathfinder," was oft-heard explaining the primary vision of the WVSTA for the ALT from the beginning. This simple goal was, nonetheless, complicated by other realities. Physical trail location was determined by a number of factors. First, ideas about which scenic, wild, or other outdoor recreational features would best fit the ALT concept were discussed and explored; "Where can backpackers camp? Where are potential water and food resupply points?" Then landowners were contacted for permission to develop the trail on various properties. The founders approached the WV Parks authorities and the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) officials early on to sell the ALT concept. The outdoor recreation emphasis at the federal level during the Johnson administration had "greased the tracks" and made both federal and state officials receptive to the concept. Meetings between government officials and WVSTA volunteers resulted in an official agreement in August of 1975 between the WVSTA and the WV

Dept. of Natural Resources (WVDNR) (plus the Department's Divisions of Parks and Forestry) and then an agreement on April 3, 1976 with the Supervisors of Monongahela, George Washington, and Jefferson National Forests. Two key state employees who provided guidance and administrative assistance at that time were Bob Mathis and Mike Meador, while Seneca State Forest Superintendent Fred Fromhart and Watoga State Park Superintendent Walt Shupe gave support on the ground. A West Virginia first was the Forest Service agreement that had signers from three National Forests in two administrative regions (Southern Region 8 and Eastern Region 9) agreeing to cooperate with a volunteer group to develop a long-distance trail in two states. WVSTA founders had recognized early on that connecting the ALT to the AT, would necessitate traversing the Allegheny Mountains in part of Virginia.



At a meeting held on August 1975 in the _____

representatives of the West Virginia Scenic Trails Association, and the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Division of Forestry of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, discussed and agreed to a set of planning objectives and procedures for the development and maintenance of the Allegheny Trail through Blackwater Falls State Park, Seneca State Forest and Cass Scenic Railroad State Park.

The purpose of these objectives and procedures is to improve communication and coordination between the agencies and the West Virginia Scenic Trails Association.

APPROVED: West Virginia Scenic Trails Association *1/51 Dick Boardwine*
President

APPROVED: Division of Parks and Recreation *1/51 Ralph Mumme*
Chief

APPROVED: Division of Forestry *1/51 State Forester*
State Forester

APPROVED: West Virginia Department of Natural Resources *1/51 Ira Latimer*
Director

Exhibit 2350
Permit for
W.V. S.T.A.
Howe Reese

Date	Plan	DATA	IMA	R. Tech.	T. Tech.	BMA	Stark	Alt.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

Act of May 15, 1862 (5 U.S.C. 511), and Act of June 30, 1914 (16 U.S.C. 498).

THIS AGREEMENT, made and entered into this 3RD day of April, 1976, by and between the WEST VIRGINIA SCENIC TRAILS ASSOCIATION, hereinafter referred to as the "Association", and the FOREST SUPERVISORS OF THE MONONGAHELA, GEORGE WASHINGTON, AND JEFFERSON NATIONAL FORESTS in West Virginia and Virginia, hereinafter referred to as the "Forest Service":

WITNESSETH:

The date pages of the WVSTA agreements with the WV Dept. of Natural Resources agencies (L) and with three national forests (R). I had the pleasure of knowing three of the signers of the DNR agreement. Recall the quote from Ira Latimer's June 1972 *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine comments above.

Four Forest Service Rangers were critical to the early development of the Allegheny Trail in the borderland between the two Virginias. George Martin in the Blacksburg District of Jefferson National Forest (JNF), Bob Boardwine in the New Castle District of

the same forest, Bill Leichter in the James River District of George Washington National Forest (GWNF), and Pepper Martin in the White Sulphur Springs District of the MNF all worked with the WVSTA to put the dream on the ground. With support from their respective Forest Supervisors, these rangers helped the WVSTA volunteers to find routes that could be accommodated by Forest Service lands. Word got out to the general populace and the effort snowballed. In the ALT development project, Dr. John F. “Jack” Backels saw an opportunity for his forestry students to get some practical field training while marking trees with ALT gold. Serving as Forestry Professor and President of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge, VA, Dr. Backels utilized his school’s Forestry Club students as volunteers on the Allegheny Trail in the James River Ranger District beginning in 1972, establishing the trail in western Alleghany (Virginia spelling of the word) Co., VA and eastern Greenbrier Co., WV. Other folks who helped in the 1970s with networking and getting trespass permissions were boy scout leaders Mike Reynolds and John Corey, Nature Conservancy board member Frank Pelurie, and the head of Westvaco’s Woodlands Division, Kenny Funderburke. Those men ensured the ALT would be able to expand across both sides of the Virginia-West Virginia border.

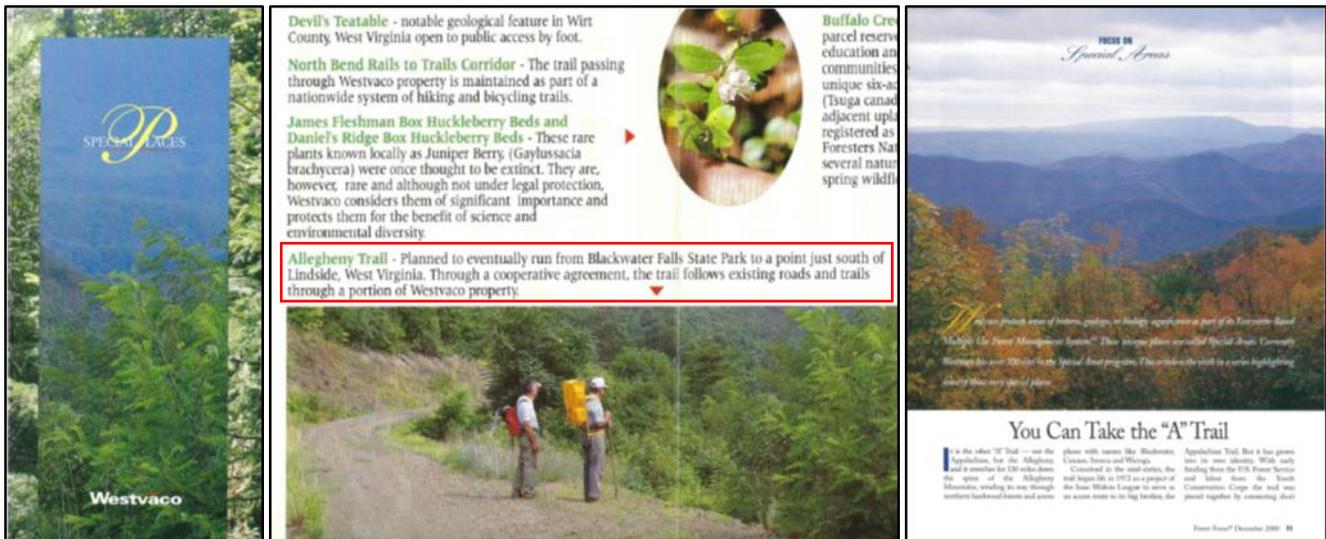


(L) Highlands Conservancy activist George Rosier, left, and Nature Conservancy board member Frank Pelurie, right, CONSERVE their energy amid a mixed Spruce-Birch forest atop Back Allegheny Mountain in the “Mower Tract,” after a long climb during an overnight exploration of a potential ALT route in November 1978. The trail was ultimately routed onto Little Mountain next to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. Both men were U.S. Navy veterans. (Doug Wood photo).

(M) Dr. Jack Backels in 2019, a Navy veteran of the Korean War, was the first volunteer known to establish the ALT on the James River Ranger District in 1972 (image from <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D42eCzJ24mQQ&psig=AOvVaw22VVsYaezU0zI7LoZPvI8I&ust=1607102906903000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQIQRXfwTCKJ5v4Krsu0CFQAAAAAABAD>).

(R) Young Bill Leichter (red circle) with his family on their farm in Rock Lick, Marshall Co., WV. Bill served in the U.S. Army and then graduated from the WV University Forestry School in 1964. He was employed in the U.S. Forest Service soon after graduation and retired in 1990. He passed away in WVSTA’s incorporation 40th anniversary year.

(image from <http://www.mmlidesign.com/leichter/photos.htm>)



(L & M) The cover and an excerpt from a Westvaco Special Places brochure and (R) an article on the ALT in Westvaco’s December 2000 Forest Focus magazine.

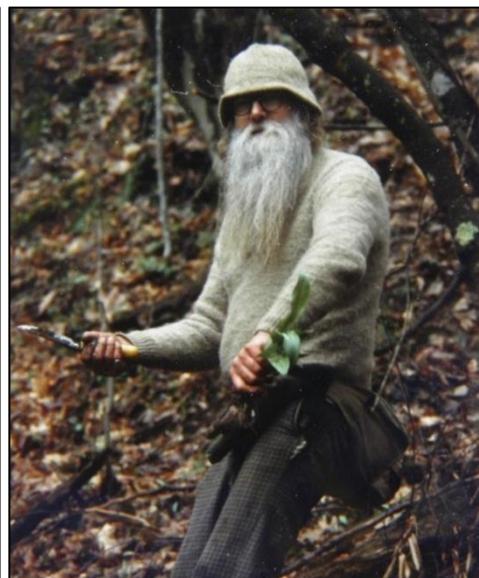
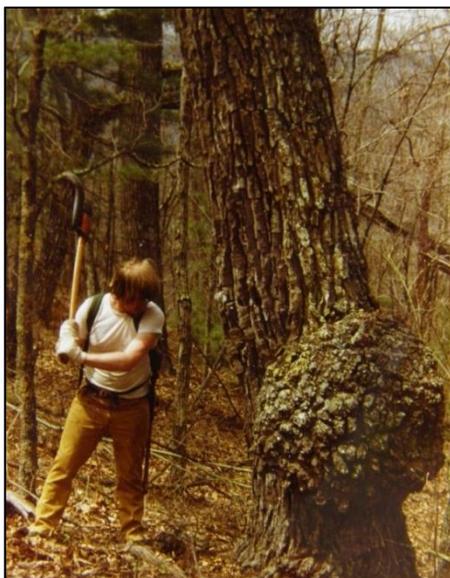
By 1976, the WVSTA founders had recruited another BSA supporter, Charlie Dundas, by then graduated from Marshall University, returned from duty in Viet Nam and serving as an adult leader with Boy Scout Troop 42 sponsored by the Baptist Temple in Huntington. Dundas brought to the association a combination of Marine Corps engineering skills, boy scout labor, and some much needed trail tools and expertise, having been involved in development of the Kanawha Trace since 1958, when he was a young scout

(recall Nick Lozano’s life-changing backpack trip in the same year). Two scouts gained Eagle Scout status by planning and implementing portions of the Appalachian Trail relocation project from further east to the spine of Peters Mountain, the border between the two Virginias. The Allegheny Trail would benefit from Eagle Scout projects time and time again as development progressed.



Shirley Schweizer and Charlie Dundas cross Little Cabell Creek on the Kanawha Trace at Camp Arrowhead of the former B.S.A. Tri-State Council.
(Doug Wood photo)

Tabor and Lozano organized a public meeting held in Elkins, WV during the Mountain State Forest Festival Oct. 4-5, 1975. The two Allegheny Trail fathers were presenting the concept of the ALT to the public in that town, considered by many to be the “Gateway to Monongahela National Forest.” In the crowd, a local mental health counselor and community activist named Fred Bird incredulously wondered out loud, “Why hasn’t anybody told us about this before now?” Fred turned out to become one of the most influential developers of the ALT in two ranger districts of the MNF. His family became involved and he recruited other brush-hook toting volunteers like Dr. Robert Urban, professor of Biology at Davis and Elkins College (D&E). Those two worked as a dynamic duo, with special assistance from their family members, from Greenbrier District Ranger Dave Stack, and from students of the D&E Outings Club, especially Pete Josimovich, one of Bob Urban’s talented students who went on to become a medical professional. In a few years, they extended the ALT from Cass, WV to Blackwater Falls State Park, WV, including its traverse through the high spruce forest of Shavers Mountain.



(L) The first ALT Section 2 Coordinator, Fred Bird may not have the right tool for that particular clearing job.
(R) The first Section 1 Coordinator, George Rosier participating in a WV early spring tradition of digging ramps
(Doug Wood photos).

Nick recalls his recruitment of another very effective volunteer, George Rosier, an electrician/repairman and strong supporter of the WV Highlands Conservancy. After the initial meeting, George Rosier was bitten by the ALT bug and he recruited other volunteers, including his wife Lois and his son Lakin, to help him complete the northernmost portion of the trail to the Pennsylvania border. As with the efforts of Bird, Urban, and Backels, Rosier's effort included assistance from a college's outings group, that of West Virginia University's (WVU) Soil Science Club. Some of George's recruits continued their volunteer efforts for many years, like Joan and Jim Mooney, Minnie Bosley, Kathy Kirby, Kay Bailey, and Vicky Shears. George and his recruits formed the Northwest Passage Chapter of the WVSTA around 1985. The chapter operated for many years. Another chapter, the Allegheny Highlands Chapter formed a bit later and focused attention on the Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley area of the ALT.



(L) NW Passage Chapter outing. Leaders are pointed out (unknown photographer). (M) George Rosier looks over his exploratory crew marking the ALT through an old surface mine near Douglas (Doug Wood photograph). (R) Beaver dams on the old mine benches created ponds and cranberry bogs that fed many NW Passage work crews on the tart fruits (Doug Wood photograph).



(L) On a driving tour of ALT Section 1 in the early 1980s, we were surprised to find the ALT totally obliterated by this surface mine operation in Preston Co., WV. (R) Many years later, the reclamation effort resulted in a pleasant, pastoral landscape, and numerous Bob-o-links. (Doug Wood photos).

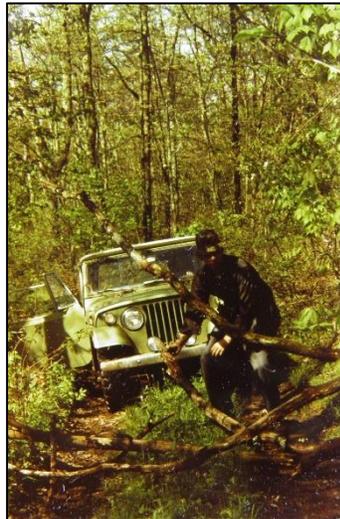
With much of the trail north of Watoga State Park completed, and bits and pieces south of that park awaiting connection efforts, the WVSTA decided to officially designate four sections for managerial purposes. In the January 1980 issue of the WVSTA newsletter, President Bruce Bond announced that each section now had a volunteer Trail Coordinator. Incidentally, that newsletter issue was the first one titled *Whoop 'N' Holler*, thanks to Mary Helen Thaw, and the first produced monthly and edited by Fred Bird. ALT Sections 1, 2, and 3 were assigned, respectively, to Rosier, Bird, and Lozano, the primary developers of those sections. Section 4, the most incomplete section was assigned to Bob Tabor and a relative newcomer, Yours Truly. While I was working on a B.S. in Wildlife Management at WVU, my uncle Dave Pennington, an engineer with the WV Dept. of Highways' (WVDOH) Long-Range Planning Unit told me about a work party coming up August 7-8, 1976. I drove my VW mini-bus camper to Douthards Creek and met other volunteers working towards Watoga and the top of Middle Mtn. I hadn't paid dues yet, being a poor college student, so I was considered a "friend" of the WVSTA, not a member. After graduation in May 1977, my first work party as a dues-paying member was on an October outing at the BSA Buckskin Council's Reservation at Dilley's Mill. In years past I had attended summer scout camp there with Uncle Dave's troop, had participated in Family Trails Day events held by the WVDNR at local state facilities like Seneca State Forest and Watoga State Park, and had fished for trout in Knapps Creek, so I was familiar with the territory. Charlie Dundas and one or two boy scouts were involved in that effort. Bob Tabor picked up on the fact that I had recently graduated from the WVU school of Agriculture and Forestry and asked if I liked maps. In my last semester, I had completed a cartography class

taught by Dr. Richard Little, so I said “yes”. Bob handed me a USGS 7.5 minute topographic map, a note pad, and a brand-spanking-new mileage wheel and said, “Then you are the official note-taker and map-reader—mark down all points of interest and note their distances from our starting point at zero.” I was bitten. I also met Randy Curtis that day, my Uncle Dave’s colleague at the WVDOH. Randy had arranged a sweetheart deal with the agency’s testing laboratory, whereby the WVSTA received leftover quarts of yellow highway paint submitted for testing by competing paint manufacturers. Only a thimble full was needed for physical testing and the WVDOH avoided paying high dollar to have the paint shipped to Ohio to a special landfill permitted to safely dispose of the volatile carbohydrates that carried the pigments. Plastic trail markers had not been invented yet.

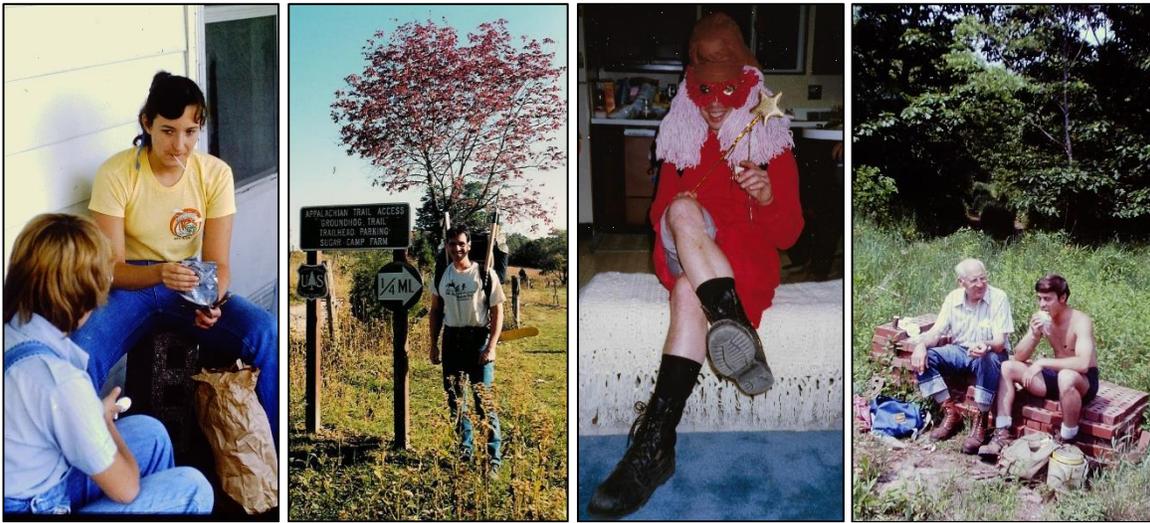


(L) First ALT Section 4 Coordinator, Doug Wood (hunkered down) and WVSTA volunteer Dan George (on the R) during a work party in 1992 with the MNF-led Anthony Youth Correctional Center crew (photographer unknown). (R) Gina Majestro uses the original WVSTA mileage wheel on Section 4 of the ALT. (Doug Wood photo).

Over the ensuing years, I had excellent assistance from many volunteers. A few stand out, like Harry Tupis, a post-WWII army special forces veteran and recently retired food inspector, who received his life back from the awful grasp of alcoholism by hiking the entire length of the Appalachian Trail. He never touched a drop after that. Subsequently, the ALT and I benefitted from Harry’s can-do attitude and his special forces training in woodcraft (he could read weather sign like nobody else). Other excellent helpers were Dave Mullins, Jayne “Janey” Looftoro, Charlie Bowers, Lynn Inman, Roger Hardway, the Addis family, the “Raikes Boys,” the Majestro family, New York transplant John Giacalone, and Dianne Anestis, who later married me (she was stone-cold sober when that happened—honest!). The Reger family brought construction expertise and a strong conservation ethic to two shelter projects and many miles of trail improvement on Sections 1 and 2. They also hosted many outings at their camp along Glady Fork.



(L-R) Roger Hardway practices his tool-leaning (actually one of the most versatile trail workers I ever had the pleasure of working with), Jayne Looftoro swings a mean brush hook, Dave Mullins clears the way for Bob Tabor’s old Jeep Wagoneer, and the best helper I ever had, Dianne Anestis. Look at the fire coming out of her loppers! (Doug Wood photos).



(L & M-L) WV State Police Crime Lab Techs Lynn Inman and John Giacalone. (M-R) John's alter ego, the *Trail Fairy*, at a Mary Ingles Trail Blazers Halloween Party. (R) Retired insurance agent Charlie Bowers and I have a working lunch atop Peters Mtn.

During my early days as ALT Section 4 Coordinator, I was sometimes pleasantly surprised at the efforts of cooperators who had forged ahead with the trail development process even without prodding or participation by the WVSTA. For instance, Bob Tabor once arranged for me to meet MNF's White Sulphur Springs District Ranger Donald "Pepper" Martin to discuss potential development of the ALT up Laurel Run to connect with private properties that Bob recently acquired permission to cross, and thus bridge the gap between MNF and GWNF atop Allegheny Mountain, where Dr. Backels had been working. Pepper arranged for us to meet long-time employee Edgar Hall and newly hired Recreation Specialist Jim Miller on site at the confluence of Meadow Creek and Laurel Run. Edgar guided us up Laurel Run, drive-able for about three miles then, to view treadwork he had led YACC crews to build near the head of the run and up Allegheny Mountain. He also showed us a rock-hop crossing the MNF had placed on Meadow Creek and an extensive treadwork project he had led on the southern end of Meadow Creek Mountain. He had also led tread crews at the northern ascent/descent of the mountain and at Bear Branch. When Pepper left MNF for Mark Twain N.F., his replacement ranger, Morse Reece continued the Hall and Miller ALT development on the district. Later, when the MNF hired Tim Henry as the South Zone Recreation Supervisor, Tim continued that work until he retired and was replaced by Matt Edwards, an equally hard-working friend of the ALT. In the late 1970s, I found out that JNF's New Castle District Ranger Bob Boardwine had started the ALT development process on his district by painting yellow blazes on a trail at the end of Hatcher Road reaching towards the ridgetop at the *Flats of Peters Mtn.* Doug Maddox had cleared the climb from Jerrys Run up Allegheny Mountain (another Dr. Backels original route) under the direction of James River District Ranger Bill Leichter. MNF specialist Ron Polgar took it upon himself to provide chainsaw training to some of our volunteers and that made a huge positive difference in our cooperative effort. You can gain insight into a management-decentralization effort in the U.S. Forest Service then, that resulted in greater accomplishments with fewer costs by reading about Pepper Martin's experience on the Poplar Bluff Ranger District of the Mark Twain N.F. at [Pepper Martin pg 179](#).



(L) Edgar Hall, far left, and Jim Miller, next to him, show Bob Tabor and Jeff Roy the rock hop across Meadow Creek. (R) L-R MNF's Matt Edwards, WVDOH's Bill Richards (First WV Statewide Trail Coordinator), and MNF's Tim Henry pose with then WVSTA President Dianne Anestis in June 2005 as she cuts the tape on the recently erected Laurel Run Bridge. (Doug Wood photos).



WVSTA's volunteer ALT Section Coordinators depend heavily upon other volunteers to help maintain the ALT. That includes recruiting experienced workers as well as training inexperienced trail users. (L) WWII special forces veteran & one-time Kanawha Trail Club President Harry Tupis, shown here decked out for a trail clearing and spring improvement project, was my righthand volunteer for many years. (M-L) Elsa Nadler, who stepped into the Section 1 Coordinator position after George Rosier passed away, trains Gina Majestro to paint yellow blazes neatly. (M-R) Under a shower of "Sarvisberry" blooms, George Rosier recruits Eddie Pride to become the third Section 2 Coordinator after Fred Bird "retired." (R) John Northeimer became the fourth Section 2 Coordinator later (Doug Wood photos).

My personal story of first involvement with the WVSTA is typical of the initiation ritual of many first timers. By word of mouth from a friend or family member, sometimes by newspaper notice, and, today, often by website information and Facebook, a new volunteer shows up at an event, she has a good time working with her hands in the Great Outdoors with like-minded friendly folks, and she feels good about doing something that benefits both people and the environment. The second, third, and fourth generations of ALT Section Coordinators (SCs) were recruited in a similar fashion. Harry Tupis took over the reins of Sect. 3 for a short while, when Nick Lozano's life circumstances pulled him away from it. Anita Tracy (3rd Sect. 3 SC, recruited by Harry and Fred Bird). Later, Anita moved to Kentucky and Vicky Shears (3rd Sect. 3 SC, a George Rosier recruit) whipped Sect. 3 into shape for several years. Later on, Ken Beezley (4th Sect. 3 SC, a Doug Wood recruit) filled in after Vicky could no longer handle it due to life circumstances. Bruce Wollaber (2nd Sect. 2 SC, a George Rosier recruit) took over the reins from Fred Bird, then came Ed Pride (3rd Sect. 2 SC, also recruited by George), then John Northeimer (4th Sect. 2 SC, a Doug Wood recruit), and later, Kieran O'Malley (5th Sect. 2 SC, another Doug Wood recruit) tried it for a short period before his employment duties made it too difficult for him to perform his volunteer SC duties. One of George Rosier's recruits, Elsa Nadler, became the second Coordinator for Section 1 and faithfully performed her volunteer duties for several years, nurturing good will with local landowners as well as keeping the trail well blazed. When Elsa moved to Cleveland, OH, the entire ALT only had one active SC, myself on Section 4.

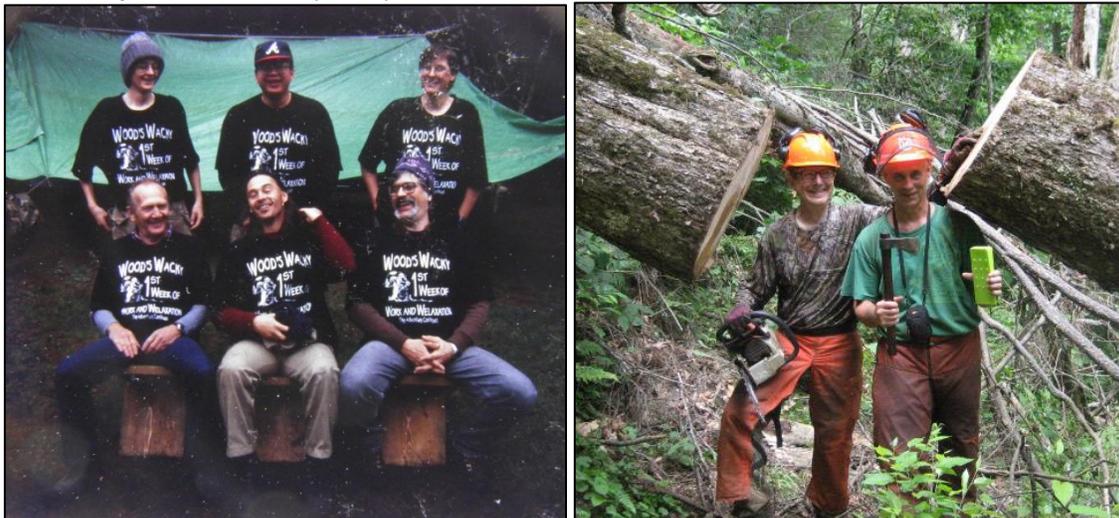


(L) Bruce Wollaber hunkered down. (ML) Kieran O'Malley, WVDNR Wildlife Biologist (photo courtesy of Cumberland Times-News). (MR) Newt Harman blackens a bat box for a wildlife enhancement project (Doug Wood photo). (R) Steve Shields, on right, working beside his son Jonathan (J.D.), aliases "Poppa Bear and Baby Bear" (Doug Wood photo).



Section 3 had a series of hard-working coordinators after Fred Bird & Harry Tupis; (L-R) Anita Tracy, Vicky Shears, & Ken Beezley (Doug Wood photos).

Those were tough times. Inevitably, any complaint about poor blazing or any attempt at coordinating trail maintenance and improvement projects fell into my lap. With the help of other dedicated volunteers, we limped along. Quite frankly, my efforts at filling in the gap in Section 4, suffered during that period, when I had to try to keep up with more immediate needs on the other three sections of the trail. I was also serving as president of the Mary Ingles Trail Blazers and attempting to guide that chapter in its development efforts on the Mary Ingles Trail, while holding down a bread-and-butter job with the WV Dept. of Environmental Protection (WVDEP). During that period my father contracted and died from Parkinson's Disease. Family responsibilities took precedent, but I continued to organize the annual work of week on the ALT known as Wood's Wacky Week of Work and Welaxation (started Aug. 7-13, 1994) just to maintain my sanity.



(L) Trail crew members of the first Wood's Wacky Week of Work and Welaxation (Aug. 7-13, 1994) pose in their T-shirts during the second W5 in 1995. Clockwise from upper left are Adam "Weasel" Raikes, Richard Cosner, Steven "Bohunk" Raikes, Roger "Pakrat" Raikes, Yours Truly adjusting my coiffure, and Tom Addis (Dianne Anestis photo). (R) Greg Edwards and I gloat over our log-cutting skills with his chainsaw and my tomahawk and wedge along Glady Fork during W5 of the WVSTA's 40th anniversary year; in 2014, WVSTA volunteers cut an estimated 450 blowdowns from Glady Fork trail segments, saving MNF approximately \$22,500 (Brian Hirt photo).

Fortunately, during that difficult time, our cooperating partners—USFS and WV State Park staff—kept maintaining the ALT in several locations under their authorities. Blackwater Falls State Park Superintendent Rob Gilligan and Naturalists Pat Hissom and Paulita Cousin made sure the ALT was well maintained. Canaan Valley Superintendents, Steve Bollinger and Stan Beafore, as well as Naturalist John Northeimer dedicated staff time to the ALT. Further south, Seneca State Forest and Cass State Park staff under Superintendents Dave Caplinger and, later, Jeff Layfield, excelled at maintaining the ALT. Watoga State Park's series of Superintendents and Assistant Supts. (Mark Wylie, Mark Mengele, Kelly Smith, & Jody Spencer) also assured the ALT was kept up. In between the parks and state forests, MNF staff like Tim Henry and Matt Edwards kept Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), and Americorps volunteers busy on the ALT. JNF staffers Bill Compton and Jim Laignel were very helpful. On the GWNF, one staffer in particular, Yvonne Norman/Rice assured the ALT received maintenance during my period of personal trial. My wife Dianne was then, and continues to be, a dependable supporter of the WVSTA, helping plan and carry out

work hikes, backpack trips, and other events, and she often took on parent-watching duties to allow me time for trail development and maintenance. She also served many years as the annual Allegheny Trek organizer and in the board positions of Vice President and President. Eventually, my fellow WVDEP employee and WVSTA recruit Newt Harman filled in as the 6th SC for Sect. 2 and Steve Shields (recruited by Roger Raikes) agreed to be the 3rd SC for Sect. 1 for a short while, and then recruited another volunteer for the job—thank goodness that Greg Edwards (4th Sect. 1 SC) joined our organization when he did. He also helped in Sect. 2, while Newt dealt with family issues similar to those that I attended to in the first decade of the 21st century. In 2020, the WVSTA had a full complement of SC's, but as with any volunteer organizations, that could change at any moment. Below is a jovial excerpt from the May 2020 issue of the WVSTA's quarterly newsletter, the *Whoop-n-Holler*, regarding the Section Coordinators at that time.



A lightweight only by poundage, Sect. 1 Coord. Greg "Mighty Mite" Edwards is a dynamo of log-eating power with his trusty chainsaw, nicknamed "Missing Link".



Sect. 2 Coord. Jeff Byard turns Laurel Hells into tossed salads with his power pruner, "Tornado Alley".



Need a view from the trail? Sect. 3 Coord. Brian Hirt has any tool for any job. Watch out baby birds and rabbits, WVSTA's newest SC is gassed-up, gung-ho, and geared for whacking what gets in his way! His fave tool? "Rattlesnake Buzz".



WVSTA's Sect. 4 Coord. Doug Wood has been around longer than anyone can remember, and he still hasn't upgraded his tool supply. It's slow work, but he's intimate with every twig he cuts. His fave hand celt is "Stoned, B.C."



Changes did occur, and within the decade after the 40th anniversary year, Mitch Klein (L) became Section 1 Coordinator, but was soon succeeded by Marissa Bennett (ML), Joe Kelly (MR) coordinated Section 3, and Justin Mullins (R) coordinated Section 4. (All Doug Wood photos, except Joe Kelly photo attributed to Kelly Bowyer.).

Many WVSTA trail projects are complemented by habitat enhancements that benefit flora and fauna. For instance, under the guidance of John Northeimer, WVSTA volunteers removed an old creosote-timbered boardwalk from a wetland that was home to two rare plant species. We relocated the trail relatively easily, once the tough job of boardwalk removal was completed, and we improved the wetland's water quality at the same time. Other habitat projects accomplished along the ALT and other long-distance trails include installing bat roosting boxes and fish habitat structures, removal of exotic plants that compete with rare native plants, mowing wildlife openings to conserve habitat diversity, pruning fruit trees in wildlife openings, and controlling erosion at stream crossings. Volunteers have often served as the eyes of biological personnel in the WVDNR and the USFS by finding rare plant and animal population locations unknown to those folks charged with the conservation of such species.



(L) Florida Trail Section Coordinator Bob Atwater, said he joined the WVSTA to “earn my right to backpack on the Allegheny Trail.” Would that all ALT users had the volunteer-spirit that Bob brought north to us before he passed away several years later in Melbourne, FL. He and myself are shown here removing decking from the creosote-leaching boardwalk at Canaan Valley State Park in 2001 (Dianne Anestis photo). (M) The rare Glade Spurge (*Euphorbia purpurea*) was enhanced by the project (Photo courtesy of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center). (R) Bob maintaining his section of the Florida Trail (Unknown photographer).

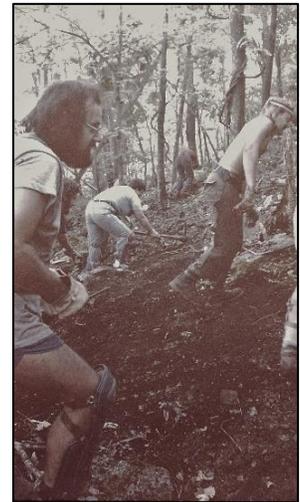
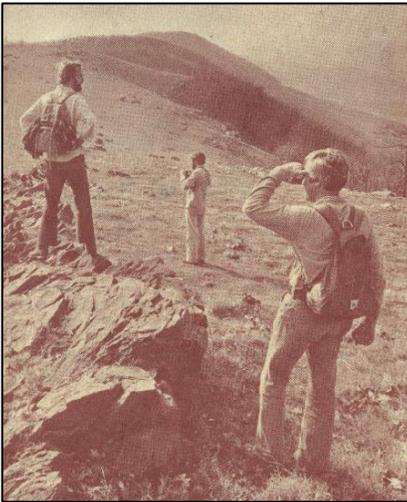


(L) WVSTA volunteers (L-R, Riley Sain, Rick McAllister, Mary Channel, & John Northeimer) take a fun break from a Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) migration research project along the Appalachian Trail on Peters Mtn in 1987. (R) Tagged Monarch held by volunteer Lizette Grijalva (Doug Wood photos).



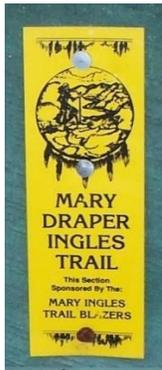
The Flat-spined Toothed Snail (*Triodopsis platysayoides*) (L) and the Cheat Mountain Salamander (*Plethodon nettingi*) (R) are federally protected species that are very sensitive to small disturbances in their habitats. ALT maintainers in the gastropod’s Cheat Canyon habitat and the amphibian’s Shavers Mountain home minimize ground disturbances when they clear the trail of obstacles. (Images from: <https://www.fws.gov/westvirginiafieldoffice/speciesinfo.html>).

The ALT development effort received boosts from not only volunteers, but also from short-distance hikers and long-distance backpackers. In the latter category three individuals stand out, Michael Meador, Leonard Adkins, and Laurie (Messick) Adkins. Mike, in 1974 or 1975, backpacked the general route of the ALT long before it was anywhere near completion. His early effort acted as a public awareness campaign that drew new members to the WVSTA cause. Later, with much of the ALT completed, Leonard Adkins took on the challenge, and then a few years later, 1983, his new hiking partner, Laurie Messick joined him on his second ALT adventure, which was a training trip for their planned Appalachian Trail hike the next year, leading up to their through-hike of the Pacific Crest Trail. Once again, these adventures drew attention to the ALT project.



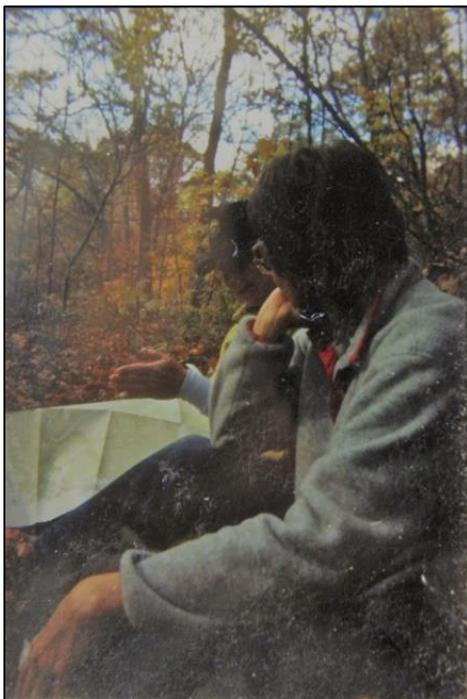
(L) A photo from the original WVSTA brochure, showing Mike Meador between Bruce Bond and Nick Lozano exploring Rice's Field atop Peters Mountain (unknown photographer). (M) Photo of Leonard Adkins and Laurie Messick from: http://www.athikerpictures.org/embedded_show/17698. (R) Leonard Adkins, left, and other WVSTA volunteers joined the Konnarock Trail Crew in 1985 and 1986 when they stayed at Sugarcamp Farm and worked on the Groundhog Trail (Doug Wood photo).

Life circumstances tend to pull founders away from organizations they have established, and such was also the case with the WVSTA. Changing family circumstances, new employment assignments, sickness, and death pulled all the founders away from their leadership roles after several years. Bob Tabor remained engaged on-the-ground longer than the other co-signers of the articles of incorporation, long enough to help establish two WVSTA chapters dedicated to the development of the Mary Ingles Trail (MIT) in honor of the colonial frontier heroine of that name. Both of those chapters started with strong female leadership as well as the traditional male leadership often associated at that time with outdoor adventure clubs.



(L) Evelyn Quillen designed the MITB logo and the chapter uses it still on plastic blazes (Doug Wood photo). (M) Dianne Anestis and Sheri Moore were early leaders in the Mary Ingles Trail Blazers (photo courtesy of Vicky Shears). (R) Hillary Jones and Liz Watson played similar roles in the Mary Ingles Trail Club (Kathy Kirby photo).

Mary's story is one of personal stamina and hope against incredible odds during her captivity by Shawnees allied to the French at the beginning of the French and Indian War. It is an inspiring story that propelled a middle-aged mother from Bloomington Indiana, to embark in 1987 on an adventure to retrace Mary's footsteps nearly 500 miles. When Eleanor Lahr set foot in WV, the first established WVSTA MIT chapter, the Mary Ingles Trail Club (MITC), was headquartered in Fayetteville, WV and the second chapter, the Mary Ingles Trail Blazers (MITB) did not yet exist. Eleanor graciously allowed other people to walk with her during portions of her adventure. Male and female, fit and fat, young and old, many people inspired by the story that had been recently retold in James Alexander Thom's novel *Follow the River*, joined for a few hours or a few days hoping to "feel Mary's spirit." Volunteers with the MITC guided Eleanor through the rugged New River Gorge on portions of the MIT they were developing then. After a decade of productive trail building, the MITC faded away when top administrators of New River Gorge National River pulled away technical support of the MIT effort through the National Park Service (NPS) property. Without cooperation of the large land-holding entity, the club had nothing to do, so it withered away.



(L) Eleanor Lahr was guided by Mary Ingles Trail Club volunteer Liz Watson in 1987 through New River Gorge (Doug Wood photo). (R) Eleanor returned in 2012 to walk the hiking trail she and Mary Ingles inspired the MITB to establish (Dianne Anestis photo).

The second MIT WVSTA chapter, the MITB, was accepted as a chapter in 1989, largely due to the groundswell of public interest in Mary Ingles' story generated by Lahr's trek. The chapter, headquartered in the mid Kanawha Valley, continues its efforts thanks to state land administrators and private landowners who had more vision than the NPS did. The MITB now have two segments of the trail open to the public, one in Kanawha State Forest and one on Appalachian Power Company (APCo) property between Winfield and St. Albans, WV. APCo and its parent company, American Electric Power, continue to benefit from the good publicity generated by hosting the MIT.

The story of Mary's journey...

begins with the War of Emancipation between Great Britain and France known as the French & Indian War. Mary's father, Alexander Draper, was a British soldier.

Colonial backland, addressing the Ohio Valley Indians in the early summer of 1755 by personally leading the French to the region & the Indians had no choice but to accept the French & attempt to force the English back across the governing bodies of the British colonies were ineffective in regard to preparations for defense.

The result of this indecision was never a plan for the French to attack the frontier settlements from Pennsylvania to North Carolina, east & west of the Allegheny Mountains. Secured in the spring & summer of 1755 in the hands of the British, could only hope for a last opportunity to escape their loved ones from their capture.

In preparation, the Shawnee war chief could be enticed after an ancient Shawnee custom that started the two Missions. Captain Peter Greasy & escorted the English to the settlement of present-day Clarksburg, WV. In the spring, Mary was put to the task of remaining safe from the heavy spring water seeping from the ground.

The wary party, determined to the River & arrived Draper's Meadow. They continued working the meadows & subsistence of Lower Shenandoah Valley, of 50000 acres near present-day Parkersburg, WV.

Within a short time, Mary's legs & feet were sprained from lack of shoes. Mary worked for a Draper's man, saving their lives from lack of food. Mary also made the acquaintance of other captives, one of which was a woman named Betty.

July 1755 - ... Dutch - French, New River, wounded. Her wife, New River, prisoner, captured.

July 26 - ... Col. James Patton, New River, killed. Capt. Greasy, New River, killed. Mrs. Greasy, New River, killed. James Cook, New River, wounded. Mrs. English, New River, killed. Mrs. Greasy, New River, prisoner. Mrs. Greasy, New River, prisoner. Mrs. Greasy, New River, prisoner.

Deposited in the Big Bone Lick.

The inside of the Mary Ingles Trail promotional brochure developed by the MITB (Doug Wood photo).



Above: The Mary Ingles Trail Blazers cleaned up an illegal dump in Kanawha State Forest at Rockcamp Branch, which later became the first Mary Ingles Trailhead in the Kanawha Valley. Back Row standing (L-R): Lu Schrader, Paul Walker, Charlie Thomas, Doug Binau, Denny Wood, Carl McLaughlin, Delbert Atkins, Roger Hardway, & WV Dept. of Natural Resources Environmental Inspector Lacy "Bud" Zimmerman. Front row standing (L-R): Connie Miller, Loretta Wood, & Dianne Anestis. Kneeling: David Miller. (Doug Wood photograph)

Other private companies and NGOs benefitted from the ALT, especially construction companies that won contracts on USFS-funded trail improvement projects like bridges and trailheads. Tri-State Company, a trail construction company owned and operated by Charlie Dundas and John Gibson, a former boy scout in Charlie's troop, won a handful of contracts on the ALT, including two bridges and some tread reconstruction. Other entities have benefitted from similar projects of the WVSTA.



(L) L-R Boy Scout Charles Gibson, Scout John Gibson, & Scout Master Charlie Dundas resting beside Manns Creek Gorge on their first for-pay trail development project (Doug Wood photograph). (R) The MITB contracted with the Huntington Museum of Art for several years to conduct semi-annual trail maintenance (Dianne Anestis photograph).

Although the WVSTA's state and federal partners have generally been reasonable and helpful, the machinations of governmental entities can sometimes confound the most logical among us. For instance, notice the name of the trail shown in the photo below. The story behind that photo is quite weird. The most rugged portion of Mary's journey home was arguably through the New River Gorge. Partnering with the NPS to locate and develop a trail in honor of Mary Ingles, the MITC, led by such visionaries as Liz Watson (lower left, sitting) and woodsmen like Albert Falls (upper right in camo) recruited volunteers and local businessman John Dragan (founder of *Wildwater Unlimited* rafting company) to assist by constructing the first ever MIT trailhead. Dragan's machinery

did the heavy work of grading the site and spreading the gravel provided by the New River Gorge National River. The trailhead was completed in time for Eleanor's walk and a grand opening of the trail was planned to coincide. A few days before the ceremony, Bob Tabor was aghast to find that the NPS had changed the nameplate to "Thurmond-Minden Trail." No one knew why, but when Bob called the maintenance supervisor, he was told that somebody above his pay scale had requested his crew to make the change. After Bob's rant, the supervisor re-installed the original nameplate just in time for the grand opening, but he was required to replace it with the other nameplate afterwards. Even staff members were upset that Mary Ingles' name was no longer associated with the trail. To this day, the NPS has not one segment of trail named in Mary's honor.

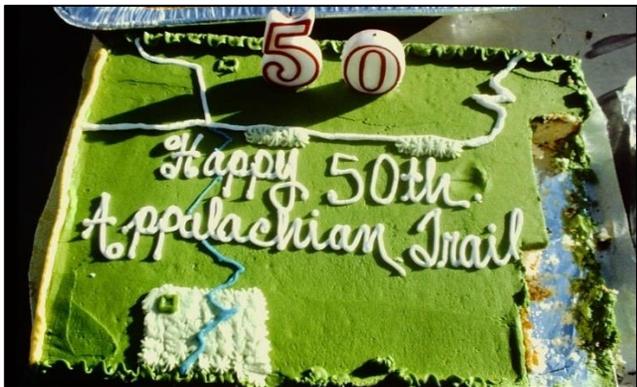


Many people joined Eleanor Lahr (lower right with an 18th century-style wool blanket like Mary would have had) along portions of her journey, but Debbie Klene (far right in blue) was the only one who accompanied her the entire way. Note the trail name before it was changed a second time (unknown photographer).

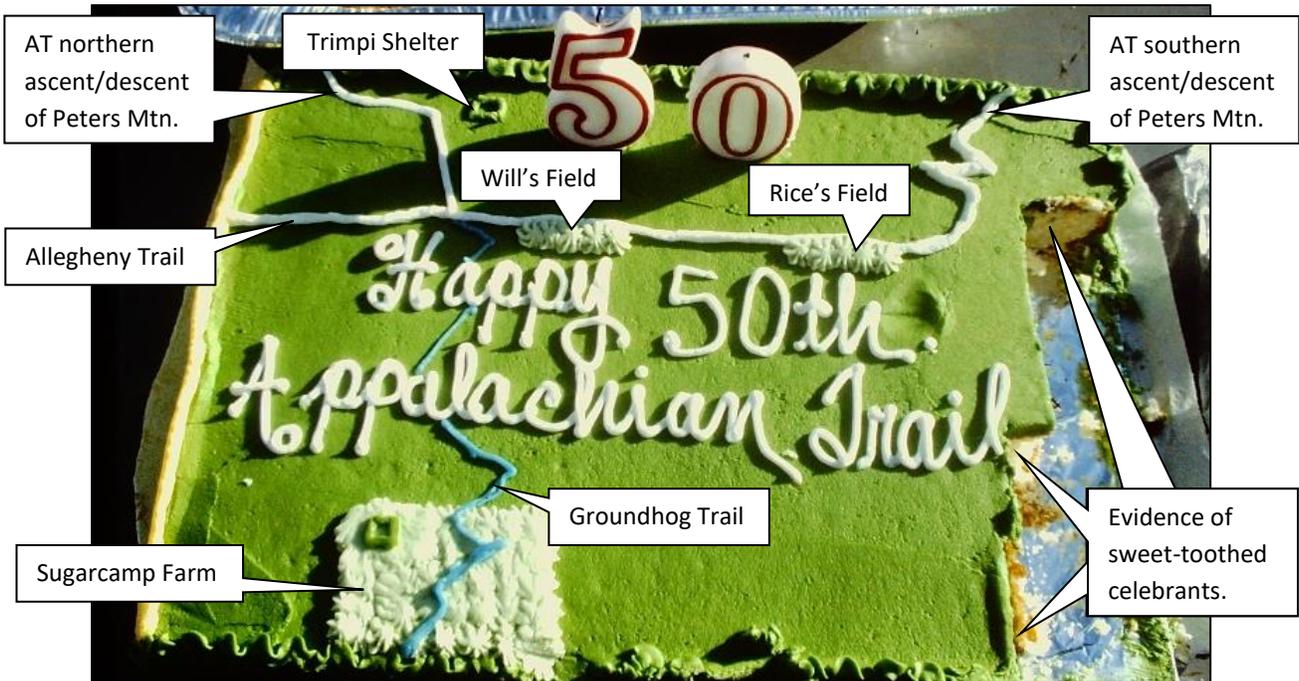
Another mind-boggling action by a federal partner occurred when the WVSTA had become a maintaining club of a segment of the AT on Peters Mountain in cooperation with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's predecessor, the Appalachian Trail Conference. Founders Bob Tabor and Nick Lozano had found a willing seller of a tract in Monroe County, WV whose property would make it possible to develop a trailhead and trail connecting to the AT. The NPS's Pam Underhill was involved in the negotiations to purchase the tract, as were a number of other federal authorities. When the deal was done, WVSTA volunteers began refurbishing the old four-square home of Cecil McKinney, the former owner, to make a trail crew operations base. Blacksburg District Ranger George Martin supported this effort, giving the WVSTA two damaged portable outhouses to convert to pit toilets, and providing trail building tools for the AT and ALT, as well as for construction of the hoped-for access trail to the AT. Volunteers began extending the aptly-named Groundhog Trail towards the top of the mountain, to connect the new Sugarcamp Farm trailhead with the AT. However, the development was hindered for two years, while two federal agencies argued about which one should pay for a professional survey to identify the tract's boundaries. Volunteers were not eager to complete the trail just to find out we had trespassed on neighboring properties, but the WVSTA finally did its own primitive survey so our volunteers could continue expanding the trail. The Association sunk over \$1,100 from its treasury and over \$1,000 from individual donors, into refurbishing the house (plumbing, electricity, furniture, fire alarms, etc.) and paying two professional, historical house assessors to evaluate the needs of the structure. Our volunteers expended hundreds of hours clearing the AT for several years. The WVSTA hosted the ATC's Konnarock Crew at the farmhouse for several weeks over two years to help complete the Groundhog Trail. A long-term Breeding Bird Survey route was established along the Groundhog Trail by the WVDNR. We also hosted a mammal survey crew from Marshall U. and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History one summer, while they collected specimens from southeastern WV. That crew collected the first known specimen of the rare Appalachian Cottontail (*Sylvilagus obscurus*) from Peters Mountain along the AT. The Sugarcamp Farmhouse was becoming a wonderful recreation and science asset to Monroe County, WV and the AT. Then, in a bizarre, on-site meeting with ATC representatives and the new Forest Service District Ranger, the representatives hurled a string of insults, accusations, and threats against the WVSTA. After the meeting, Bob Tabor called WV Senator Robert C. Byrd's office to pull him into the role of mediator, but the Ranger had the farmhouse burned to the ground and the barn demolished before Senator Byrd could act. The WVSTA board decided not to spin our wheels fighting "city hall," but rather to cut our formal tie with the AT and sink our efforts "full-steam ahead" into developing the ALT. Much later we learned that the ATC Field Representative had defamed the WVSTA to the ATC, the JNF, and the NPS. Several more years passed before enough complaints forced the ATC to finally fire the ne'er-do-well. Water under the bridge. The WVSTA has moved on and the ALT has benefitted.



(L) "Founding Mothers" Carolyn Welcker and Shirley Schweizer repaired the porch at the farmhouse in 1989. (M) Volunteers in 1994 cleared Symmes Gap Meadow (a.k.a. Will's Field) on the AT, while staying in the farmhouse. (R) Appalachian Cottontail collected by a Carnegie Museum of Natural History mammalogist while staying at the farmhouse (Doug Wood photos).

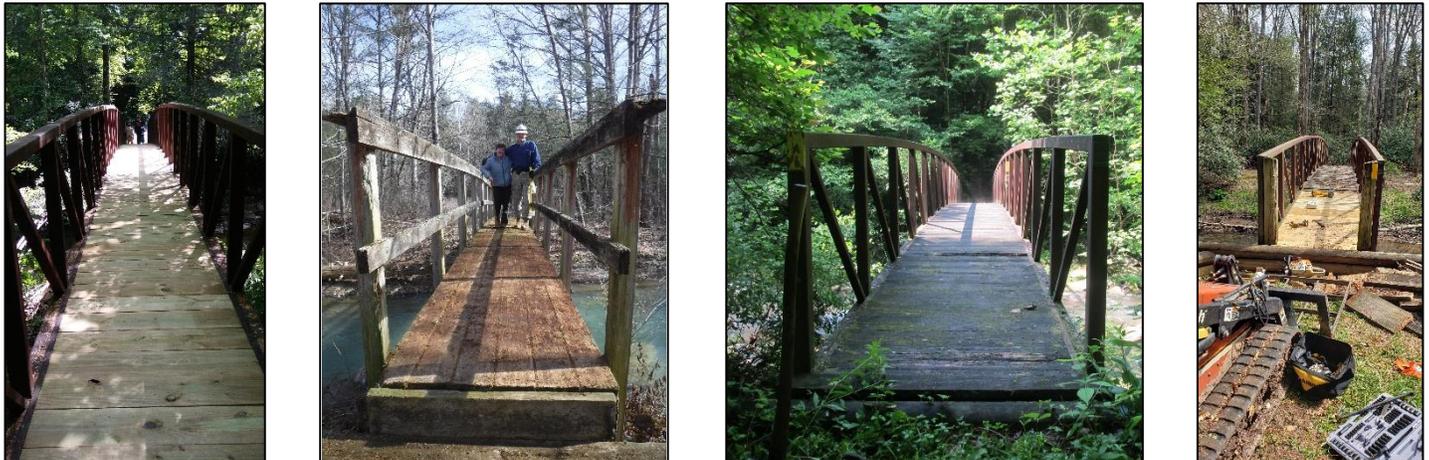


In 1987, the WVSTA held the AT's 50th birthday celebration at the farm and invited local supporters to join in the festivities (Doug Wood photos).



Ingenious rendition of the local trail landscape in the icing of the celebration cake. (Doug Wood photo).

The WVSTA has had its political allies over the years. The most effective was the late Senator Byrd. His efforts were most conspicuous with costly trail improvement projects on MNF. Called “Byrd droppings” by the Senator’s detractors, the funds he obtained resulted in four footbridges on the Allegheny Trail at critical stream crossings and a 6,813-acre land purchase from a willing seller that ensured protection of a segment of the Allegheny Trail in Greenbrier County at MNF’s border with GWNF. Another entity that has provided crucial support is the Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council. In the mid 1970’s Bob Tabor recruited the immense facilitating experience of the Council’s Coordinator, Paul Brant, in exchange for Tabor’s service as a volunteer director on the Council’s board. This partnership accomplished several WVSTA projects, including completion of the AT’s Groundhog Trail, conversion of an old state fire tower on Peters Mountain into the now famous Hanging Rock Raptor Migration Observatory, and further development of Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the ALT. All of these projects required cooperation with several other entities, and the Mountain RC&D provided leadership, funding, and technical expertise in these cooperative efforts.



(L-R, S-N) Byrd Bridges: Meadow Ck re-decked 2017, Anthony Ck deck refurbished 2020, Beaver Ck before re-decking in 2021, Gladly Fk re-decked 2020
(photographers L-R: Mike Wygal, Doug Wood, Gary Mullins, Jonathan Wheeler).



(L) (from: <https://dolearchivecollections.ku.edu/index.php?p=digitallibrary/getfile&id=4585&preview=long>) Senator Byrd (facing camera) beside Pres. Reagan as Reagan shakes Sen. Dole’s hand. (ML) Thanks to the Senator’s “Byrd droppings”, the ALT’s Meadow Creek Bridge was built in October 1989 with funds appropriated by Congress in the last year of Reagan’s Presidency. (Dianne Anestis photo, March 1990). (MR) Hanging Rock Fire Tower in September 1980 (Doug Wood photo). On June 2, 1983, Jefferson National Forest purchased the Hanging Rock Fire Tower site from the Bert family. The next month, Paul Brant (R), the Mountain Dominion Resource Conservation and Development Area Coordinator, continued recruiting potential cooperators (for funding and work) to construct a trail on the ridgeline and to restore the tower to host bird research, ongoing since 1952 (Doug Wood photo).

Central to cooperative success is effective communication. The WVSTA has produced a newsletter to inform its members and partners since 1972. From handwriting, to typing and mailing, and onward into the computer age, with word processing software and e-mailing, the WVSTA had eight newsletter editors before 2014: Bruce Bond, Ellen Thomas, Fred Bird, Jim Mooney, George Rosier, Roger Raikes, Steve Shields, and Martha Ballman. J.D. Shields developed the first WVSTA website by 1999.

Private landowners have played an important role in developing the WVSTA’s long-distance trails. Key landowners on the Allegheny Trail included Westvaco Corp., and families named Alikakos, Baker, Buskirk, Fogus, Graham, Mayle, Pickett, and Perry. On the Mary Ingles Trail, the Weiford family and Appalachian Power Company’s John Amos Plant have been important contributors to that trail development effort. Both Virginias have laws that limit liability of landowners who open their lands free-of-charge to public recreation activities. While these laws help ease the minds of private landowners, the families seem to be more driven by the idea of sharing portions of their properties with others because “it’s the neighborly thing to do.” The Graham family is a prime example of this. Not only did the family give permission for the ALT to skirt their meadow on Allegheny Mountain, they also sawed the lumber for construction of a trail shelter built as an Eagle Scout project by local boy scout, Matt Bordas in 1996.



(L) At Dilleys Mill Scout Reservation, landowners Hayroth and Atz Graham listen as Nick Lozano, a WVSTA founder, tells of the origins of the Association during a 2014 40th anniversary celebration of its incorporation (Doug Wood photo). (M) The Graham Family Shelter has protected many a cold, wet, or weary hiker atop Allegheny Mountain after a day of hiking. In this photo, volunteers are laying new flooring and cooking hot dogs in 2011 (Dianne Anestis photo). (R) Use of the Perry family tract allowed the ALT to bridge the gap between two national forests (Doug Wood photo).



(L & M) For many years, the Weiford family hosted "The Legacy of Mary Ingles," a living history event that highlighted frontier history and recruited support for the MITB's trail development effort (Bob Weiford photos). (R) The Weifords were the first private landowners to give permission to the WVSTA chapter to place the Mary Ingles Trail on their property and Bob was crucial to gaining permission from Appalachian Power Company to develop seven miles of the trail on a tract in Putnam Co., WV. Bob is shown here at one of two new trailheads during the 2011 grand opening event (Dianne Anestis photo).

Matt Bordas' Troop 70, under the able leadership of scout master Cliff Baker, a Lewisburg, WV engineer, was one of many boy scout troops and other non-governmental organizations that helped the WVSTA improve the ALT in its first 40 years of existence. The Association partnered with girl scout troops, the Sierra Club of WV, church youth groups, nature clubs, college outings and environmental clubs, the WV Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy of WV, hiking clubs, and many others to enhance trail tread, build and refurbish trail infrastructure, prevent erosion, conduct trail cleanups, etc.



(L) Boy scout Chris Kolar (yellow oval) designed and supervised the construction of the Mason-Dixon Line ALT kiosk in 2000 (Dianne Anestis photo). (M) In 1998, a boy scout built the Mayle-Lantz Ridge shelter, which received the metal roof you see here in 2011 (Doug Wood photo). (R) A church youth group refurbished the shelter's spring at the same time WVSTA volunteers roofed. (Doug Wood photo).

Several other projects and organizations spun off the WVSTA in the first 40 years. Some of the most significant of these can be placed squarely on the shoulders of one WVSTA volunteer, Lu Schrader. In the early 1980's, the WVSTA worked with the American Lung Association of WV (ALAWV) to sponsor an annual fundraising event known as "the Allegheny Trek for Life and Breath." Schrader had recently been hired as Director of Development for the ALAWV and as such was tasked with coordinating that effort with the WVSTA. Lu joined the WVSTA right away and became intrigued with developing a statewide trail system. In a few years, he established the WV Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (WVRTC) and worked to establish the Greenbrier River Trail and the North Bend Rail Trail, which he liked to call "The Trail of Tunnels." Then, as President of the WVRTC he worked with the WVSTA and others to convince the American Discovery Trail (ADT) movement to develop the ADT through the Mountain State, utilizing existing trails, including the North Bend Rail Trail, the Allegheny Trail, other MNF trails, and the C&O Canal Towpath. Schrader spearheaded the effort to form the WV Trails Coalition, which then worked toward establishing the first ever, grassroots-driven statewide trail plan. Schrader's effort came to fruition in 2002, just a few months after he passed away. The dedication page of *Pathways to the future: The West Virginia Statewide Trail Plan* states: "This document is dedicated to the memory of Lucian Schrader, the late executive director of the West Virginia Trails Coalition. Without Lu's vision and energy, this project would not have been possible." The WVSTA is proud to claim Schrader as one of its native sons.



(L) Lu Schrader negotiates a fence crossing on the Kanawha Trace during a WVSTA backpack trip (Doug Wood photo). (R) Lu, in the center, eagerly engaged various trail interest groups to fulfill his vision of a statewide trail plan (Dianne Anestis photo).

Read about Lu's trail legacy at: <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/lu-schrader-west-virginia-trail-advocate>

One of the hoped-for outcomes of the statewide trail plan was establishment of a state government office of State Trail Coordinator. Funding for "alternative transportation," including trail development was made available to states through the Federal Highway Administration via a federal tax on gasoline and creation of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) under the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. The WVDOH created a State Trail Coordinator position to oversee the RTP in WV. The program was highly successful at developing new trails and improving existing trails. In 2004-05, the WVSTA utilized grant funding through the RTP to construct a shelter, build a footbridge, and make general trail improvements on the ALT.



(L) In 1999, the WVSTA celebrated its 25th anniversary since incorporation. "Founding Parents" Bruce Bond, Bob Tabor, and Shirley Schweizer helped celebrate. Shirley is credited with the idea to hold the celebration Dianne Anestis photo. (M & R) The 1973 newspaper article reproduced on the 25th anniversary cake, reveals the date of the first annual membership meeting of the WVSTA as Saturday & Sunday, April 5 & 6, 1973. At the 1974 meeting, the last word in the name was changed from "Conference" to "Association." Incorporation occurred later, on Aug. 19, 1974 (Dianne Anestis photo).

Two Allegheny Trail development stories illustrate the importance of persistence and partnerships. The first one unfolded near the southern terminus of Section 1 in Tucker County. In the mid-1970s, George Rosier was able to get a "handshake agreement" with Western Pocahontas Properties to place approximately six miles of the ALT on land between the community of Douglas and Blackwater Falls State Park. The ALT was able to get from one Forest Service parcel to another passing by beaver ponds and cranberry bogs that had succeeded onto the long-abandoned strip mine benches on the private parcel, as well as clambering through mixed Red Spruce-Norway Spruce forests to Pendleton Lake at the state park. But the handshake agreement did not last, when the corporation leased the tract to a hunting club for exclusive use. The following article from the Dominion Post tells about the loss.

Sunday, July 26, 1992 THE DOMINION POST 3-A



State News

Landowner to trail users: Take a hike

HUNTINGTON (AP) — The West Virginia Scenic Trails Association has been told to take a hike by the owner of property where the group has a six-mile trail.

Western Pocahontas Properties, a landholding partnership based in Huntington, has leased the Tucker County property to a hunting club and is worried about liability in case hikers are injured, said Douglas Toothman, land re-

sources manager for the company.

The Morgantown-based association had adopted the section of the Allegheny Trail along the north fork of the Blackwater River, said member Elsa Nadler. The Allegheny Trail winds 330 miles from the Pennsylvania state line to the Appalachian Trail in Virginia.

"I'm furious. This trail was put in 20 years ago," Nadler said. "They told us to 'get out, stay out

and we don't want to hear from you.'"

Hikers will be forced to travel along West Virginia 32 if they must avoid Western Pocahontas land, Nadler said.

"They made the request in the late 1970s but we denied their request," he said. "We were under the impression that they were using public roads."

The Division of Environmental Protection had planned to re-

vate the trail as part of a \$3 million mine reclamation project.

The company has leased property surrounding part of the trail to Mountain Top Hunting Club, Toothman said.

"Having the trail on our property open to the general public is not compatible with the main use of members of Mountain Top, especially during hunting season," Toothman wrote.

Dave Callaghan, then director of the WV Division of Environmental Protection, offered the WVSTA to take up a legal fight, if the WVSTA wished, to force the company to abide by the Division's wishes for public access as part of the reclamation project. The WVSTA thought better of the idea of scaring other private landowners away from similar handshake cooperative efforts, so we licked our wounds and made lemonade out of sour lemons, reasoning that at least backpackers would now be able to resupply in either Thomas or Davis. But, oh did we miss eating those cranberries! Then a group called the *Friends of Blackwater*, originally organized to protect Blackwater Canyon from logging, blossomed into a formidable force for good in the Blackwater River region. One of the many projects they have undertaken, is development of a loop trail system that will once again establish a woodland jaunt between Douglas and the park. The ALT will be able to piggy-back on the new trail system. Good things come to those who wait.

The second story unfolded on another part of Section 1 of the ALT, the Cheat Canyon. West Virginia Power and Transmission Company (WVPTC) gave written permission to the WVSTA to develop and maintain the ALT through Cheat Canyon in 1986. The Section 1 Coordinator at the time, George Rosier, immediately coordinated work parties to develop the trail. Later, WVPTC sold its canyon lands to Allegheny Wood Products (AWP), which began to negotiate terms with the WVSTA. The negotiations seemed to be going well, when the association was sideswiped by a notice from AWP that the ALT must be closed through the canyon--no ifs, ands, or buts. In fact, after the pronouncement, AWP staff would not return repeated phone calls and letters (before the days of e-mailing). So, the ALT had to be rerouted out of the canyon. This meant less "path through the woods" walking and more roadway walking for hikers and backpackers. To be sure, the reroute was pastorally scenic, but Section 1 largely consists of similar settings, so the Cheat Canyon segment was a particularly unique change of scenery for Section 1 backpackers. Like the Blackwater story, the Cheat Canyon story has a happy ending. AWP sold its canyon lands to Forestland Group, which then sold to The Conservation Fund (TCF) in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the WVDNR. The last three entities partnered to operate the canyon partly as the Charlotte Ryde Nature Preserve and partly as a Wildlife Management Area. Additional funding came from the West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection In-Lieu Fee Program. Nearly \$7 million was the price tag. Before the deal was negotiated, a long-time friend of mine, with ties to both TCF and TNC asked me by phone if the WVSTA wanted to re-establish the ALT through the canyon. I advised that I would run it by the board and he insisted it must not leak out or the deal could sour, because the funders intended to use the proposed ALT relocation through the canyon as leverage. This would be a telephone and face-to-face decision only. No e-mailing, no texting, and no social media communications to potentially leak all over the internet. The Association board jumped at the idea and everyone understood the weight of secrecy. About another year later and "BAM," the deal was done during our 40th anniversary year and the news hit the media all across the nation. Both of these stories illustrate well the necessities of patient persistence and strong partnerships to reach mutual goals of conservation and trail development.

The Washington Times

Reliable Reporting. The Right Opinion.

Cheat Canyon tract to be preserved for wildlife

By - Associated Press - Sunday, April 13, 2014

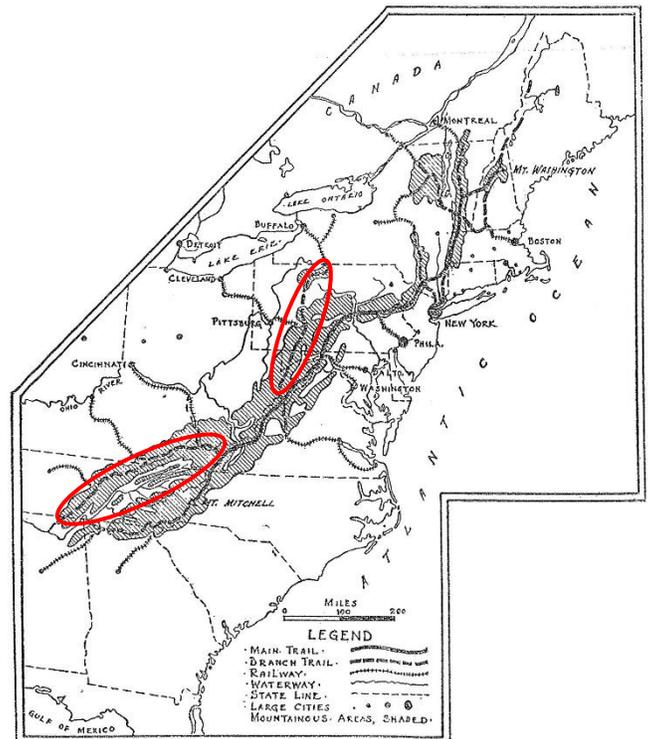
ALBRIGHT, W.Va. (AP) - A segment of the Cheat Canyon will become a state wildlife management area and a nature preserve...

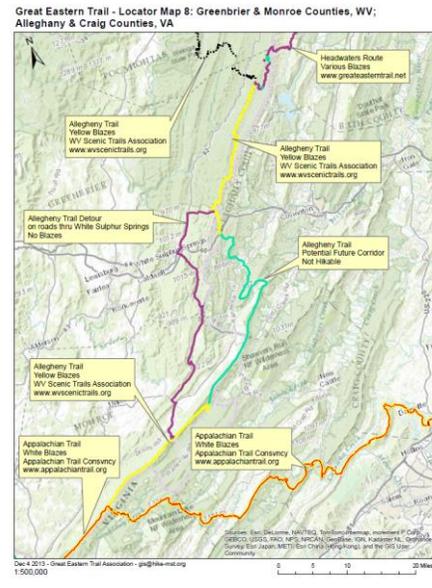
MetroNews, “the voice of West Virginia” and many other outlets mentioned “public access to seven miles of the 330-mile Allegheny Trail, which had been re-routed away from the canyon after it was closed by a previous owner – a resource for hikers, bird-watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts.” The guesstimated total mileage of the ALT was incorrect, but the rest of the info was on target.



This Kent Mason photo is on The Nature Conservancy’s website where the Allegheny Trail is also mentioned as a star attraction in the preserve (<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/charlotte-ryde-preserve-at-cheat-canyon/>).

The WVSTA also cooperates with other trail interest organizations, such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Friends of Cheat, Heart of the Highlands Trail System, Friends of Blackwater, and the Great Eastern Trail Association (GETA). The Great Eastern Trail concept may have had its origins in Benton MacKaye’s vision of “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning”, originally published in the October 1921 edition of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (read it at <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/an-appalachian-trail-a-project-in-regional-planning/>). At right, see the map that accompanied his article and pay attention to the “Branch Trails” which I have encircled in red. The idea of using the ALT to fulfill MacKaye’s vision may have begun as early as 1973, when Bob Tabor reported in the third WVSTA newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 3, October) that Jefferson National Forest had initially agreed to a mapped proposal to extend the Cumberland Trail northeastward to the ALT and AT. Later issues of the newsletter provided further descriptions of a proposed 1,000-mile trail parallel to the AT, that would use the Cumberland Trail, the ALT, and the Tuscarora Trail. The current Great Eastern Trail takes advantage of completed portions of ALT Sections 3 and 4, and the GETA has joined the WVSTA to advocate for completion of the gap in Section 4. With partners such as the GETA, the chances of convincing our federal partners to assist in completing the gap are higher than if we were one lone voice crying in the wilderness.





The Great Eastern Trail piggy-backs on the Allegheny Trail as shown in the map from the organization’s website.



In 2014, the WVSTA held a series of events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the incorporation of the WVSTA. At the West Virginia State Archives Library, four of the “Founding Fathers” participated in the culminating event of the year. After receiving certificates of appreciation from the WVSTA, the surviving original incorporators shared a photo moment with then current Secretary of the association, Yours Truly. L-R: Doug Wood, Bruce Bond, Nick Lozano, Bob Tabor, and Arthur Foley. Incidentally, the title art on the top of the sign held by Nick, is the same as on the Allegheny Trail patch that was created by Foley’s life-long friend Tommy Carr (Dianne Anestis photo).

To hear the four founders and others tell the early history of the WVSTA and the Allegheny Trail in their own words, visit the WV Archives and History Library you tube webcast at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7zirozdlfU>

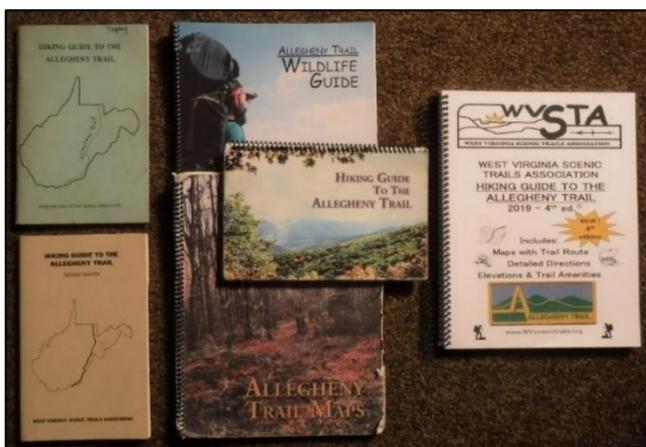
Thanks so much to the WV Archives and History Library for hosting the event “Volunteers for Forty Years: A History of the West Virginia Scenic Trails Association” on June 12, 2014.



(L) In 2014, during its 40th anniversary year, the WVSTA received a prestigious award from the PTBA. (M & R) President Jeff Byard accepted a landmark award from Region 9 of the U.S. Forest Service to the WVSTA, granted in 2022. Matt Edwards of Monongahela National Forest presented the award to an enthusiastic crowd of volunteers and members at the annual Wood’s Wacky Week of Work and Welaxation in June of 2023.

The awards shown above, one given to the WVSTA in its 40th anniversary year of incorporation and one in the decade following that important year, lead now to a discussion of achievements made in the decade between the 40th year and the 50th year, 2024. As stated previously, effective communication is the key to cooperative success. In the decade between the 40th and 50th anniversary years, I (Doug Wood) have been the *Whoop-n-Holler* quarterly newsletter editor since August of 2019, the same year in which Kelly Bowyer established the first WVSTA facebook page. In 2020, President Laura Finch took advantage of the website and the facebook page to catapult the WVSTA into the social media age, and since her presidency, other WVSTA leaders and volunteers have expanded the association’s communications outreach. There are now two websites, <https://www.wvscenictrails.org/> and <https://www.hiketheelleghenytrail.org/>; two facebook accounts, <https://www.facebook.com/WVScenicTrailsAssociation> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295404191141571/>; and Instagram connections #hiketheelleghenytrail and #hiketheat. In January 2023, Nicolle Sawczyn established a free, online, monthly newsletter focused solely on the Allegheny Trail. Our upgraded communications, including social media, have assisted with recruiting members, volunteers, and donations; some targeted to specific projects and some to the general welfare of the association.

The image below left shows all four of the paper editions of the *Hiking Guide to the Allegheny Trail*. The first edition was compiled by volunteers Fred Bird (ALT Section 2 Coordinator) and me (Doug Wood, ALT Section 4 Coordinator), and copyrighted by the WVSTA in 1983. Section 1 was not included, because it was nowhere nearly completed. The second edition was compiled by George Rosier (ALT Section 1 Coordinator) and me (Doug Wood), ©1990. Section 1 was included in that edition, because George



and his helpers in the Northwest Passage Chapter of the WVSTA worked feverishly to establish a pleasant hiking experience in a region with little public land. Roger Raikes was the primary compiler of the third edition, ©2003, with acknowledged assistance from Elsa Nadler, Edward Pride, John Northeimer, Vicky Shears, Dianne Anestis, and me (Doug Wood). It was a three-part publication, with higher-detailed maps than the previous two editions, plus a separate textbook and a wildlife viewing guide. The fourth edition, ©2019, was primarily compiled by me (Doug Wood) with acknowledged assistance from Greg



Edwards, Brian Hirt, and Dianne Anestis. The text and maps were in one booklet, while the wildlife viewing guide was sold separately. Also new to this fourth edition was the option to purchase digital, pdf versions of the entire guidebook or individual

sections. The next guidebook to dawn on the horizon in 2022 was not a book at all, but an app for digital devices, developed in cooperation with Guthook, now called FarOut: <https://faroutguides.com/alleggheny-trail-map/>. Several WVSTA volunteers worked on this project, but one stands out above the rest for his two through-hikes to gather the digital data needed to make the app accurate, Kevin Riedel. The photo above right shows Kevin resting on the steps of the Laurel River Club B&B during one of his FarOut hikes.

In the last ten years, the WVSTA has rerouted the ALT through Cheat Canyon, brokered a 2-mile reroute with bridge and trailhead at Seneca State Forest, replaced rail and decking of Anthonys Creek Bridge, assisted replacing the hand rail and decking of Hanging Rock Raptor Observatory, developed a tent campground at the Laurel River Club, assisted replacing the decking on the Robert C. Byrd Bridge over Glady Fork, restored Wildell Shelter and spring, replaced decking on Beaver Creek Bridge, restored the Brushy Mountain segment of the ALT (701A) after a major fire, restored Canaan Mountain (Plantation) Shelter, restored Pointy Knob Shelter, restored John’s Camp Shelter and spring, reopened numerous vistas, restored Marlin Mountain Shelter, constructed numerous small bridges of both dimensional lumber and log stringer type, restored the Reger Family (Cannon Hill) Shelter, constructed a new backpackers’ shelter along Glady Fork, completed several miles of tread reconstruction, constructed the Daniels Creek 30-foot log stringer bridge, refurbished Seneca Spring Shelter, reconstructed the ALT at the Glady Fork Washout and Slip (major problems since 1985), and replaced 6 trailhead kiosks. In 2022, the WVSTA assisted the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation in landing a \$125,000 grant from the Federal Lands Access Program of the U.S. Dept. of Transportation. State and government oversight authorities are still plodding through their internal processes, but we expect construction on four Allegheny Trail projects to begin in our 50th anniversary year. The four projects that will improve access to federal lands include a major tread reconstruction, an informational kiosk, a footbridge, and 80+ trailhead directional signs along roadways.

The next five years should see more shelter construction, more trailhead establishment, a swinging bridge, and more rerouting off of country roads onto single track footpaths.

With the advent of the 50th year after incorporation of the WVSTA, the association changed out the old logos for new logos. First, the oldies:



Now the newbies:



Politicians, grant administrators, government and corporate land managers, private landowners, conservation organizations, hiking clubs and many others have all contributed to the development, improvement, and ongoing maintenance of the Allegheny Trail and the Mary Ingles Trail. But the core force behind these long-distance trail development efforts remains the body of volunteers that make up the WVSTA and its chapters. As the Great Eastern Trail effort builds steam, WVSTA volunteers are helping by offering assistance in establishing that new trail on portions of the MIT and ALT in southeastern WV and western VA. What has kept the WVSTA viable for fifty years? I believe it is the association's dedication to the original good work of creating "A path in the woods" as one father of the ALT, Bob Tabor, often quipped. Many volunteers over the intervening five decades have considered this good work is worthy of their participation. While the primary goal of the WVSTA continues to be development of "a path in the woods," a secondary goal is to get more people out of their houses and onto forest paths to obtain the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being that communing with nature can provide. As the other Father of the Allegheny Trail, Nick Lozano, likes to say, "Enlightenment begins where the pavement ends."

You may learn more about the WVSTA and participate in its functions by checking the website <http://wvscenictrails.org/>, the facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WVScenicTrailsAssociation/>, or writing for a membership brochure at P.O. Box 4042, Charleston, WV 25364.