



SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

On Foot in Potter County...God's Country



Winter 2017

PO Box 643 • Coudersport, PA 16915 • www.stc-hike.org • info@stc-hike.org

The purposes of the STC are to build and maintain trails, aid in the conservation of wetlands and wildlife, and promote good fellowship through the medium of hiking and nature study.

Long-Time STC Secretary Betty Ahn Celebrates 100 Years

By Wanda Shirk

Elizabeth K. Ahn, formerly of Susquehannock Lodge, Ulysses, reached the centennial milestone of her life on January 3, 2017. She was born before the United States had even entered World War I, and she has lived to see ten decades of history and technological change. Betty is best known and loved in Potter County for her 5,000 volunteer hours at Cole Memorial Hospital and for her 30 years as secretary of the Susquehannock Trail Club.

Family and friends—about a hundred of them, for her hundred years!—celebrated with Betty on Sunday afternoon, January 8, with a buffet dinner in the fellowship room of the First Baptist Church of Galeton, PA to mark the milestone birthday. The party, thrown by her husband Wil, was complete with linen tablecloths, beautiful live-flower centerpieces, an array of colorful helium-inflated balloons, and a time of tribute and testimonies to Betty's influence on many lives.

Betty recalled some of the history of her life. Her father owned of a small grocery store such as was common in the days when people walked to little groceries instead of driving to the multi-aisled supermarkets we have today. The store had a meat locker and cut meat and wheel cheese, and weighed out flour, sugar, and rice to order. People brought cans to buy kerosene and perhaps also left with a pickle from the pickle barrel.

Sadly, Betty's daddy died when she was ten. As the oldest of three daughters, Betty was called on to tend her little sisters while her mother minded the store, and then Betty

STC President, Wanda Shirk, presenting Betty Ahn with an engraved watch while Wil Ahn looks on



Photo by Curt Weinhold

and her sisters helped in the grocery business throughout their growing-up years.

In spite of her responsibilities with family and work, Betty was able to graduate from North Penn High School in Lansdale at the height of America's Great Depression, and then to secure work at Dexdale and Interstate Hosiery Mills, making silk stockings.

A small business already named "Betty's Dairy Barn" was for rent when Betty learned about it and floated the idea to her husband, Wil. Betty took over the operation, selling soft and hard ice cream,

milkshakes, ice cream sodas, and Hires root beer, with ten girls to help over the summer, and Wil assisting evenings and weekends after his other work.

Wil and Betty eventually looked to move north and operate a business together. After exploring opportunities in New York's Adirondacks and Pennsylvania's "God's Country," they settled in 1958 on a Potter County farm house with a log cabin in back that had belonged to the Brown family. The next five years were spent coming up from Lansdale to the Route 6 property on the east side of Denton Hill, turning it into the Susquehannock Lodge for Sportsmen, which opened in 1963.

Hunters, fishermen, skiers, and hikers were the clientele. Wil cooked (Tasty soups were a specialty.) and Betty made the desserts. Together they ran the lodge for nearly thirty years. There was no television as a distraction, so guests played games and enjoyed conversations.

In the early years while the business was growing, the Ahns also ran the cafeteria at Denton Hill Ski Lodge, with Wil cooking and Betty running the front end--taking orders, running the cash register, serving, and hiring local teens and others to help.

After they placed an ad in the local newspaper, the paper's publisher, Bill Fish came to check the lodge out. When Wil told him their hikers used old CCC and logging trails to hike on, Bill saw this as a way to bring people to the area and conceived the idea of connecting the trails. From that, the 85-mile loop now known as the Susquehannock Trail System--the STS--was born. A club to oversee and develop the trail system was formed. For thirty years, Wil was president and Betty was secretary of the Susquehannock Trail Club.

Susquehannock Lodge grew to hold 65 guests. The Ahns added a bunk house, a chalet, housing over the garage, and a trailer out back that originally was for Wil's parents. For a short time there were camping spaces for trailers with electrical hook-ups in the field near the bunkhouse.

STC members from out of the area often stayed at the lodge for fall and winter weekends. Betty would serve breakfast and dinner, keep the kitchen in order, make beds, and keep the lodge clean, while always making delicious desserts.

Betty and Wil planned trips, outings, and service projects, complete with meals, for the hiking club. They planned tree plantings, camping weekends, camporees, and long distance trips to Colorado, to Michigan's Isle Royale, and Assiniboine near Banff in Canada's Alberta province. Everyone would meet at the lodge, and they arranged for a tour bus for group transportation. From 1995-2001, the Adirondacks were the favored group destination. The group rented a lodge at their destination, and as always, Wil and Betty prepared the food, starting with a hearty soup on the arrival night.

When Wil and Betty retired and sold the lodge to current owners Ed and Carol Szymanik, the Ahns were able to be more active in their church, using their meal and trip planning skills there, and helping with Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Betty also was a great reader and would read and review books for the church library until her eyesight no longer made it possible.

The Ahns continued to be active with the Susquehannock Trail Club, doing trail work, leading hikes, and serving as the club's main officers.

Over the years, Betty and Wil took care of family members and some friends as they ran the lodge. Betty did the books for the lodge, and in any leisure time would sew, knit, or spin yarn on a spinning wheel she bought.

The Ahns love their Siberian husky dogs, and Betty once took hair from the huskies, spun it into yarn, and made a hat for Wil. As recollected by Helen Bernhardt in an anecdote at the birthday party, Wil loved and wore the hat--except that when it got wet, it smelled like dog!

The pastor noted that the story showed another angle of the close relationship between Betty and Wil--Betty spun yarn, and Wil spun yarns! (Wil is famous for his storytelling and sense of humor.)

Highlight presentations at the birthday party included a letter read by Chuck Dillon, of state Senator Joe Scarnati's office. Chuck, who wrote the guidebook for the Susquehannock Trail in the 1970s, has been a long-time friend of the Ahns. The Susquehannock Trail Club presented Betty with a new watch from Hauber's of Coudersport, engraved on the back: *Betty Abn--100 years old. Charter Member STC.* STC President Wanda Shirk noted that the engraving was necessarily tiny and a bit hard to read without magnification, but they hoped the watch face was large enough that Betty could easily read the time.

Few centenarians are still able to live independently in their own homes, but with Wil's help, Betty still lives in their Route 6 home next door to Susquehannock Lodge. The couple, who celebrated their golden anniversary years ago, have a daughter and a son, both of whom were present for Sunday's party. 5π



Next Newsletter Deadline

All articles must be received before **March 15, 2017** to be included in the next edition of the *Susquehannock Hiker*. Email your articles to info@stc-hike.org, or mail them via the USPS to **PO Box B, Robinson, PA 15949** no later than Saturday **March 11, 2017**. 5π



Welcome New Members

By Lois Morey, STC Secretary

Steve Erway
Coudersport, PA

Craig & Joni Warner
Dillsburg, PA

James Frickmann
Elizabethtown, PA

Earl Sullivan
Harleysville, PA

Old Geezer Hiking Memories

New York's High Peaks

By Bob Knowles

The winter season is here to stay its allotted time; the new year just begun. The Tioga and Potter counties' naked woodland hollows and mountains are a scene of muted browns, grays, and blacks, brightened somewhat by the green color of evergreen trees. Flora and fauna are dormant, have hibernated, or migrated southward. Cozy and warm indoors, at age 96, the scene awoke long-ago memories of unforgettable 1960's winter overnight backpack hikes.

My first winter hike with an experienced cold weather hiking friend in the High Peaks area of New York's Adirondack Park was a revelation for me. My inexperience and overly heavy equipment of 60 lbs.—backpack, surplus U.S. Army sleeping bag, and heavy 16mm movie camera was the reason we never reached our goal to stand atop 5,244-foot Mt. Marcy's peak, New York's highest mountain.

Another Adirondack winter hike included five guys, calling themselves "The Sloppy Rangers." On Friday, January 27, 1967, the five left Quakertown, PA in two autos in nice weather. The weather deteriorated through rain, sleet, and rain-and-snow mix on slippery highways. We arrived at the Adirondack Loj in the high peaks area in time for the evening meal of fish. As the only guests of the Loj, we were assigned a room with three bunk beds.

On Saturday, January 28, 1967, we were served breakfast at 7:30 AM. Shouldering backpacks, Loj-prepared trail lunch in backpacks, the five snowshoed the Van Hoevenberg Trail to Marcy Dam. We rested at the lean-to picnic table, took photos, and fed sunflower seeds to the chickadees. The sun was warm on our skin. We were comfortable in winter hiking garments in zero hiking weather.

The five backpackers left Marcy Dam on the Avalanche Trail. At Avalanche Pass, the hikers meandered among large boulders between nearly perpendicular rock walls on both sides, and crossed catwalks set in the sheer rock wall a few feet above the lake surface.

We hiked lengthwise across snow-covered Lake Colden, a very cold crossing in a blowing wind. At the far end of Lake Colden, we left the frozen lake by stepping across thin ice onto the snow-covered earthen bank. Four hikers reached the shore. The last hiker broke through the shore-side ice. At the next lean-to, he changed into dry footwear. The group camped overnight at Uphill Lean-to.

On Sunday morning, January 29, 1967, after numerous changing of minds, two hikers decided to continue the ascent hike to the Mt. Marcy summit up the steep trail from Four Corners. Three hikers including me decided to return to Adirondack Loj via Lake Arnold and Marcy Dam. The backpack trio, like the horse "returning to the barn," reached the Loj in speedy time. The Loj caretaker/cook, Mrs. Foster, attractive, efficient, and shapely, agreed to accommodate three tired hungry hikers with a late supper. One of us asked, "Is it O.K. to use the bunks?" She replied, "I didn't change or make them up because I figured some of you would be back!" Later that evening at 8 PM, the two Marcy backpackers arrived at the Loj. The first words out of one of the Marcy hikers were, "It was pure hell. Wasn't sure we would make it." Mrs. Foster told us, "Two fellows from Cornell went up Mt. Marcy and back today with no backpacks. They were on Mt. Marcy by 12:30 PM; back at the Loj for dinner."

Damn college kids!

Later in the evening, the two Marcy hikers told their problems. "On top of Mt. Marcy by 2:30 PM. Couldn't find trail signs on the way up. White frostbite spots appeared. Ice collected on our noses, frost on eyebrows and eyelashes. Took shelter in the stone emergency shelter. Cold wind was blowing on top. We looked at each other—scared. We kept going because each lean-to was crummy. Finally decided to go all the way to the Loj. We used crampons."

After lunch, three backpackers left to drive home. One of the Mt. Marcy hikers and I drove to Lake Placid to buy film. The camera store clerk wore an overcoat. We didn't ask. After dinner at the Loj, we drove to the local hospital for an appointment with a doctor concerning the Marcy hiker's facial frostbite spots. The doctor suggested self-help treatment procedures. Next morning after a Loj breakfast, we drove home to Pennsylvania.

Another winter with my hiking friend, I drove most of the day from southeastern Pennsylvania to Lake Placid, New York to stay overnight at the Adirondack Loj which is owned and operated by the Adirondack Mountain Club near Heart Lake.

Next morning, equipped with snowshoes and ski poles, we left Adirondack Loj via the Van Hoevenberg Trail, the oldest and shortest trail to Mt. Marcy. The Van Hoevenberg Trail was originally created in the 1880s by Henry van Hoevenberg. Van Hoevenberg built the original Adirondack Lodge which was burned in 1903 by a forest fire. On

a clear day, we hiked over two miles to reach Marcy Dam, walk across the dam with the pond on our right, and take a lengthy rest stop.

We hiked gradually uphill on a trail that became moderately steep with short steeper sections and easy sections. Six and a half miles after leaving Adirondack Loj, we reached the Plateau Lean-to surrounded by chest-high stunted evergreen trees that Nature had decorated with frosted snow. We erected a lightweight two-man nylon tent inside the lean-to, made from a surplus parachute. The above-timberline, snow-covered dome of Mt. Marcy was in full view from the lean-to site.

In minus 10-degree weather, we slept toasty warm inside our down sleeping bags that night in the nylon tent inside the lean-to, sheltered from the cold winter wind. Our footwear shared our sleeping bags to prevent freezing in the below-zero temperature.

Next day, warmish under a bright sun, we wore sunglasses to protect our eyes against the glare from the pure white snow blanketing everything in sight. The smallish pines and spruces gradually decreased in height the higher we hiked uphill to the bare rock mountaintop covered with the frosted snow. The views were spectacular from atop Mt. Marcy with a snow-covered mountainous woodland below stretched to the horizon. We roamed the mountain area like two kids in a candy store, amazed by the vista and the emergency shelter built of stone. Off to the east were Mr. Haystack, 4,960 feet. Mt. haystack was named in 1849 by Orson S. "Old Mountain" Phelps. The bare rock top resembled "a stack of hay." Mt. Marcy was named by Ebenezer Emmons for Governor William Marcy in 1837. Snow-covered wilderness with ponds and lakes, numerous mountain peaks of different elevations were visible on the super-clear sunny winter day.

Reluctantly we began the walk downhill to begin our seven-mile return hike to Adirondack Loj. Back at the Plateau Lean-to, we watched a tiny mouse-like creature, a mouse or mole, moving about a thick clump of brown grass surrounded by frosted snow. ☸



STS Circuit Hiker Award

Congratulations to the following who are the most recent inductees into this distinguished group!

1132 Valorie Patillo
Galeton, PA

1133 Stacy Boone
Pagosa Springs, CO

Fall 2016 Trail Maintenance Projects

By Bill Boyd

Twenty sixteen was one of the busiest and most satisfying years for the STS Trail Crew. Sixty volunteers reported 1,752 hours of trail maintenance work. Our major accomplishment was the building of the first Adirondack-style shelter along the STS. Other projects include log bridges across Yochum Run, Cross Fork Creek, Little Lyman Run, and (Big) Greenlick Run, plus cable handrails on a couple of our older log bridges; relocation of the trail up the highway bank at Ole Bull State Park; construction and donation of our fourth picnic table to that park; replacing rotted posts on a large trail sign at the intersection of the Donut Hole Trail on Fork Hill; refurbishing the Bill Fish memorial and bulletin board at the Northern Gateway and the informational signboard at Ole Bull. State Park. In addition, the dangerous loose heavy door at the Crooks Trail CCC dynamite house was removed by the local forest district, and the building has become an emergency ad hoc trail shelter.

The fourth quarter 2016 activities are listed below.

- Larry Holtzapple painted the Bill Fish sign posts, and re-furbished the STC bulletin board at DCNR.
- Joe Allis installed a new door on the "Dynamite House" Trail-Shelter on the Crooks Trail.
- Ben Cramer blazed the Big Trestle and Lebo sections of the North Link Trail.
- Ben Cramer and Wanda Shirk blazed parts of the North Link and South Link Trails.
- Wanda Shirk and Bill Boyd weed-whacked some sections of the North Link Trail. And Larry Holtzapple and Bob Bernhardt blazed the NLT from Lebo Rd. to Dyer Rd.
- Wanda Shirk - cleared some barberry bushes from the Quarry Trail.
- Mark Kelly and Bill Boyd removed blowdown from Quarry Trail and put up a post and sign for hiker-parking at the Williams farm. Also removed an uprooted stump from the Game Refuge Trail.
- Larry Holtzapple and Bill Boyd cleared and blazed a section of Rattlesnake Trail.
- Joe Allis refurbished the Ole Bull kiosk.
- Wanda Shirk cleared briars from the Buckseller Trail, and also cleared section of the NLT.
- Mark and Denise Kelly and Bill Boyd built steps, put up an STS sign, put in corner guide posts and

rear roof support, and cleaned up the site at the Scoval shelter.

- Wanda Shirk cleared brush and laurel from the east end of the North Link Trail.
- John Eastlake, Jeff Raisch and Walt Zegarski blazed the Cherry Springs Tower Trail and along Sunken Branch Road.
- Curt and Penny Weinhold did some brushing on the West Branch crossover trail.
- Ben Cramer and Wanda Shirk did some clearing on the Cou-Dyer section of the North Link Trail.
- Bill Boyd did some lopping and clearing on the White Line Trail from Lyman Run Road to the trail book box, and along the Forestry access Trail.
- Pat Childs and Larry Holtzapple cleared and blazed on the Fanton Hollow, Sarah Jane and Prouty Road access trails.
- Joe Allis made and installed signs for Splash Dam, White Line and other miscellaneous trails. ♪



Hiking Sticks

By Wanda Shirk

When I started my first real hike—a solo backpacking trip on the Susquehannock Trail System—I did not have a hiking stick. It never even occurred to me. I had never even gone on a real group hike before, much less embarked on a trail used by backpackers. If I ever saw a hiking stick, it would have been in some old pioneer-days movie in which a grizzled “mountain man” lumbered along with a slung-over-the-shoulder canvas gear bag in one hand and a stick in the other. Hiking sticks weren't needed for our little family hikes, which were usually on fairly level old railroad grades or around local fields and patches of woodland.

So on my first backpacking trip, I lumbered along the trail like the old mountain man, but stickless, and no doubt carrying several times more weight in my backpack than the geezer carried in his sack. I was clued in to the advisability of a hiking stick when my STS trail guidebook, preparing me for Morgan Hollow, warned me at mile 36.39: *“CAUTION: Trail gets much rockier and very steep downhill, descending 600 feet in next 0.3 mile – Much of the rock is loose and is slippery when wet. Walking stick is recommended.”*

My marginal note from July 19, 2000, reads: “This is the best advice in the book. I found a great walking stick this morning in preparation for this descent. It was invaluable!”

Now, sixteen years later, I have a battered hiking staff that has been my partner on hundreds, even thousands of miles of trail. Discussions about hiking sticks occur on almost every group hike. “Two-stickers” swear by their trekking poles and declare that they would never go back to one stick. “No-stickers” tend to look like amateurs, but they're usually young, and I'll give 'em time. I've remained a “one-sticker,” but I admit that I haven't tried using two. (“Amateur?”)

My friend Ed says that when he and his wife first did some day hikes on the Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania, they were stickless, but they noticed that all the thru-hikers they encountered had hiking sticks. They asked one of them, “Do all thru-hikers use sticks?” The thru-hiker paused to consider and then said, “No, but all the ones who get this far, do.”

With that as background, I submit the following

Top Twenty Reasons for Carrying a Hiking Stick:

1. Going uphill. The stick is tremendously helpful to lean on, pull on, power you.
2. Going downhill. The stick is invaluable to brace you and keep you from sliding.
3. On the level. A stick will often save you from tripping over unexpected rocks or roots. I slid on a slippery rock once, not carrying a stick, and automatically put out my hands to break the fall. No insurance. The broken wrist surgery cost me \$14,000. That's what a stick could've saved me.
4. Crossing streams. A stick or two really aids when you're balancing on slippery rocks. If you like dry feet, have a stick if the trail has wet crossings. Three points of contact is best for stability.
5. Knee-saving. Especially with a pack, but even without one, a stick takes a lot of pressure off your knee and ankle joints. (From *The Hiker's Little Book of Wisdom*, by David Scott: “According to studies, the use of two walking staffs results in 250 tons of pressure being transferred from the back, knees, and legs to the arms during an 8 hour hiking day.” Love your knees.
6. Spider web destruction. If you're leading the pack on summer mornings in Pennsylvania woods, you'll encounter spider webs. You can break them with your face, your hands, or a stick. Take your pick.
7. Briar parting. When you have to go through blackberry patches, multiflora rose, or other thorny sections, a stick is great for holding back some of the scratchy stuff as you make your way through.

8. Weed-whacking. Not all weeds submit to stick-whacking, but a certain amount of stinging nettle will succumb, and the stick is especially worth it if you are or someone behind you is wearing shorts or a mini-skirt.
9. “Sausage-finger” prevention. Many hikers find that walking miles with their hands dangling at their sides leads to swollen fingers late in the day, as lymphatic fluid seems to accumulate rather than circulate. You sometimes see hikers, after many miles, with their hands on their heads or otherwise elevated. Holding a stick keeps your hands up and fingers flexed and nimble. *Editor’s question: How often does a one-sticker need to switch hands?*
10. Dogs. Personally, I’ve been bitten by a dog, enough to put a hole in my shorts (I still have them for proof) and a bruise (now gone) in my butt. I did not have a stick in hand that day.
11. Bears: You want to look large, make ‘em think you’re nobody to mess with.
12. Fishing pole. Well, not really. But I carry a “cooling scarf” in the summer, and sometimes when I want to wet the scarf, I tie it to the leather wrist-wrap on my hiking stick to dip the scarf into water as I lean over a bridge or a bank to save climbing down to the water.
13. Pack lift. When my backpack feels heavy and my hips and/or shoulders need a break from the weight, I have often held the pole horizontally behind me, under my pack, and carried the backpack weight on my stick. It brings a spring back to my step!
14. Baggage assist. If my cap, shirt, or jacket is making me too hot, I often fasten it to the strap on my stick, where it doesn’t stuff or weight down my pack, and I can put it on again easily.
15. Stick-flicking. This is the fun one. Fallen branches across the trail can trip hikers. Flicking them off the trail is a sport on top of a sport. The technique requires spotting the branch in advance, determining its center of balance, and getting your hiking stick under the impediment at just the right spot to flip it onto the low side of the trail (so gravity won’t move it back onto the trail again) without breaking your stride. For someone like me who revels in simple pleasures, stick-flicking really adds fun to the day.
16. Poking and prodding. There are things you don’t want to investigate with your bare hands.
17. Upper body conditioning. While it’s taking some pressure off your legs and knees, the stick is making you use some arm and upper-body muscles for better all-around conditioning.

18. Clothes rod. Stretched between two trees, your stick is something on which to hang your damp stuff at the end of the day.
19. Duct tape carrier. Wrapping some duct tape around your hiking stick keeps the number one tool of your shoe-and-pack-repair kit right at hand.
20. Personality. What you carve or engrave into, or tack onto, your hiking stick, can make it your personal totem and story-teller.

Sticks can have lots of other functions. You’ll inevitably find your own multiple uses if you carry one.

So, yes. Take Teddy’s advice: “*Walk softly... and carry a big stick.*” ♪



Finding Peace in the Hammersley

By Jeff Mitchell

Editor note: this is an excerpt from Mr. Mitchell’s recent hike. You can find the full writeup at

<https://endlessmountains.wordpress.com/2016/02/12/finding-peace-in-the-hammersley/>

I recently hiked a 17-mile loop through the beautiful Hammersley Wild Area in the PA Wilds. I love the isolation and wilderness of this place. While hiking the trails, we didn’t hear any cars or traffic, just the streams tumbling down their glens. There were scenic forests of pine, hemlock, and laurel, as well as open hardwood forests with old ferns and ground pine. The views from the meadows were spectacular, reminiscent of the Appalachian balds. We then did something different: we followed the northern edge of the meadows down to Hammersley Fork. This became an impressive ridge walk with superb views into the Hammersley Canyon. The views continued almost all the way down to the bottom. The hike along Hammersley Fork was a joy, with views of the pristine stream as other side streams joined. There were some small waterfalls, including a cascade that came right out of the ground. There were also several beautiful campsites. Hammersley Fork is a gorgeous stream with rapids, slides, and pools, set in a deep canyon surrounded by wilderness. All we heard was the flowing water. We hiked out to complete the loop. Experience this place. It is one of Pennsylvania’s best kept secrets. I shall return. ♪

Novice Hikers Meet Their Match on the Susquehannock Trail System

By Wanda Shirk

Editor's note: This encounter, 3 1/2 years ago, was repeatedly "kicked down the newsletter trail" until we finally had room to fit it in.

After hiking through the Hammersley on September 23, 2013, and then having supper in Cross Fork, six of us rode in Pat Child's van back up to McConnell Road so that Art could retrieve his truck, which had taken us all to the starting point of our hike.

When we arrived at the truck, two young fellows in their early twenties were standing by it, backpacks beside them on the ground. They had hiked 25 miles on the STS, counter-clockwise from Denton Hill to McConnell Road. By the time they reached the top of the Gravel Lick Trail, Joe's knees and feet couldn't take any more. They had seen the "STS TRAIL CREW" sign that Art had left in the window of his truck, and they were hoping that whoever owned the truck would come up out of the Hammersley before dark and give them a ride back to their car in the lot behind the forest district office.

Tall, bearded, dark-haired Joe had graduated from the University of Buffalo recently with a degree in philosophy. Not finding any "HELP WANTED: PHILOSOPHER" ads among the classifieds, he was unemployed and open to some hiking when he met Austin. Shorter, blonde, boyish Austin had had a year of college when he moved up from Georgia to Buffalo to live with his mom after his dad had decided to hike the Appalachian Trail this year. Dad finished the AT in 5 months and loved it so much that he now intends to go west and do the Pacific Crest Trail and the Continental Divide, to get that "triple crown" of long-distance hiking. Dad had inspired Austin to try some backpacking, and somehow Joe and Austin had gotten one of our tri-fold brochures (no maps or guidebook) about the STS and decided to come and do it.

They found the trail to be much tougher than they expected, with all the ups and downs. Austin, in particular, had done some hiking before, but had never encountered such hills. Joe was hiking in the "minimalist" shoes -- those rubbery ones with individual toes that a lot of people rave about for comfort -- "it's like walking barefoot, but with some protection for your sole" -- but no cushion or support for the feet. I've run into other hikers who have found that these shoes are fine for ordinary walk and for trails around state parks, but they are totally inadequate for the serious trails of Pennsylvania like our STS.

Joe and Austin were greatly relieved to see us and to get a ride in Art's truck back to Cherry Springs SP, where I got my van and then took them back from there to Denton Hill and their car. They hope to come back and finish the trail later, after Joe gets hiking footwear. They enjoyed their two days on the trail, Sunday and Monday, even though they found it much more challenging than they expected.

After a great day hiking through the Hammersley, meeting these two young backpackers was "the icing on the cake" for a great day. ☺

Hide-Behind Sighting in Spook Hollow

Lylah Dillon, 2 years old, at the Spook Hollow Sign



Photo by Jon Dillon

Lylah Mae Dillon (age 2) was walking along "Spook Hollow" on November 7th, 2016 when a possible sighting of a rare 'hide-behind' was caught on camera. A mysterious creature is seen hiding behind a trail sign in this photo. Lylah was quoted as saying, "I ain't afraid of no ghost!" ☺



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