

THE HISTORY OF THE HIKE ACROSS MARYLAND

July 18, 2024

Everyone in the Mountain Club of Maryland (MCM) knows about the Hike Across Maryland (HAM), of course. Hiking the entire 41-mile length of the Maryland (MD) Appalachian Trail (A.T.), with all its hills and rocks, is a great endurance test. Hikers and trail runners from other states often travel long distances to participate. And a very large number of MCM members (usually about 70) who don't do the hike join in to help run the event—registering hikers, cleaning up the overnight facility used the night before the event, managing the food and drink stations, staffing the checkpoints, serving as section sweeps behind the hikers, driving in hikers who drop out back to their cars, etc. It's a large, well-known, well-organized event that takes months of planning. In this article, as part of our 90th Anniversary review of our club's history, I'll review how the HAM started and mention some noteworthy points in its history.

In the beginning, this long-distance hike across the entire Maryland length of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) was called the Marathon. In an occasional year it was called the End-to-End hike, but usually it was the Marathon until 1997, when it was renamed the Hike Across Maryland (HAM). It has been known as the HAM ever since.

The MCM 50th Anniversary book, MCM First Person: 1934 – 1984, in the front section about MCM's first 50 years, included the following statement about the Marathon:

In 1940, someone decided that it would be “fun” to hike the entire thirty-eight miles of the Maryland AT in one day. Thus began the Marathon, unique at that time. Traditionally, this entails spending the night at the fire house in Blue Ridge Summit, so that hardy souls taking part may be fed and sped on their way before daybreak. In a different fashion, the master mind command and his helpers have as arduous a task as the hikers... Some have crossed the... bridge in early afternoon, others at 9 p.m., but it is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. It has been repeated many times by popular demand.

The first Marathon appeared in the hike schedule included in the April-June 1940 Bulletin, providing the following information:

JUNE 23. A-T ACROSS MARYLAND, PEN-MAR TO HARPERS FERRY

The guide book gives this as 38.49 miles. If this isn't enough to furnish a full day's hiking, arrangements can be made for side trips. Plans contingent upon the number who wish to participate. To be combined with a hike from Turner's Gap to Woverton Cliffs. Early morning start from Pen-Mar will necessitate leaving Baltimore Saturday afternoon. For further information consult Morgan Barr, 720 Cator Ave., Chos. 2755.

I have not found any discussions in our early Council meeting minutes to explain what led to the scheduling of this first hike across the entire Maryland A.T. I also found no discussion of the

results in the Council meeting minutes in the months after that hike. But the October-December 1940 Bulletin included a humorous hike report by Grace Wagner, one of the participants, which I have copied below. She reported that 21 hikers started the hike and 14 completed it.

TRAIL MEMORIES

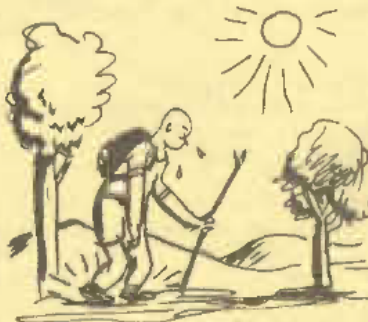


THE MARATHON

I, Grace Wagner, a member in good standing of the Mountain Club of Maryland, do hereby state and affirm that the following was personally seen by me, and is true in all respects. *

WHEREAS, many months ago the aforesaid MCM determined to conduct a Marathon across the State of Maryland on the AT, a distance of 38 miles, which had never before been attempted at a single gulp and whereas said Marathon was to be held on June 23rd, same being the longest day of the year (thus allowing more daylight in which the rescue squads could locate the fallen) the following events occurred:

ON THE afternoon of June 22nd the 'marathonees' left Baltimore for Camp Ritchie, the Army Camp near Pen-Mar. The Army kindly provided quarters, cots, etc., and anticipating the 'things to come' all entrees retired early. At 2:30 Sunday morning the alarm clocks pinged and the poor misguided hikers found their 'averages' catching up with them as the ghost of the 38 mile Marathon came in the window along with the moonlight.** It scurried on to the Maryland-Penn- of the 21 victime, wear- boots to sneakers, and had left Pen-Mar. The stumbling over rocks in being nice juicy bruises, aces that seem to haunt the morning, just to trip fast was secured at Wolf- bacon and eggs seemed to At this point, the afore- cards, serving as records speed. Four of the part- hem, Kemper and Latane over four miles per hour, and were discovered lunching at the Washington Monument about nine AM, a distance of 20 miles from the starting place. At this point a way- side fruit and confectionery stand had been set up by Florence and Harriet, who dis- pensed to the weary. The aforementioned Barr, Everingham, etc, who will hereinafter be known as the 'Four Horsemen' crossed the bridge into Harpers Ferry at 3:15 and fell upon the West Virginia soil. No one was there to put them out of their misery since no one had expected that the human frame could take such punishment and survive (a detail which will not be overlooked on future marathons). The last of the 14 who finished arrived at 7:15, after sixteen hours en route. The 7 who did not finish were buried along the route, under neat, white crosses, with suitable inscriptions.



Although the 50th Anniversary book stated that hikers could choose to spend the previous night at the Blue Ridge Summit firehouse, that tradition started later. In 1940, the hikers slept on cots at U.S. Army Camp Ritchie, which was close to the Trail, the night before. As with the modern HAM, MCM volunteers provided food and refreshments along the way. A hot breakfast of bacon and eggs was provided at the Wolfsville shelter, and lunch was served at Washington Monument.

THE "A" MARATHON HIKE JUNE 23, 1940

MORGAN BARR GOT THERE FIRST - AND
FINDS THE WATER SOOTHING --
BEN EVERINGHAM SEEMS TO BE
LIMPING IN - - - - -

AND MAKES USE OF THE HIGHER
WATER SUPPLY FOR HIS TOOTSIES-

PAST THE HALFWAY MARK AND
WINNIE IS SMILING - - -
IN FACT- LAUGHING -
IT'S EASY - - -

THE MARATHON - JUNE 23, 1940 APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKE ACROSS MARYLAND - - PEN-MAR, PENNSYLVANIA TO HARPER'S FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA FOURTEEN HIKERS COMPLETED THE TRIP

HARRIET WAS CHIEF OF THE
COMMISSARY SQUAD WHICH FURNISHED
BREAKFAST AT WOLFE LEAN-TO AND
LUNCH AT WASHINGTON MONUMENT PARK

THE OAKLEYS AND
PAUSE A MOMENT -

BILL KEMPER - ONE OF THE
EARLY FINISHERS- MOVES ALONG

Sunday June 26 Appalachian Trail Marathon across Maryland
Leader: Francis E. Old, Jr.

There was no additional information, but that issue of the Bulletin also contained no additional details about any of the other scheduled hikes —just the date and location of each hike.

As with the 1940 hike, there were no discussions of the Marathon in the Council minutes before or after the hike. But the October-December 1949 issue of the Bulletin did include a long hike report. Seventeen hikers started the hike and six of them finished--extremely hot weather may have reduced the number of participants. Once again, the participants stayed at Camp Ritchie the night before the hike. After a cold breakfast before starting, the hike began around 4 a.m. An "official breakfast" was offered at the Wolfsville Road shelter, lunch at Washington Monument, and refreshments at Crampton Gap (Gathland).

* * *

APPALACHIAN TRAIL "MARATHON" -- JUNE 26

The weekend of June 25-26 was one of the hottest we had all summer and none but the most foolhardy would have attempted the "Marathon" across Maryland. Those who later heard of the expedition thought that anyone who even tried it was considerably out of his head. Nevertheless, there were seventeen starters, and six finished, or were finished, as the case may be.

After a fabulous dinner on Saturday night, it was much too hot to go to bed, and there were all kinds of trips around Camp Ritchie to explore tanks and the like. Later, sleeping was well nigh impossible due to the heat and the humidity. Anyway, every one knew that Harry Cox was going to rout us out at 2 A. M. or so.

After a cold breakfast, the main group started out from the State Line at 4 o'clock. However, playing follow-the-leader with the wrong man, a second contingent finally got on the right road approximately fifteen minutes later. So began the long day.

Very early it was apparent that the day was going to be most unsuitable for walking. Halfway up High Rock one was acutely aware of streams of perspiration, an awareness which persisted throughout the trek! The official arrival of day-break, at about 4:45, was indeed welcome, for there was at least a temporary letup in the oppressiveness of the atmosphere. From Pen-Mar to the Wolfe Lean-to, where we had our official breakfast, the trip was rather easy, for this was a mild one-day hike for the Mountain Club.

At the lean-to, our most efficient commissary outdid itself in providing for us. The only unusual item was the appearance of salt tablets on the bill of fare! Our need for them was not great at the time, but later in the day, that supply was continually called upon partially to replace the huge amounts of salt lost in perspiration.

By breakfast, the line of hikers was spread thin, and one might say that the real work began here. The climb up from the Wolfsville-Smithsburg Road was just about the stiffest that we had all day, and perhaps half a mile of the Trail on the ridge above is over a very annoying boulder field. The hikers, traveling in small groups, began to think more and more of water and salt. With reference to the former, the very welcome Black Rock Springs supplied the most wonderful water had on the trip. Would it not have been much better to sit by this cool spring instead of continuing?

At the Dual Highway, we were again met by the food brigade and the hikers took to oranges and the like. Anything wet was in order. However, the trip was still not impossible and we pushed on to Washington Monument, and lunch, with twenty miles of the journey past!

At this point, the traveling food house found all kinds of liquid refreshments in great demand. The quantities of water, soup, and fruits consumed were fantastic, and the solid foods went begging. As for salt, Paul Bradt was seen putting approximately six large tablets in one cup of soup!

[NOTE: The term Dual Highway referred to route U.S 40 in the Hagerstown area.]

The last half of the trip was of course where the distance began to tell: Starting out well refreshed by lunch, Sam Moore, Paul Bradt, and I found the going easier than expected, over Lambs Knoll and down into Crampton Gap. It was very hot and the pull over Lambs Knoll seemed very long, but all in all, we felt surprisingly good.

At Crampton Gap we were met by Mr. and Mrs. Moore, who supplied us with delightful lemonade in large amounts. It was like feasting the lambs before the slaughter. For it was in the next section, the 6.2 miles to Weverton, that heat fatigue caught up with us.

After a brisk start out of Crampton Gap, this MCM member of the trio was soon left far behind by Sam and Paul. Quite suddenly, walking became downright hard work. A rest and a pace that seemed like that of a snail followed. Soon the other two were encountered, finishing a rest stop. It seems that they too had been hard hit rather suddenly. From that point on into Weverton, where we got more lemonade, and then the final miles down to the Sandy Hook bridge, the pace was a very leisurely one. The end was definitely in sight and there was no sense in hurrying.

15

The actual crossing of the bridge and the realization that the trip was over was rather anticlimatic. However, to sit down and take off one's shoes was indeed a pleasant procedure!

Such was the Marathon on the Appalachian Trail across Maryland on June 26, 1949.

Lloyd Felton

Unfortunately, there are no photos of this Marathon in the 1949 MCM photo scrapbook.

The Marathon hike was not offered again for more than two decades. Perhaps hikers disliked the long hike, or perhaps no one wanted to volunteer to take on the amount of work required to organize it. This long-distance event would next appear in the March-September 1971 trip schedule, which announced the following hike:

Saturday, May 8 — Maryland Appalachian Trail Marathon — Pen Mar to Harper's Ferry

Are you in good enough condition to hike the 38 miles of AT across Maryland in one day? Then come out and give it a try. Volunteers are needed to help with food, man the check points and drive the survivors back to Baltimore - sign up early. We'll sleep in Pen Mar on Friday night in order to get an early start on Saturday.

Leave: Friday P.M.

Time, place and expenses by arrangement with leader

Registrations close May 2

From this time forward, the hike has been held in early May instead of June in hopes of avoiding the summer heat--the May 1971 Council minutes specifically mentioned that the May date provided cooler temperatures. Thirty-one hikers started the event and 22 finished. There is no description of this hike in the July 1971 News. But we don't have copies of the newsletter issues for May or June, so it's likely there were details about the event in a missing newsletter.

Likewise, we do not have a newsletter article about the 1973 Marathon. But we do have an article about the Marathon in 1975 and in most later years. We know that starting with 1975, hikers would spend the previous night at a firehouse in Blue Ridge Summit (just across the PA border), and MCM would bus them to the trailhead. That's probably what happened in 1971 and 1973, as well.

From 1971 on, the Mountain Club offered the Marathon / End-to-End Hike / HAM every other year (i.e., every odd-numbered year) until 2019. In 2021, because of CO-VID, it was postponed until the following year. The HAM was held again in 2022 and 2024, and it is likely that we will continue to offer it in even-numbered years in the future.

The table below shows a set of basic information, to the extent it is available, for all the Marathon and HAM events. There are a few years when we do not have copies of the appropriate club newsletter issue that would have published information (including the number of hikers) after the race.

Paul Ives, alone or with his wife Ellie in early years, took the lead in organizing 12 Marathon events. Patty Williams managed the next eight HAMs, and now Sharon Sniffen has managed three. I've been a volunteer at six HAMs myself, and I have observed (and also heard from many HAM hikers) how well organized and managed the event is every time. MCM has been very fortunate to have a string of committed, skillful leaders who have (with the help of a large team of dedicated volunteers) led these events.

YEAR	COORDINATOR	NO OF PARTICIPANTS	NO OF FINISHERS
1940	Morgan Barr	21	14
1941	Francis Old	17	6
1971	Eloise and Bill Elmendorf?	31	22
1973	Eloise and Bill Elmendorf?	unknown	unknown
1975	Eloise and Bill Elmendorf	22	18
1977	Eloise and Bill Elmendorf	23	19
1979	Paul and Ellie Ives	26	22
1981	Paul and Ellie Ives	26	21
1983	Paul and Ellie Ives	37	27
1985	Paul and Ellie Ives	68	55
1987	Paul and Ellie Ives	46	38
1989	Paul and Ellie Ives	44	33
1991	Paul Ives	41	39
1993	Paul Ives	34	30
1995	Paul Ives	79	67
1997	Paul Ives	92	82
1999	Paul Ives	unknown	unknown
2001	Paul Ives	unknown	unknown
2003	Patty and Steve Williams	104	unknown
2005	Patty Williams	101	91
2007	Patty Williams	unknown	unknown
2009	Patty Williams	102	90
2011	Patty Williams	126	105
2013	Patty Williams	120	106
2015	Patty Williams	107	91
2017	Patty Williams	104	89
2019	Sharon Sniffen	123	89
2022	Sharon Sniffen	51	31
2024	Sharon Sniffen	73	56

It would be too voluminous to include the MCM newsletter articles for all the HAM events between 1975 and 2024 in this article. But below I have noted a few highlights of various HAMs, and changes that occurred over time, as well as HHP photos for many of the years.

Highlights of Past HAMs

The 1977 Marathon article has the first mention of the assistance of the Frederick Amateur Radio Club, which has provided invaluable support to these events ever since.

In May 1981, Kevin Lewis became the youngest hiker ever to complete the Marathon on the day before his 12th birthday.

Hikers suffered through very wet weather in 1987 and torrential downpours in 1989.

In 1991 Council, six Boy Scouts ages 11-13 were among the finishers.

The August 1995 HHP included the following anecdote about that year's Marathon: "This year's anxiety—there is always one—was provided by the absence of hiker number 68 at several early checkpoints. After several calls to his wife to: confirm that he had not quite and gone home, to obtain his description, to get a description of his car to determine if it was still at the firehouse, and after notifying the police, we discovered that we had two hikers numbered 89. Yes—68 had his number on upside down!"

The 1997 event was the first time it was called the Hike Across Maryland, and it was the first time that section sweeps were used.

In 2003, Patty and Steve Williams took over as HAM coordinators, replacing Paul Ives. In later years, Patty took the lead as coordinator.

At the 2017 event, because of heavy rains, MCM volunteers strung a rope across Little Antietam Creek and helped hikers cross the stream safely.

In 2019, Sharon Sniffen took over the role of HAM coordinator, after many years of outstanding leadership by Patty Williams. Starting in 2019, hikers spend the night before the hike at Camp Round Meadow in Catocin Mountain Park rather than the Blue Ridge Summit firehouse.

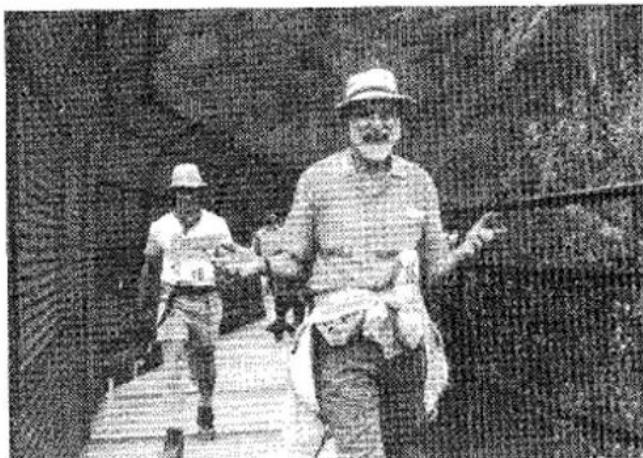
Because of CO-VID, the 2021 HAM was cancelled and held the following year. The HAM is still being offered every two years, but now it is held in even-numbered years.

In 2022, there were several days of heavy rains before the HAM, as well as downpours throughout the day of the hike. Both Little Antietam Creek and Warner Hollow stream crossings were submerged, and it was necessary to detour hikes around them on roads, and they also were detoured around High Rock for safety.

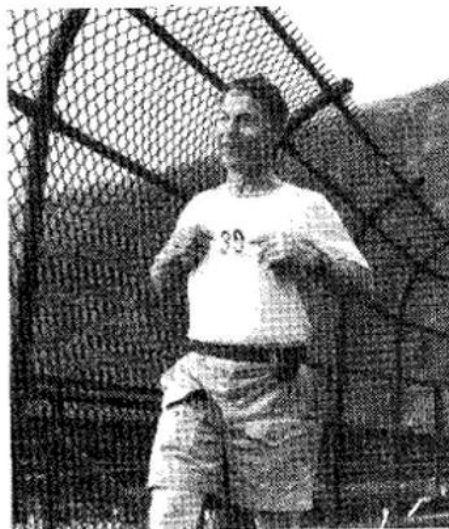
HAM Photos

Almost all of the photos below come from our newsletter reports of the HAMs, although I do have a few taken by members.

1987



Walt Pocock and Keith Wood enjoy the
"thrill of victory" at Harpers Ferry...



as does Ted Sanderson
(is that his age?)



Sue Bayley
(can't you tell?)
accompanied by
"the radio lady"
provide valuable
support.

Marathon hikers
also endure the
"agony of de feet".
Here are Maria Galindo...



...and Walt Pocock.



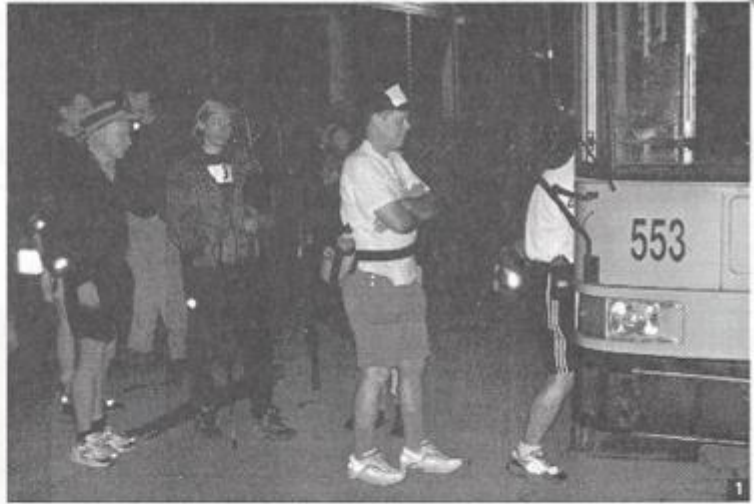
Lester Miles and Carson Billingsley
at Crampton Gap. Nobody stole the
arch while they were there.

Photos by Terri Eckard

1993



2003

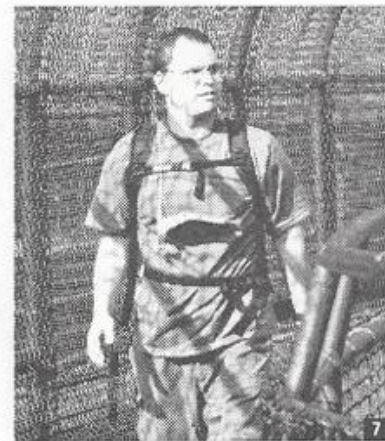
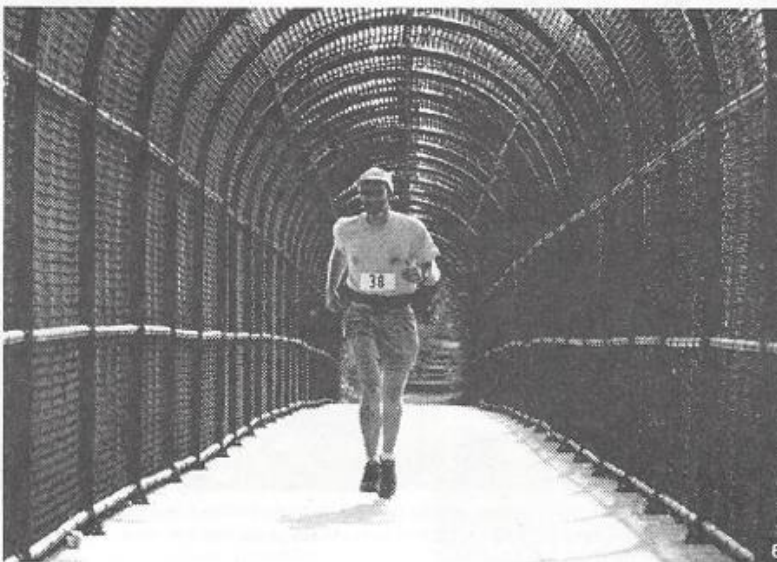


1. Hikers boarded buses at 5 AM to take them to the start of the hike.
2. Volunteers, Amanda Greene and Sue Bayley at the Blue Ridge Summit Firehouse.
3. Bridget McCusker (left) at the Boonsboro Road checkpoint.
4. Dan McQueen (left) takes a break at the Boonsboro road checkpoint.
5. Jesse Dobbs fills up.
6. The Boonsboro Road checkpoint volunteers.

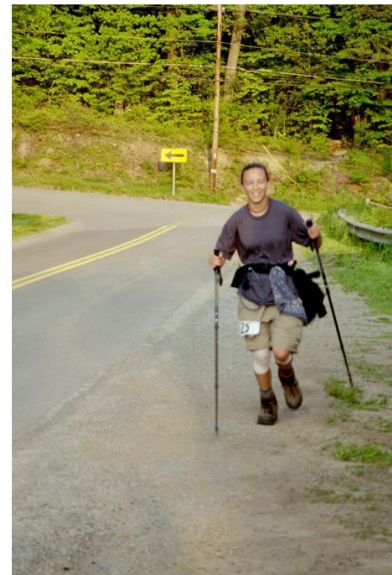
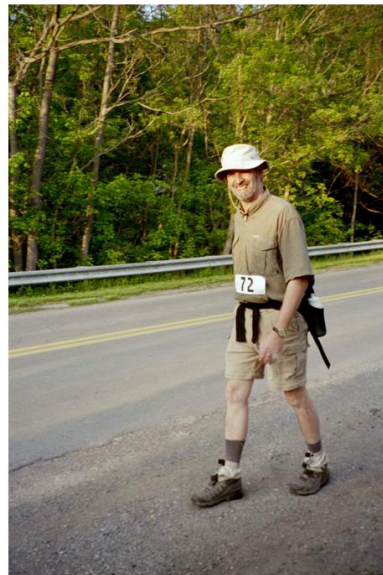




1. HAM manager, Patty Williams at the Weaverton checkpoint.
2. Volunteers, Paul Ives and Larry Kelly.
3. HAM finisher, Philip Waesche
4. Steve Williams (center) changes shoes at the Weaverton checkpoint.
5. Dave Warfield (left) on the C&O towpath.
6. Trailrunner, Kev Hawn crosses the bridge at Harpers Ferry to finish HAM at 1:10 PM.
7. Ron Eshleman on the Harpers Ferry footbridge.



The following photos of the 2003 HAM were taken by our long-time member Rosie Suit.



2005

HIKE ACROSS MARYLAND 2005



1. MCM members, Eva Barnhill (left) and Cherie Hunter (right) approach the Weaverton checkpoint.
2. MCM member and past MCM president, Bridget McCusker looks great at the Lambs Knoll checkpoint, 26.5 miles into the hike.
3. From left: Norman Glick, Bob Carson (seated), Norma Walker and Art Lien, were some of the wonderful Lambs Knoll checkpoint volunteers that made HAM 2005 such a success.
4. Wednesday Hikers, Dan McQueen and Ron Cully with Karen Klinedinst at the Harpers Ferry finish.

Hike Across Maryland 2007 (Photos by RosieSuit)



The end of the rainbow for hungry hikers.

Ron Cully, Gary Gentry, and Dan McQueen stick together like glue.



Plenty of onlookers to cheer the hikers on.

Tailgate party for hikers and friends.



Wayne Libscomp, Amanda Greene, and friend chill out.



Karen Klinedinst leaves 'em in the dust!



2011



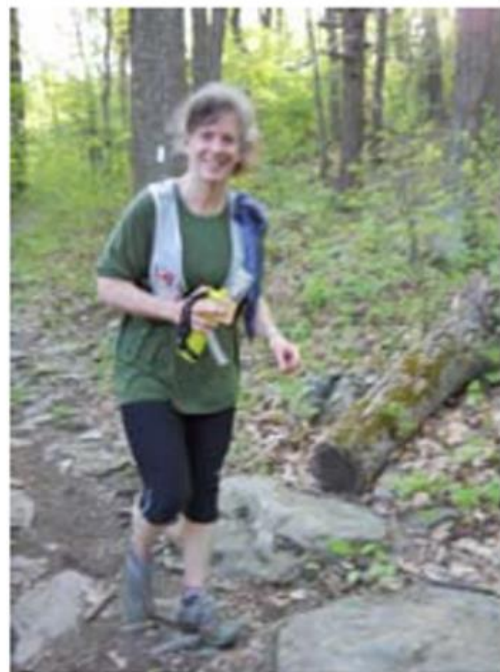
HAM hikers remove boots, shoes...air and cool the feet...at the half-way point where lunch was served at the shelter at Washington Monument State Park. A cool but sunny day, hikers found walking conditions perfect.



Jesse Dobbs shows eight fingers for his eighth HAM finish.



Jim Koury crosses I-70 during the HAM in good shape and great spirits...with almost half the day's walk done.



Bridget McCusker, MCM prexy '98-2000, on her 40 mile day.

2013



Karen Kleindinst, Bridget McCusker, Gwen Mahoney, and Kathy Ruland...four strong MCM lady hikers, compare notes and congratulate each other at the Harpers Ferry finish of the 2013 HAM.



Janet Bolard and Marge Mitchell, with clipboards and hikers' numbers, check on those leaving Washington Monument lunch stop, heading for Gathland and Harpers Ferry.



Art Hall and wife, Rain (nee: Willoughby), with their grandson Colin, wait at the I-70 bridge crossing for their son, Colin's dad, to cheer him on in his first HAM.



Cherie Hunter and Jesse Dobbs show well-prepared spirit when they arrive at the I-70 bridge...both are multiple times hikers of the HAM.



MCM V.P. Jim Floyd arriving at lunch. (Photo: I. Eckard)

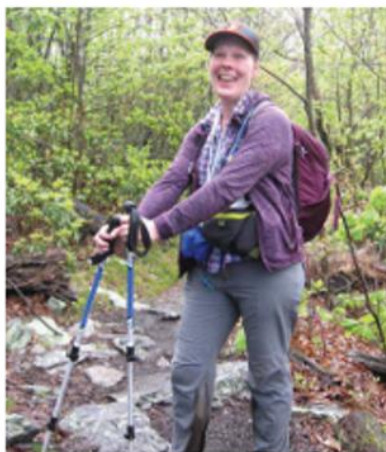


Volunteers at check point #7, trying to keep warm and dry

2017



Karen Ohlrich



Kim Considine



Bob Goren

2019



The HAM's top three finishers were Anthony Fisher, left; Steve Kelly, center; Megan Jefferson, right.

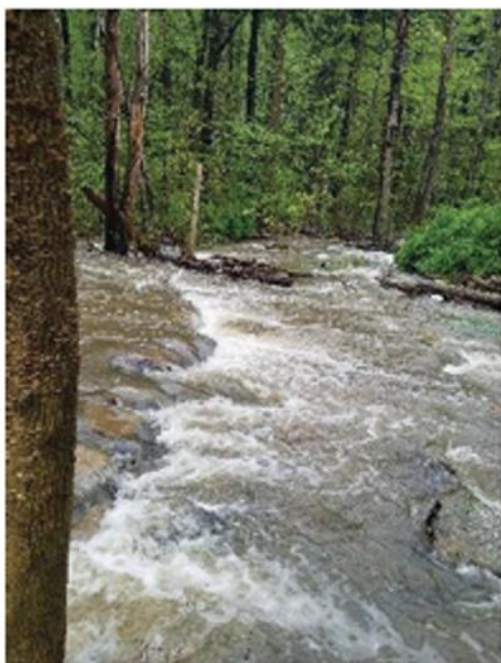


Eric Dahl arrives at Harpers Ferry. Photo by the author.



Andrew Petras arrives at Checkpoint 8 Gathland. Photo by Randy Wendell

2022



Flooded Little Antietam Creek



Frederick Amateur Radio Club at Harpers Ferry



Ronald Henry and Brian Oswald were two of the earliest hikers to finish the race.

2024



