

Local hiker finishes Appalachian Trail

John J. McFerrin of Black Mountain finished the Appalachian Trail (AT) on August 29 at Maine's Mount Katahdin.

McFerrin began the Trail on February 22 at Georgia's Springer Mountain, pursuing the personal challenge of becoming a "thru-hiker" on the world's longest continuously marked footpath.

On average, only 10 percent of the people that start the hike each year actually finish. McFerrin began the hike once before in 1989 and made it as far as Virginia, where injuries and illness forced him off the Trail.

In covering the 2,144 miles, McFerrin hiked through 14 states and climbed more than 400 mountains.

In March he trekked the 164.5 miles of the trail in North Carolina. This section includes Nantahala National Forest with its 4,000-foot gaps and 5,000-foot peaks.

McFerrin averaged 15-20 miles a day. At night he slept in the three-sided shelters provided and maintained locally by AT Club volunteers. The shelters offer some protection from the weather, but not from all of the wild animals. Mice and skunks were regular uninvited guests at the shelter.

McFerrin carried a backpack weighing approximately 38 pounds. His pack contained a sleeping bag, dry socks and

enough food for four or five days when he reached a new town to resupply. Food and supplies were sent to pre-arranged points by his wife Diane, who hiked parts of the Trail with him.

The pack weight was a major concern. Covering rocky terrain can be tricky even with a light pack.

The emphasis on weight encourages a hiker to be creative with food. McFerrin dried most of his own food which included fruits, vegetables, tuna and tomato sauce. He added water to the dried tomato sauce and made spaghetti sauce and even tomato juice. Instant noodles and macaroni and cheese are the substance of most

AT meals, although peanut butter is a trail favorite.

A community atmosphere exists along the length of the Trail. Friendly towns with facilities for washing clothes and finding a hot meal, and local clubs that maintain the Trail, have a singleness of purpose about them. They are a part of the natural beauty of the mountains and work to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the hikers, said McFerrin.

McFerrin attributes his interest in hiking the Trail to his childhood experiences at Camp Ridgecrest for Boys where he participated in the Sioux Trailblazers program.

As a young camper and later counselor he hiked many parts of the Appalachian Trail, learning exactly the skills and determination that would be required for a thru-hike.

He decided as a Trailblazer that he would rather be a part of the beautiful mountains and scenery by hiking the Appalachian Trail than by being a spectator on the Parkway.



John McFerrin

Art League Open House

An Open House will be held this Sunday from 2-5 p.m. at the new Art Center, operated by the Swannanoa Valley Art League. The Open House is jointly presented by the Art League and the Swannanoa Valley Medical Center,

covering, Ken Hoover of The Art Annex for mirrors, and Minnie Stallard for counter tops and the stove top range. Screens and labor were donated by Ralph Dixon of Black Mountain Glass & Mirror.

Free labor has been donated by

Williams and Louise Vogt, who is "keeper of the keys."

Other volunteers include the Education Committee, whose members are Lola MacMillan, Teddi Lowenstein, Jean Kouns and Colette Cooley, and the Inside