

Historical Origins

One Summer day early in the 1990's when George and DeeDee were, in Polly's phrase, "freshly together", George decided to interest DeeDee in hiking, to show her what fun it was and to get her going. Enlisting some of his co-members of the Berkshire East Ski Patrol, Dave and Polly Bartlett, Frank Hicks, and possibly Jack Blood and Hattie Ball, George, together with DeeDee and the others, set out for Raycroft Lookout. They drove most of the way up and hiked around on the dirt roads for I don't know how long. It was the most miserable, hot, muggy, rainy and mosquito day one can imagine. When the group finally returned, hot, exhausted, with at least one member very irritable, George opened his trunk. The hikers anticipated beer. But no. In addition to beer, George, knowing DeeDee's penchant for champagne, had thoughtfully brought along more than one bottle, which cheered every one up. At some point, they decided that it would be a good idea to bring along at least one bottle of the bubbly on future hikes. DeeDee, however realize that she didn't need to have hiked to drink the champagne. This was to be her first - and last - hike. At least, that's the way the myth goes. DeeDee herself says she actually want on quite a few subsequent hikes but that in essence the story is true.

Meanwhile, the others, recognizing the logic of DeeDee's position, decided that the champagne would have to be drunk enroute to insure only legitimate hikers partook. So began the practice of popping at the top, during lunch. DeeDee, as one might imagine, continues to drink champagne at the Champagne Hikers potlucks (see below).

Next spring, George and DeeDee went to Angel Fire NM for four years leaving just a skeleton four: Dave, Polly, Hattie, and Jack, to keep up the tradition. Which they did. As the years went by, more hikers joined the group until by 2004, the Champagne Hikers had over 20 active members on their roster. The largest number of participants on a given hike so far is sixteen (see Vol.2 No. 15), the smallest four (e.g. Vol. 2. No. 1).

The first champagne potluck was held in June 2003, hosted by the Eggerts, to celebrate Hattie's eightieth birthday. For her present, the Champagne Hikers presented her with the Champagne Hikers t-shirt, which Margaret and Hank's soon to be son-in-law designed, and which all Champagne Hikers are eligible to wear (at \$10 a piece). Discovering the enjoyment of each others' company, it was decided to hold a potluck every month, rotating hosts. Intoxicated by the idea of doing things as a group, all kinds of ideas surfaced, from political discussions, to theater trips, to river rafting. So far only the political discussions and one day's tubing (see Vol. 2. No. 15) have occurred.

The same year -2003- saw the emergence of *The Champagne Hikers World*, loosely based on *The Ringing World* (a weekly paper published in England that records every successful full, half, and quarter peal rung in the United Kingdom the previous week, with name of peal, who rang each tower bell, church location, date, and time it took to ring the peal). Although we do not have written up descriptions of the Champagne Hikes prior to the beginning of *The Champagne Hikers World*, Polly has kept a record of each hike, where it went, date, and who hiked, from the onset of the champagne hikes (see next page).

During this early period, Polly recalls a particularly memorable hike in Conway State Forest with Jack Blood leading. There were no trails. The hikers bushwacked until they reached what used to be a pasture, overgrown with juniper, and a scenic view. They found a large rock with a plaque on it dedicated to someone who led hikes just like ours (but without the champagne). Polly has never found it since. Never say that the Champagne Hikers lack a future goal!

A TCHW TOC sample from 2008, does anyone have any others?

The Champagne Hikers World

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03	Wednesday Jan 16	Watermans/M. Freeman	Harriman Dam
04	Wednesday Jan 23	T. Waterman&S. Southwick	Northfield Mountain
05	Thursday Jan. 31	Emma Stamas /M. Freeman	Pelham Lake
06	Thursday Feb 7	Jarretts/Watermans	Cook State Forest and Halifax, VT
07	Wednesday Feb 20	M. Poudrier/Melanie&Tiger	“The Square,” Hawley
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Vol. 2 # 14

Date: Friday July 30, 2004

Leader, Polly Bartlett with the help of print outs from Ed Stamas

Hikers: Ted and Bari Jarrett, Polly Bartlett, Mary and Cliodhna Kelly, Tiger and Ron Waterman, and Lenore Weinbrom

Location: Haystack Mountain South end trail

Time on the trail: 3 hours

Distance: Short 2.4 miles one way (The Green Mountain Guide says)

Compiler: Polly Bartlett

Polly, the Kellys and the Jarretts met at the Brick Church in Colrain at 9:00 and proceeded to Wilmington where we met Lenore at the junction of Routes 9 and 100 then on to the entrance to Chimney Hill Estates off Route 9, 1.1 miles west of Wilmington center. There were many roads in the development but essentially we kept going up at each intersection (always welcome by car) until we came to the Haystack Mountain Trail head. We left the cars shortly after 10:00 and started up a very gentle incline on the gravel access road to the reservoir. We were glad when the Keep Out signs on the road directed us to the woods trail to Haystack. Some of us had XC skied the trail before and some had climbed it years ago so it was new and enjoyable to all of us. We were glad that the trail was no wetter than it was as we skipped across streams and muddy patches. The trail climbs very politely through ferns, spruce and northern hardwoods gaining . . . (The guide book says a total of 1045 feet gain in elevation.)

Cliodhna and Mary were always in the lead and would have made the trip in half of the time if we didn't tell them to wait for us. We were on the "Deerfield Ridge Trail" going all the way to the Haystack ski lift and Mount Snow and nearly missed the branch trail to Haystack Mountain itself. This trail rose steeply to the ledgy summit with views of the Deerfield Valley going toward Mount Snow. The views were good but the humidity was too high for distance views. We could see Haystack pond off to the North and the ski lifts going to Haystack and Mount Snow.

We arrived at this summit at 11:30 and had a BODM to decide if this should be lunch or snack or Champagne stop. We decided on Champagne anyway and people ate what they pleased. We left the summit at 12:15 and at 12:30 had another BODM looking at the map to see how far we wanted to go. The map showed that Haystack lifts (next view point) were about as far ahead of us as we had come to that junction so we decided to keep that for another time when we would not take the side trip to the peak and maybe in the Fall the colors would enhance the views. So by 2:00 we were back at our cars where some of us went home to our responsibilities and others went off to their favorite canoeing and swimming spots.

The Champagne Hikers World
Vol. 5 No. 11

Date: Wednesday March 28, 2007
Leader: Stan Perry
Hikers: Polly Bartlett, Peter Buell, JoEllen Cameron, Margaret Eggert, Maureen Flaherty, Margaret Freeman, Ana Hendrick, Joan Holzman, Bari Jarrett, Ted Jarrett, George Rapp, Sandi Southwick, Ron Waterman, Tiger Waterman
Location: Massamet Mountain to Gould's Sugar House
Directions: Perry house, first house on left on Halligan Road, off Route 2 in Shelburne
Distance: Four miles
Time: Three hours
Compiler: JoEllen Cameron

It was a merry start as usual for our first "boot hike" of the season. The weather was delightful for hiking- deep blue sky and chilly. Stan led us up the mountain trail on his property. Discussions included the whereabouts of our missing hikers (Hank being the mud sissy), what people have been up to this winter, and politics. We detoured to the power lines to see the beautiful view of Buckland (and seven turkey vultures). We then continued up the steep trail to Massamet. The footing was tricky at times, but overall it was fine. Ted commented that we should send Hank his own version of the report that said the trail was like a sidewalk the whole way. We saw the first signs of spring, which included Morning Cloak butterflies and Ana's pink boots and straw sun hat.

We popped at the top of Massamet and toasted Stan. While the rest of us flopped on the rocks, Tiger, never one to run out of energy, ascended the tower and peeked out of the windows. After a brief rest, hunger prevailed and we headed down a snowmobile trail. We passed through a hemlock forest where we almost lost a few of us who had gone beyond the cutoff trail. Reunited, we continued on through Polly's favorite part of the hike until we reached a radio tower. Rock Margaret (by now wearing just her T-shirt) wondered what the things that looked like drums were at the top. We had a BODM and decided to bushwhack directly to Gould's instead of cut down to Cooper Road. It was a good decision-it was mostly dry leaves underfoot, and we walked through a lovely hickory grove with views (Sandi commenting that this time of year is great for unblocked views) and saw an interesting cabin.

At this point, the hike became a familiar sort of Champagne Hike as we inadvertently separated from five of our hikers due to a separation. We thrashed about descending the mountain, aiming toward the smoke from Gould's. It being such a windy day, this was no easy task. The group I was in stopped and blew a whistle to locate those missing (or maybe we were the ones missing). After a bit, we figured that they had probably found a better way down, so we started moving again. Lo and behold, when we reached the road at the bottom there they were. We all continued down the trail, following the sugar lines, until we reached Gould's, quite ready for lunch!

We had a yummy lunch that included blueberry pancakes, corn fritters and waffles with ice cream. There had been some talk in the beginning of eating first to avoid the crowds, but as it turned out we were the only crowd. After lunch we all piled into Ted and Bari's car (11-a new record) and Hank and Margaret's car and came home. Great hike, Stan!

The Champagne Hikers World
Vol. 5 No. 12

Date: Wednesday, April 11, 2007
Leader: Ted Jarrett
Hikers: Polly Bartlett, JoEllen Cameron, Ana Hendrick, Bari Jarrett, Ted Jarrett, Ted Merrill, Stan Perry, Sandi Southwick, Ed Stamas, Emma Stamas, Ron Waterman, Tiger Waterman
Location: Quabbin
Directions: Route 122 in New Salem to Gate 35
Distance: 8 miles
Time: four hours (including unspecified time for lunch)
Compiler: Sandi Southwick

The group met at Home Depot parking lot where the first lesson of the day was learned by Ted, our leader. The exit from Route 2 to Route 122 does not have a Sunoco station. Luckily, Ted was able to contact JoEllen (who was waiting at the Sunoco station at the exit for route 202) by cell phone and directed her to the correct meeting point. From the Quabbin parking area we took the fork in the road to the right. We walked a short way to the water where we found a footpath to the left that took us to a road. Taking a right at the road, we walked along the reservoir until the road was submerged. A left here and we were in the forest for most the rest of the walk.

As lunch time neared, JoEllen spotted a trail on the left which she thought would get us to the top of Soapstone Mountain. A BOD meeting was held. We agreed to try this option and headed into the pines. Very soon it became clear we had erred. We went back to our BOD location and decided to back track to another trail we had seen. Again we erred. Back to the main trail we went. We decided we needed to go further on the main trail and soon arrived at a third option near water which looked promising. We had a short break for squirrel food and tried option number three. The third time is a charm. Very soon we came to the marker for a left turn to the trail to the top the Soapstone Mountain. Onward and upward!

The steep climb to the top had many rewards. We passed an old quarry which contained a vernal pool with wood frogs croaking. As we continued our ascent, Polly brought our attention to the sound of a yellow-bellied sapsucker at work. At 891 feet we were at our destination. We dined overlooking the reservoir in the warmth of the sun. Turkey vultures soared overhead. Champagne was shared.

JoEllen led us on the return back to the starting point. The trail back was much more gradual. We traversed a beaver dammed area, using many methods to cross from bare feet to pole vaulting to primitive bridge construction. While we were returning on the road along the reservoir, a large thin sheet of ice was being pushed up against the shoreline. Small sections of the leading edge would rise up and break off creating little white mounds along the shore. The sound was a soft rustling as one layer of ice glided over another. It was an amazing phenomenon.

We followed this road directly back to our cars and said our goodbyes after another enjoyable hike.

The Champagne Hikers World

Vol. 5 No. 24

Date: Wednesday, July 4, 2007
Leader: Maureen Flaherty
Hikers: Mandy Comai, Hank Eggert, Margaret Eggert, Margaret Freeman, Cheri Giddings, David Giddings, Ana Hendrick, Joan Holzman, Bari Jarrett, Ted Jarrett, Susan Purdy, George Rapp, Ed Stamas, Emma Stamas, Pam Tepedino, Ron Waterman, Tiger Waterman
Guest Hikers: Barry Weinbrom, Lenore Weinbrom
Location: Berkshire East and Redman Hall, Charlemont
Directions: Berkshire East Ski Resort parking lot off Route 2 in Charlemont
Distance: Who knows? Two miles?
Time: Two hours
Compiler: Margaret Freeman

Perfect day for hiking the glorious Fourth. Two or three cars at the Beast. Another car pulls in, then another, then another. Amazement that so many were hiking without having "other plans." A final total of twenty people in ten cars. List checked off. Eighteen on the list. Twenty bodies on the ground. Check and recheck. Still eighteen and twenty. Line-up ordered. Counted off. Twenty bodies. Eighteen on the list. Final discovery: Ted and Bari not on the list. Puzzle solved. We set out at 10:15 a.m., taking the Roundabout trail to the Outback trail to the top (an ascent, George reported, of a thousand feet). Tiger finds fluffy copper glowing feathers on the way. Peacocks? Woodcocks (a live couple spotted later)?

Stop at the first chairlift. Welcome seats for the lucky few. Emma noted as having appeared on national NPR concerning water issues. George summoned to listen. Smirk on face and wheels turn as he thinks how to respond to Emma's account of how to treat well water (as opposed to bottled water which involves a lot of oil in the making and transportation of said item). Finally, question comes: "But how expensive is a filtration system and why is it necessary?" Leader indicates we are not yet at top. Set out again, this time with Emma and a fiery Ted continuing the water arguments all the way up. Lots of "bullshits" heard floating in the Berkshire East air. Not sure who wins the nomenclature of "conversational pyromaniac" (a phrase picked up at a Lake Wyola party the evening before): George usually the champion; Ted becoming the conversational pyromaniac of the day, with Joan observing that George is more of the conversational prankster, the kid who'd dunk girls' braids in inkwells or tie them to chairbacks.

Top reached. More chairlift to sit on for a (different) lucky few. Desultory conversation. Group picture called for; George summoned to take his place. George ordered to stay put while Tiger and Ron do their usual position exchange for a later photoshop insert. Maureen and Hank exchange thoughts on which route to take down. Hank opts for the mown paths. So the Mohawk Trail it is. Until George branches off with a goodly portion onto a side trail. The few sensibles stay on the Mohawk and are lounging at the Lodge waiting for the rest. Rock Margaret even had time to "go home" to change into party wear before they arrive. Decision made that since the Eggerts had hosted the week before and were hosting the potluck next Monday, better for Maureen to host the post-hike barbecue. Hank thought that just as well as they had no intention of doing so (though they'd left their food at home and Kitty Margaret had a whole display of flags at the ready). Noticeable that only the naturalized sported patriotic ephemera.

Hikers joined by various spice for the feast (Deedee and Don). Champagne (and other liquids) flowed, and absent (off somewhere in the kitchen) leader toasted, as was the Fourth (this naturalized citizen still reluctant to mention the name of the day). Barbecue items ranged from hotdogs through turkey and veggie burgers to tenderloin venison. Much talk about commutations and pardons and impeachments. All beautifully timed and coordinated by our leader-host, as the rain started just as we wrapped up the barbecue.

The Champagne Hikers World

Vol. 6 No. 2

Date: Thursday, January 10, 2008
Leader: Polly Bartlett
Hikers: Ted Jarrett (snowshoe), Ron Waterman, Tiger Waterman (skis)
Location: Pine Brook Farm
Directions: Take Rte # 2 then take 112 South to # 44 Ashfield Road
Distance: nearly 2 miles
Time: 2 Hours
Compiler: Polly Bartlett and Tiger Waterman

Ron and Tiger met Polly at Pine Brook Farm at 2:00 p.m. First, Polly needed to feed her horse some hay. Civian, "Civi," had her winter fluffy fur on which made her look like a teddy bear.

Ted Jarrett came soon afterward.

Ron, Tiger, and Polly already had their skis on, and Ted put on his snowshoes and joined us on the trail behind Polly's house. The snow conditions were just great for both skiing and snowshoeing! The hemlocks and pines still had the snow on them from the last storm making a beautiful contrast against the sky.

We soon came upon a field and stopped for photo ops. We continued on into the Buckland Recreation area and the Clesson's River and then into the Purple Forest.

After crossing a broken bridge we had some GORP, Clementine snacks, and water.

Rick Williams, a friend of Ron's, came up the trail from the opposite direction. After introductions, Polly talked to Rick about the trail maintenance and the school's ski coach.

We followed the beautiful meandering Pine Brook back to Polly's Barn through which we need to pass right past her fluffy gate keeper, who, by the way, let us pass without incident.

We put away our winter play equipment and went inside Polly's home for some cozy hospitality and delicious hot chocolate and yummy home baked cookies. Dave and Zack the cat joined us.

The Champagne Hikers World

Vol. 6 No. 5

Date: Thursday January 31, 2008
Leader: Emma Stamas with Moss
Snowshoers: Margaret Freeman, Bari Jarrett, Ted Jarrett, Ron Waterman, Tiger Waterman
Location: Pelham Lake Recreation Area, Rowe
Directions: Parking at Pelham Lake Beach area
Distance: Three miles, give or take
Time: Two hours
Compiler: Margaret Freeman

A slight snow dusting in Heath and Rowe protected the trails against ice accumulation from freezing rain, but Emma pronounced the snow too crunchy for skis. So we all set off on snowshoes shortly after 1:00 p.m. under brisk sunshine. The ranger at the park station asked where we were headed. He explained that he was about to take his dog to the Back Cove to cut trees, so we decided to head away from the lake, after setting out on the Beach Trail and then the Lakeview Trail. At the junction, Tiger pulled out squirrel food while Emma pointed up the Sabrina Rice Trail, saying that it went up for a bit, then leveled out. Ted: "Is she on the level?" Margaret: "We'll have to wait and see."

Moss who had bounded off ahead and out of sight returned to join us at the junction, and from then on, stopped at each junction for us to catch up. Ted wondered if it was OK to let him run loose with all the coyotes around. Margaret shrugged (not pointing out that her border collies would chase coyotes in California and, anyway, there was nary a trace of them to be found in the recreation area).

Mostly we went in single file which cut down on conversation, but we managed to celebrate Bari's last round of treatments the day before and commiserate with Ron who was scheduled for dental surgery for a tooth implant the day after. From the Sabrina Rice Trail we stopped for another BODM before taking the Davis Mine Trail, as our leader (the human not the canine one) pointed out that we would have to retrace our steps so that we should decide how far we wanted to go. Ted suggested that we try to get back to the cars by 3:00-3:15 p.m., which meant we had another fifteen minutes to explore the Davis Mine Trail. By this time the path had widened somewhat so that we could conduct more of our usual conversation (aided by frequent stops). These included recent and anticipated visits to the movie theater and a PBS show Bari and Ted saw the previous night on Tierra del Fuego, with Bari and Ted contradicting each other over details, so much so that they didn't even hear Margaret's comment that if we were going to quarrel, let's do it over the Clintons. By this time we had already reached and turned back from the point where the trail took a steep uphill turn to the right.

Margaret and Emma then started a conversation on the recent political scene, focusing on whether Obama would take Massachusetts, especially since Kennedy's, Kerry's, and Governor Deval's endorsements, and presuming that Clinton would have the edge in New York ("they seem to like her there" said Emma). One peculiarity about this "hike" was that I think each one of us ended up taking turns being in front, though Moss maintained his lead throughout. As we approached the lake, we could hear the ranger's chainsaw faintly in the distance.

We reached the parking lot at 3:05 p.m. Ted commended Moss for his good behavior, and Bari rewarded him with some of her special granola. We had enjoyed gentle and non-strenuous exercise which left us all energized and feeling good and not at all tired.