

SATC CLUB HISTORY

10/26/2005

Dedicated to the memory of Ralph H. Kinter

"TRAIL BLAZES" is the official name for our club history. The logo is a double blaze. As Jean Stephenson explained many years ago, the double blaze is trying to call our attention to something; 99 times out of 100, it's a turn in the trail. This is the 1 in 100 time that the blazes are trying to call your attention to something else: History.

These pages have been appropriated from the Archives; almost three dozen articles written by Bushwack Bulletin Editor and SATC co-Founder Ralph H. Kinter. If you remember anything from the early days of the SATC that Ralph forgot, let us know. They were transcribed and, in some cases, condensed by slave labor under the executive direction of Dick Martin (in other words, Dick typed a few words then told Pete to finish the rest).

Prehistory

SATC was not the first Trail Club in Harrisburg. Even before there was an Appalachian Trail, there was a very active Pennsylvania Alpine Club. It had chapters in Harrisburg, Chambersburg, and other towns of Pennsylvania. The PA Alpine Club constructed and maintained its own series of trails, including the Darlington Trail. The Darlington started at Overview (near the west end of the Rockville Bridge) and ran all the way to the Kings Trail, just west of Chambersburg. The trail was named for Bishop Darlington, the Minister at St. Stephens Episcopal Cathedral in Harrisburg. The good Bishop was the Secretary of the Penna. Alpine Club. There was a monument to Bishop Darlington at the East end of the Rockville Bridge (since destroyed by vandals).

The Pennsylvania Alpine Club was one of the original A.T. Clubs. The P.A.C. wanted the Darlington Trail to be incorporated as part of the Appalachian Trail. When the South Mountain route was chosen for the A.T., only that portion of the Darlington Trail from Lambs Gap to Overview became part of the Appalachian Trail. This caused the PAC to lose interest, and the club dropped out of the Appalachian Trail Conference.

The Penna. Alpine Club had a requirement that prospective members had to climb certain mountains under Club sponsorship; this initiation requirement eventually spelled the demise of the club, because as the club members aged, there were few left to qualify new members.

There were at least seven attempts to start new clubs in the Harrisburg area, with only the KABOB Hiking Club being successful (they had a better initiation rite: food). But they limited their active membership to only 40 members. This resulted in a 3 to 5 year waiting list. KABOB still exists today, but you have to ask around to find a KABOB'er. They're not in the phone book.

The Dream

Then, in 1948, Earl Shaffer electrified the hiking world by doing the impossible. He hiked the entire 2024 miles of the Appalachian Trail . . . in a little over 4 months. Not only did Earl hike the Trail, but he reported back to the Appalachian Trail Conference on the problems he noted along the Trail. The problems included:

1. The Pennsylvania Railroad would never permit hikers to cross the Rockville Bridge. This meant a lengthy detour South along the Susquehanna River to Harrisburg and back north to the Trail . . . a 15 mile detour.

2. During WWII, the Federal Government took over the Military Reservation at Indiantown Gap and made the Appalachian Trail off limits. This made for another lengthy detour on roads from Manada Gap to Swatara Gap.

Now Earl was a Thinker, a Dreamer, a person who can visualize needed changes and he immediately came up with a plan to solve both problems . . . Relocate the Trail northward, to the Clark's Ferry Bridge! This would entail a 69 mile relocation, from Center Point Knob to Swatara Gap.

Earl took his plan to Murray Stevens (then Chairman of the ATC) and Murray bought the idea. For the next few years, the two studied the maps, spent considerable time going over the area and planning on where and how to relocate the Trail.

The Beginning

Earl Shaffer began pursuing his trail relocation project but began to run into a real problem - manpower. The Mountain Club of Maryland maintained all the A.T. west of the Susquehanna. The York Hiking Club maintained the A.T. east of the Susquehanna, to about Manada Gap. The Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club's section began east of where the York club's section ended. All of these clubs would have great distances to travel in order to assist with a major relocation of almost 70 miles.

So once again, "our dreamer" had a vision: Why not start a new trail club in Harrisburg to help with the work? Harrisburg had the population and the location . . . but where to start? Sometime in 1953, both Earl Shaffer and Ralph Kinter had independently approached George Gruber about starting a local trail club (Earl had met George in Maine while hiking the A.T.).

It was George who got Ralph and Earl together. The three finally met on Sunday, April 4, 1954. Eighteen people* met behind the State Education Building. Earl arranged a hike to Hawk Rock, high above Duncannon. It was there that the group came up with the name "Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club".

After two more hikes in April the club organized, with Ralph as President, Earl as Vice-President, Thelma as Secretary/Treasurer (April 25, 1954).

They set up a Constitution and By-Laws Committee and made plans to join the Appalachian Trail Conference.

* Some of the original 18 were: Earl Shaffer, George Gruber, Ralph Kinter, Elmer Bolla, Ruth Bolla, William Lief, Thelma Marks, Jennie Riggio, and Paul Walker.

First Steps

While Ralph was concentrating on the Club functions, Earl busied himself with the Relocation Project. He spent his weekends going over the proposed route, marking it with blazes, then the Club would schedule a work trip for the trail - building. Earl's enthusiasm was picked up by the club and the construction of the 69-mile A.T. Relocation gave the club a goal which helped ensure the success of the Club. One unusual note is that Earl's relocated trail used several miles of Ironstone Ridge to cross the Cumberland Valley (the "road walk" began when I-81 later came through and cut the trail).

The first newsletter came about in October 1954. Earl Shaffer came up with an ancient mimeograph, and a name "BUSHWHACK BULLETIN". Earl, the first Editor, neglected to tell Ralph how to spell Bushwhack, and the newsletter came out as BUSHWACK BULLETIN. Jean Stephenson, Editor of the TRAILWAY NEWS, pointed out the error, but said "keep it that way." So we continue spelling it "Bushwack" today And now we know why.

Other "teething problems" ensued with the new Club. Simply agreeing on a time and place to meet threatened to split the Club, and compromises were necessary to get the Constitution and By-Laws approved . . . but that, too was accomplished. Important too, were rules preventing any "dictators for life" on the Board, so nomination rules and term limitations were included in the Constitution.

One rule accepted by compromise was a rule requiring every member to vote . . . And a failure to vote would be considered a "No" vote. That had the effect of having members that were no longer interested in the Club having control of the Club.

The only way that rule was rescinded was by having the vote right after April 1, when the dues were to be paid (and anyone late on paying dues was ruled ineligible to vote). That inventive method got rid of the bad rule.

Earl's original idea for the Club to be governed by a Board of Directors took a little longer to accomplish . . . like twenty-seven years.

Big Success

The Club had done well on Earl's 69-mile relocation. When maps of the location were needed, the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey supplied 7-1/2-minute quads and in December 1954 and January 1955 Ralph Kinter walked the 69 miles and mapped it. The last 16 miles (from Clark's Valley to Rt. 443) were finished on February 2, 1955. The dedication took place on the weekend

of March 19 - 20, 1955. The Harrisburg Civic Club auditorium was rented, and, with A.T. Conference Chairman as Master of Ceremonies, 350 people celebrated the relocation. On Sunday, a hike to Hawk Rock was followed by a ribbon-cutting at the East side of the Clark's Ferry Bridge. Traffic was stopped and Murray Stevens, ex-Congressman Danny Hoch and Earl Shaffer jointly cut the ribbon.

The Installation Ceremonies for the first elected Officers was held at Hawk Rock on April 3, 1955. The installation of the newly-elected officers* was interrupted by a mysterious marksman on the north side of Sherman's Creek who kept the group pinned down for the better part of an hour as he shot at Hawk Rock. That closed out the Club's first year with a big bang.

The Installation Ceremonies a year later were more subdued. Ruth Bolla was installed as the new President, Don Brady as V.P., John Lloyd as Secretary and Anna Peffer as Treasurer. Ralph missed the April 1956 Installation; he and Anna were in South Carolina on their honeymoon.

* Ralph Kinter, Don Brady, Thelma Marks, Anna Peffer

Club membership: 53

Gimme Shelter

Around 1956, the Game Commission complained about camping violations in St. Anthony's Wilderness, by persons using the Appalachian Trail. The problem stemmed, of course, from the long stretch of hiking trail, without a shelter or even a camp site. The Club's officers discussed the situation and decided that the positive approach would be to construct a shelter as close as possible to the entrance to St. Anthony's Wilderness.

President Ruth Bolla appointed a Shelter Committee. They settled on a site in Clarks Valley, hidden from the road, yet very close to the highway, and to the entrance to the Wilderness. At the time the entire mountain from the Victoria Trail to where the A.T. crossed the Clarks Valley Road was owned by Victoria Farms. Ralph and Ann Meikle visited the owners. They said they appreciated the trail going over their land, as it provided access in case of fire. They offered to donate use of the site, and further, granted permission to cut any dead oak trees for use in the construction of the shelter.

It was decided to use concrete blocks in the construction. Club members, mostly on Saturdays and Sundays, dug and poured the footers. Volunteers laid the blocks, eventually with aid from a string line. Of course, the oak trees intended to support the roof hung up on each other on the way down, but the volunteers eventually sorted that out. The Club had appropriated monies to purchase the roofing material. But Earl Shaffer managed to locate some used corrugated sheeting, which cost considerably less. The bad news was that it had holes, which needed patching. And, patch though we may, the holes were always opening up, giving us a leaky roof. Bunks were erected inside on 2 x 4's, with 1/2-inch hardware cloth stapled into place. This type of bunk was standard at the time and served for many years. However, they had one big fault. As the hardware cloth wore out, it tends to snag and ruin sleeping bags. A fireplace in front, just outside the overhanging roof, completed the Clark's Valley Shelter. Both DER and the Game Commission sent representatives to the ribbon cutting.

The shelter was close to the highway, but well hidden. Over the years, we had little trouble with

misuse. We heard rumors of wild parties, which we could never detect. In all the years it was in use, we had very little debris to clean up. We did have some trouble with young campers using their axes on the trees that provided shade for the shelter, and soon they were gone. Gone, too, was the fireplace, in just a few short years.

Protecting the Trail

There have been considerable efforts made to have the Appalachian Trail, as well as some other trails, protected by having the lands acquired by either the State or Federal Governments. Even before our Club was founded. Congressman Danny Hock, D., from Reading, and a member of the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club, introduced a bill to acquire and protect the Appalachian Trail. It failed in passage.

Those first efforts to protect the Trail envisioned a corridor one hundred feet in width. Then Jeannette Fitzwilliams, of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, came out with the idea of an Appalachian Greenway, wherein 500-1,000 feet would be acquired to preserve the Appalachian Trail.

In this background, the National Scenic Trail Act was first passed--but it did little to acquire the lands, so the protection under the Act meant little.

In this atmosphere, the Appalachian Trail Conference convened at Delaware Water Gap, in June of 1961, on the theme of trying to have the States, over which the Appalachian Trail ran, acquire the lands. About half of the Trail in Pennsylvania already was on State owned Lands: State Forest Lands south of the Susquehanna, and State Game Lands north of the Susquehanna. Even the 69-mile relocation, engineered by Earl Shaffer, ran over a large portion of Game Lands.

Dr. Maurice Goddard, then Secretary of DER, was sympathetic. DER had the money, but it had a limitation on how much could be spent per acre. It remained for our people to grasp the situation and take advantage of it. But they didn't. KTA would have been an excellent vehicle for securing the necessary support to make possible acquiring the trail lands, if only they could settle their differences and unite. But they couldn't, and thereby they fumbled away a golden opportunity.

Unfortunately, a spat at the Delaware Water Gap meeting on the election of a Pennsylvania director to the Board of Managers divided the Board and KTA from the maintaining clubs. The necessary unity for action was destroyed. Dr. Goddard did acquire one section that was threatened by development near Allentown. But it was to be another twelve years before the next real effort was made on Trail acquisition in Pennsylvania. And, it took even longer to have the National Scenic Trails Act improved, so that a realistic Trail acquisition program could be placed into effect.

Next Quarter, we will discuss how SATC got into the act.

Enter the Lawgivers

As it became apparent that action was not forthcoming elsewhere, Elmer Bolla approached Representative George Gekas in January, 1973, about sponsoring HB-189, the State Appalachian Trail Bill, and HB-190, a companion bill for other trails in Pennsylvania. And George Gekas, in turn, approached Ralph Kinter at a meeting to discuss its prospects. Ralph pointed out that he was 'leery' about the use of Eminent Domain and suggested tax relief as an alternative.

George accepted the idea, and even though it took four sessions of the legislature, this remained in the final bill.

By April, the House Conservation Committee was ready to hold hearings on these two bills, scheduling one in Harrisburg and another in State College.

The Trail Clubs got together at Dickinson College and planned their strategy. Someone urged we stress the 'esthetics of the Trail. And, we all agreed. Several club representatives spoke at the hearing about how beautiful the Trail was. The Committee began asking questions about the trail, how it was maintained, how wide was it. Alas, most of the witnesses had never worked on the Trail. Ralph Kinter of SATC was last on the agenda and skipped his prepared talk on 'esthetics to answer questions until the subject of financing came up. Out of the air, one million dollars for each bill was proposed.

Both HB-189 and HB-190 passed the House without any difficulty, only to die in the Senate. George Gekas was defeated at the Polls at the next election and was succeeded by Steven Reed. Two years later George Gekas ran for the State Senate, and served in that body for several years, and then moved on to Congress.

Senator Wade, from Cumberland County, died in office, and Bob Myers succeeded him. Elmer Bolla and Hank Finerfrock persuaded Bob Myers to sponsor the bill in the Senate, but it was unsuccessful. Then at the next session SAVE THE TRAIL entered the picture.

“Save the Trail”

The year is now 1977, and our Trail Bills are still floundering as SB-144 and HB-2373. The Penn-Cumberland Garden Club, on the West Shore, decided to get involved, and organized an organization known as “SAVE THE TRAIL.”

A group, spearheaded by Audrey McGahan, Sue Wilder, and Sue Daugherty, arranged to have Garden Clubs statewide collect signatures to petitions. Armed with more than 20,000 signatures, they marched on the Capitol in Harrisburg. But before they did, to assure the support of the Trail Community, they asked Ralph Kinter to organize SATC, and rallied them behind the Garden Club efforts. Representative Laudadio, Chairman of the House Conservation Committee, became their Champion.

The march on the Capitol turned out to be a big success. SATC turned out in force, bolstered by the Penn-Cumberland Ladies. Other lobbies came out of the woodwork. Individuals from other Trail Groups showed up to assist with the work.

A ceremony was held to present the more than 20,000 signatures. Then the lobbying efforts began in earnest. Teams were assigned to visit key legislators. SATC drew some tough ones—for example: Representative K. Leroy Irvis, the House Majority Leader; and Senator Nolan, an avowed opponent of the bills.

Every attempt was made to see Representative Irvis, and each met with failure. The team waited outside his office, to catch him in the halls. When he came out, the team tried to corner him. He simply put up his hands and ducked us.

Nolan, on the other hand, was not so tough. He met with us readily enough, but his answers were always a firm “NO.” Nevertheless, he would discuss the bills with us. And, he explained that we would be getting an appropriation only, no trail protection.

The SATC team called the teams together, meeting in the halls of the Senate, on the second floor. Here we discussed what Senator Nolan had told us. Sue Daugherty went back to Laudadio. The House Bill was amended and tacked onto a joint House-Senate appropriations bill.

We attended the Joint Session but had to wait in the hall. When it was over, Representative Irvis, who had chaired the meeting, was the first out. He bolted across the hall, and exclaimed, “Well, Mr. Kinter, we gave you everything you wanted!” Gee! I didn’t realize he even knew who I was!

Nevertheless, the bill was at most, a stop-gap measure. It did give us temporary protection, and necessary funds to protect the most desperately needed trail portions, but we still had to go back to the next Session.

The next Session was easier. Hearings were again held. Mac White of Allentown showed up with a complete slide show about what Trail Work was all about. The result was that the bill passed both Houses in a breeze. And, Governor Shapp signed the Trail Bills in a ceremony that will never be forgotten.

WE HAD FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN GETTING THE TRAIL PROTECTION IN PENNSYLVANIA THROUGH—and now it was time to set our sights elsewhere.

“Save Stony Creek Valley”

In 1973, the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company announced that in conjunction with Metropolitan Edison they planned to build a pump storage facility in Stony Creek Valley.

The area where the facility was planned was right in the heart of what remained of the area that we, in trail circles, called St. Anthony’s Wilderness. It comprised a stretch 18 miles long and 5 miles wide, without a crossroad.

To obtain the site, PP&L purchased the estate of Lucy Bayard, in Clark’s Valley, which came from an original grant from the King of England and had remained in the Bayard Family ever since. Lucy’s estate was quite vast, being some six miles or better, up Clark’s Valley from what we call Victoria Trail [2005 note: Victoria Trail used to run parallel with and west of the current Victoria Trail], and spreading up Stony Mountain on the South, and over Peter’s Mountain on the North. And, our section of trail ran right through Lucy’s lands.

Lucy and her son had been very good to the Conference and to our Club. They are the ones who granted us permission to construct the Clark's Valley Shelter and permitted us to cut our timbers for the roof from any dead trees we could find.

Now Lucy's son was dead, and Lucy soon followed him. We understand that her closest heirs live in Australia and were only too glad to sell to PP&L to get the estate settled.

After obtaining the lands in Clark's Valley, PP&L now offered to trade them for lands in Stony Creek Valley, and up over Sharp Mountain, so that they would have the floor of valley which formed a saddle between Sharp and Stony Mountains, where they could construct the upper dam.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission was only too glad to exchange some five thousand acres in Stony Creek Valley for over fifteen thousand acres in Clark's Valley, which was much more accessible to their sportsmen.

When the announcement was first made, we were all caught napping. So PP&L proceeded without much opposition. Of course, they had to furnish an environmental impact statement, for which they contracted out to Ichthyological Associates back in 1972, when they were doing their planning.

But, by 1974 the various environmental groups began to wake up and started to mount a campaign of opposition. Bill Beck, who worked in Governor Shapp's office, joined Trout Unlimited, Dauphin County Chapter, and now took the lead in opposing the dam. A meeting was called at the American Legion Post on Mountain Road, in Lower Paxton Township, with PP&L invited to explain what the project was all about.

And Bill Beck, remembering our "Save The Trail" campaign, and the results, right through to the signing of the Trails Bills by Governor Shapp, called Ralph Kinter, and through Ralph, invited SATC to attend the meeting. Ralph attended and reported back to the Officers what was occurring.

At that meeting, the PP&L Representative explained the principle behind pump storage. He explained how water would be pumped up at night when electric usage was low, and dropped back through the turbines during peak usage, generating in the range of three megawatts. This did not seem reasonable to Ralph, as it approached what TMI was putting out. So, Ralph wanted to hear more. Further, both the first and third choices of sites were in Stony Creek Valley with the Rattling Run site being first, and Yellow Springs, right on the Trail, being third. So Ralph reported back in favor of supporting the Coalition, the Club voted to join, and President Pat Heim appointed Ralph to represent the Club on the Coalition.

PP&L had issued a flier which explained how the Valley would be used for recreation after the two dams had been constructed. This was also reflected in the Environmental Impact Statement which Ichthyological Associates had prepared.

This flier became the first target for the Coalition to attack. It was the stand of the Coalition that the lakes could not be used for recreational purposes, since early in the day the lower lake would be nothing but a mud flat, while later in the day, as the turbines began to generate power, the water would rise so rapidly as to make the lake dangerous. Meanwhile, the upper lake would be filled, and as the water flowed through the turbines, undertow would render the upper lake unsafe as the water flowed through the outlet to operate the turbines.

In this, the Coalition was able to get the PUC to listen, and eventually, the PUC made PP&L withdraw this flier. It was the first victory for the Coalition, small as it was.

With the opposition beginning to mount, PP&L decided they would need a better, more complete Environmental Impact Statement, and they engaged Dr. Robert Denincourt, a biologist with the York Junior College, to make a study of the Valley. And, it is to the credit of both Dr. Denincourt and PP&L that Dr. Denincourt did an excellent job on his Impact study—much better than that of Ichthyological Associates.

Other teams were engaged as well. Eugene Wingert of Cumberland Valley High School had his students studying both the flora and the salamanders in the Valley. On the other hand, Dr. Fred Howard, also from Cumberland Valley High School, headed a team studying the aquatic life in Sony Creek, itself.

In the course of the surveys, the teams would from time to time encounter Dr. Denincourt and his team. His daughter, for example, would assist in surveying the recreational uses in the Valley. And, Dr. Denincourt, when he encountered your representative, would always indicate that his survey of recreational uses would show better than that of your representative.

But, it did not turn out this way. For most of the users were sympathetic with the Coalition, and therefore, were much more cooperative with the Coalition representatives than they were with Dr. Denincourt. And, we found a vast variety of recreational uses—from artists, photographers, fishermen, hikers, horseback riders, and even dog-sled enthusiasts, and from talking with Denincourt's daughter, we found our list about twice what his was.

It soon became apparent that to mount a successful campaign to Save Stony Creek Valley, the Coalition was going to have to raise funds—large amounts of funds. The member clubs of the Coalition provided some funds, initially, but we began to anticipate that the costs were going to run into big money, beyond the capability of our clubs. So, we set about looking into methods of raising funds.

The Board of the Coalition started by selling “bumper stickers” for \$1.00 each. This served a dual purpose—raising the needed funds and helped to keep our cause before the public. IT WORKED! Many people displayed our “bumper stickers” simply as a sign of defiance, much as the “Stars and Bars” are displayed.

We could not claim exemption under Section 501(c) (3), nevertheless, our general appeal met with excellent response.

Early in our campaign, the Capital Area Recycling donated a portion of their profits to the Coalition. Then, they offered to permit us to take the entire profit for the month, if we would furnish volunteer help. Finally, they turned over the Colonial Park operation to the Coalition.

We let it be known that we were operating the recycling effort in order to SAVE STONY CREEK VALLEY. It caught on. Recycling picked up; the profits were good; and better yet, we were getting good exposure to the public. People begin to save their recyclables to SAVE STONY CREEK! We can remember one elderly lady, who made several trips each recycling day—bringing in her neighbors' recyclables, just to do her part TO SAVE STONY CREEK VALLEY.

One of our members, Dr. John Fritchey, painted a picture, entitled “Gems of Stony,” featuring the American holly, the wood duck, and two endangered species: the bog turtle, and Coville's rush. We had hopes that we could locate either or both, the bog turtle or the rush, and use it to save the valley under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Dr. Fritchey donated the painting to the Coalition, and we had it lithographed, with 1,000 copies, signed and numbered, selling them for \$5.00. We sold all but a very few.

Then, it dawned on some of us, that come of the recyclables could be salvaged, and sold at the

flea markets. So we began to save likely items and about three times each year a group of our members would attend the flea market at the Harrisburg Drive-in Theatre. Customers would descend upon us, before we could even get set up. Before long, we were to discover that these customers were actually dealers, who were anxious to take advantage of our treasures. One toy adding machine, minus the stylus, was sold by us for 35 cents, only to be found on dealer's table for \$4.00 later in the day. Nevertheless, we made considerable at the flea market and had a lot of fun doing it, at the same time getting more public exposure.

A short time after we organized the Coalition, a group joined us from Lebanon County. They, too, had an interest in Saving Stony Creek Valley, as a large portion is in Lebanon County. After that, our membership in Lebanon County grew, with various hunting and fishing organizations joining with us. Before long, our Coalition numbered about 65 organization members. And, each month they brought considerable donation and monies from items they had sold. We were well on our way to securing needed funds.

Early on, the Coalition held public meetings, and, we all attended public meetings called by PP&L, or by the Game Commission.

In addition to PP&L, one group of antagonists we had to face was the Operating Union. They, too, attended the meetings, in support of PP&L, because they were hoping for employment. And, somehow, they always seemed to monopolize the meetings, giving the Coalition little opportunity to present our side.

PP&L promised to have the site open for recreation, but we didn't want a heavily constructed site for recreation—we wanted to be able to walk in quiet, secluded woods.

The Operating Union members were quite vocal, expressing the idea that we couldn't enjoy ourselves unless they had constructed the site. And they held out Little Buffalo State Park as their example.

They even came to our meetings and tried to monopolize them. We had the feeling, that, if they could, they would have joined our Coalition, just to infiltrate us and destroy us from within. Fortunately, we had a provision in our By-Laws, wherein we had to vote in our members.

We must say that they never got nasty, and when Bill Beck, our Chair, after having heard them out, explained that our meeting was private, and we wanted to conduct our business in quiet and peace, they left.

Meanwhile, the Trout Fishermen considered Stony Creek an excellent trout stream and they began putting pressure on the Fish Commission to oppose the damming of Stony Creek.

PP&L, on the other hand, was urging that they be permitted to dam the creek, promising to maintain the quality of the water downstream.

A tug-of-war resulted, with the trout fishermen claiming that such a large lake would lead to warming of the waters downstream, making it uninhabitable for trout. PP&L, in turn, promised to draw off the stratified bottom layers, which are the cooler portions of any lake, and use it to provide the cold waters needed for trout habitat.

On hearing this argument, your representative to the Coalition pointed out that the rapid downflow of the water during the generating period would make the waters too turbulent for proper stratification.

The Coalition approached the Fish Commission with this argument, and as a result the Fish Commission asked PP&L to send a representative to Mississippi and obtain a report from the

Army Corps of Engineers about the feasibility of the proposal.

The Army Corps agreed with your representative and with the Coalition. PP&L now began to propose the use of deep wells to obtain cooler waters, or to try to cool the waters by evaporation, employing a fine spray. Needless to say, they never did get any support from the Fish Commission.

This represented the third setback that the Coalition dealt PP&L, and now it appeared that PP&L was on the defensive. They began to talk about "Having the Stony Valley Pump Storage Facility on the back-burner."

This gave the Coalition a badly needed breathing spell. The question, now, was how best to make the best use of it.

When in a quandary like this, it is always good practice to hold a "brain-storming session." In such a session, everyone must take a positive stand; there can be no objecting to anyone's ideas. Every idea is kicked around, looking at its positive points. It is recorded, looked at, analyzed, perhaps used, perhaps discarded.

We held such a session, and out of it developed:

1. Our opposition spent months, even years, developing their idea—in this case, pump storage. Now, we must refute it in a few short weeks. This left us inadequately prepared.
2. When the opposition became too stiff, the Corporate idea was to put it on "the back burner," hoping that through inactivity we would "wither on the vine," and collapse.
3. The best defense is, of course, a good offense. The question: How do we take the offensive?
4. The Endangered Species Act (our best hope) was being overused and coming under direct act [sic]. Therefore, it was of little use to us. We must find another defensive tactic.
5. The Commonwealth had a WILD & SCENIC RIVER PROGRAM. What if we used it? It probably would not stop the pump storage program since the pump storage program was already in progress.

Therefore, we began to look into the Wild River program. There was one big difficulty. The Department of Environmental Resources had expended all of the Wild River Monies on several unsuccessful studies, including Pine Creek Gorge. Now there was no money left to conduct another study.

Then, it occurred to us. Why not turn the corporate idea against PP&L? We could do the study ourselves, at no expense to the State, and if we did it quietly, we could interject the element of surprise. Further, it would keep up our interest, so that our Coalition would not wither and die.

Each member of the Coalition was assigned some portion of the work. Your representative was assigned to study and map all trails and roadways in the corridor. And, he was also assigned to help with the study of the plants and trees within the corridor.

On the study of the trails, your representative would walk a portion, come back and set down with the cartographer, who would draw the actual map. After a number of such sessions, we had developed a fairly accurate map of all the trails within the Stony Creek corridor.

Another organization studied the life in the Creek. Dr. Fred Howard, a biology teacher at Cumberland Valley High School, but now a teacher at Shippensburg University, did this work.

Eugene Wingert, also a teacher at Cumberland Valley High School, and now a part time biology teacher at the Harrisburg Area Community College, worked on the plants, assisted by your representative.

The York Grotto, represented by Dale Ibberson and Judy Stack, compiled the history of the corridor, while Del Zimmerman, of the Lebanon County Sportsmens' Groups, located the archeological sites.

Combined, we put together quite a large volume of information, to be presented to the Legislature in support of Wild River Status. All voluntary—at no cost to the Commonwealth.

We had completed our wild river studies in Stony Creek. Now we had to make a hard decision. From the very start we had the full support of Representative Steven Reed, representing the City of Harrisburg. Steve's support for Stony Valley was phenomenal, and now he wanted to sponsor the bill on our Wild River Status. But Steve had fallen out of favor with his own party, and was soon to resign to run for County Commissioner.

Therefore, it was in our best interests to seek sponsors who would be more effective. We turned to Rudolph Dinninni, Joe Manmiller and Jeffrey Piccola in the House; our old friend George Gekas and David Brightbill in the Senate.

Public hearings were announced, and, for the first time, our study was made public. The opposition was taken by complete surprise. A feeble effort was made to challenge our study, but they chose to challenge the credentials of Dr. Fred Howard, our aquatic specialist.

As it turned out, Dr. Howard was better trained and better qualified than Dr. Denencourt, who had done a masterful job of studying Stony Valley for PP&L. The result was that the PP&L representative sat down red-faced, and it was all over.

Stony Creek Valley breezed through both houses, without a dissenting vote, and was soon signed into law by Governor Shapp. Shortly thereafter, PP&L announced that they would abide by the decision of the Legislature and honor the Wild River status.

“Save Stony Valley” – Immediate Aftermath

At this point, Bill Beck, our Chairperson, changed jobs, left the area, and Ernie Hilton assumed the Chairmanship.

Bill Beck had worked in the Governor's Office, and the Game Commission did not like our opposition to the trade of game lands with PP&L. Therefore, efforts were made to try to force Bill Beck to give up the Stony Valley Coalition Chair. But Governor Shapp ruled that what Bill did on his own time was no concern of the Governor, and certainly no concern of the Game Commission.

Your representative [*Ralph Kinter, remember, now deceased*], also, had a run-in with a representative of the Game Commission. It seems that most of these land swaps are secret and without fanfare. Your representative felt that this left too much room for hanky-panky and said so openly. The Game Commission representative thought we were referring to Stony Valley,

which we were not, since PP&L kept that land swap out in the open.

We were referring to the Game Lands in Lower Paxton Township, on Blue Mountain, through which our Darlington Trail East used to run. These lands were swapped so secretly that even the Township was unaware of the swap some three years after it occurred. Then, at a Township Meeting, where the Township unveiled plans to utilize the Game Lands in connection with Hocker Park, your representative advised them of the swap.

The hanky-panky that resulted was that the new owner did not record the deed, and as a result the lands were not assessed nor taxed. And, the owner got out of paying his fair share of tax for some few years, until someone wised up and blew the whistle.

And, we have never been able to find out what the Game Commission got in exchange for these potentially valuable lands. [*This passage was written by Ralph Kinter in Trail Blazes No. 30, published some years ago in the Bushwack Bulletin newsletter of SATC. The edit made to this portion of his story was that Mr. Kinter identified the Game Commission representative by name in his printed article, while the SATC Webmaster retyping Mr. Kinter's words in 2005 elects not to.*]

“Save Stony Valley” – Resolution at Last?

We had obtained Wild River status for Stony Creek Valley, yet the lands remained with PP&L. Every attempt to find out their intent was in vain. Nature Conservancy tried to help us, but they were not interested in purchasing the lands, nor could they under the law. But now, your representative suggested that perhaps Nature Conservancy could find out from PP&L what they intended to do about the lands. After some effort, Bud Cook of Nature Conservancy found out that PP&L was simply waiting until the proper tax break came along, and then would turn the lands back to the Game Commission.

Finally, late in 1981, the day arrived when PP&L turned the lands back to the Game Commission. And, early in 1982, we began thinking about disbanding.

We had a little under \$21,000 left in our war chest. And, Del Zimmerman located three water colors of Cold Springs and the resort hotel, painted in 1851. They were for sale at \$700. We voted to purchase them and donate them to the Lebanon County Historical Society.

At the meeting to discuss disbanding and what to do with the money, we suddenly found organizations coming out of the woodwork to lay claim to the left-over funds—organizations who never turned a finger to help us. After rejecting one such “offer,” someone moved to set up a watchdog committee of five individuals, keep the money, and have the Committee see that Stony Valley was duly protected. Your representative was placed on that Committee, and for the past decade has overseen Stony Valley.

[As the 2005 reader knows, this was not the end of the struggle to preserve Stony Valley. “Every Generation Must Save Stony Valley.” Check out <http://www.savestonyvalley.com> for news from the reactivated Save Stony Valley Coalition.]

The Cumberland Valley

Under the National Trails Act, the National Park Service, under the U.S. Department of Interior, has been, gradually, securing properties along the length of the Appalachian Trail to protect the trail corridor.

To cross from Blue Mountain to the South Mountain, the Trail crossed the Cumberland Valley on some 14 miles of narrow, congested roads. And, it was felt the Trail should be relocated off these roads for safety purposes.

Since the Trail across the Cumberland Valley was almost exclusively on roads, little or no properties were involved to be acquired, and to get it off the roads meant relocating onto private properties.

This area had always been the weak link in the Appalachian Trail. Originally, when the Trail was laid out in about 1926, it followed Blue Mountain, coming through the newly organized Indiantown Gap National Guard Camp; then, it picked up a small portion of what was the Underground Railroad, which came off Blue Mountain in the area of Linglestown. The Trail continued along Blue Mountain until it reached Rockville, where it came down, crossed the Susquehanna River on the Rockville Bridge (which the Pennsylvania Railroad never permitted us to use), and, then picked up on the older Darlington Trail, following it to Lambs Gap. At Lambs Gap, the Trail left the Blue Mountain, crossing the Cumberland Valley just west of Mechanicsburg, picking up the South Mountains at Brandtsville. Then it followed along the base of the Mountains to the Reading Banks, where it climbed an old charcoal wagon road to Center Point Knob, so named because it was the midpoint on the Trail.

When World War II came along, the U.S. Government took over Indiantown Gap, which now became Fort Indiantown Gap, and closed the Trail through the military base. This necessitated rerouting the Trail along roadways from Swatara Gap to Manada Gap.

From the time of the organization of the Trail in 1926, until after World War II, no one had ever hiked the Trail in its entirety. "In fact, it just couldn't be done!"

Then, in 1948, Earl Shaffer, one of the three founders of SATC, electrified the hiking world by doing the impossible. Earl was honored by being invited to become a consultant on the Trail. And, one of the things he recommended was that the Trail be rerouted around the Rockville Bridge and around Indiantown Gap Military Reservation. This necessitated a sixty-four (64) mile relocation, involving the entire section from Swatara Gap to Center Point Knob.

Earl, and Murray Stevens, then Chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference, walked and laid out the entire relocation route, which crossed St. Anthony's Wilderness north of the Military Reservation, cutting across Second Mountain and Sharp Mountain, following the High Valley between Sharp and Stony Mountains, crossing Stony Mountain at the former site of the Stony Mountain Fire Tower, then slashing down Stony Mountain on the Fire Tower Road, crossing Clark's Valley, up Peters Mountain, which it followed to the Susquehanna River and the Clarks Ferry Bridge, which it used to cross the River.

After going through Duncannon on roads, the Trail climbed the North Arm of Cove Mountain, following it to where it doubled back, crossing the narrow Fishing Creek Valley at Grier's Point, cutting through Little Mountain at Myers Gap, and climbing Blue Mountain at Dean's Gap,

crossing the Cumberland Valley, partly on Ironstone Ridge and partly on roads, to Leidighs Station, where it crossed the Yellow Breeches Creek, and entered the South Mountains, climbing the White Rocks and following them to Center Point Knob.

The entire section from Clark's Ferry to Pine Grove Furnace was assigned to the Mountain Club of Maryland, headquartered in Baltimore.

When I-81 was put through, it cut through the Iron Stone Ridge. At that point, instead of pursuing the interruption of the Trail, the Mountain Club of Maryland placidly rerouted back to roads.

But, now, with the National Park Service becoming interested in taking over and protecting the entire length of the Appalachian Trail, this routing over the roads became a problem. Property owners along the route through the Cumberland Valley were able to claim, "That historically, the Appalachian Trail crossed the Cumberland Valley on roads."

To make matters worse, instead of permitting the National Park Service to handle the matter diplomatically, MCM violated private property to survey out a preferred trail route. This only served to arouse the property owners in an already bad situation.

With this aggravated situation, a national organization that was opposed to the National Park System had come in to organize the local citizenry against relocating the Trail. This group was known as C.A.N.T. (Citizens Against the New Trail). And they were turning it into a political issue, involving Congressmen Goodling and Shuster. Further, the national organization had so inflamed the local citizens that the situation promised to get real nasty. In fact, if we planned to hike the roads as a Trail Organization, we found it necessary to provide guards for our parked cars.

At this point, the Keystone Trails Association had scheduled a meeting at Pine Grove Furnace. At this meeting, Mac White, at Lehigh University, and Thurston Griggs of MCM, met with Anna and me. They explained the situation, and, in light of our work with "Save the Trail," they inquired if there was anything that we could do to quiet the situation. Thurston stated, in light of the hostility of the local citizens, that his Club would be willing to yield control of the Trail across the Valley. And, eventually this is what happened.

We agreed to try but would need some help. A coalition seemed to be the best way to go.

With this situation, we came back to SATC, and they helped to organize a Group in opposition to C.A.N.T. The Club Officers helped us organize a non-profit group, and incorporate it, choosing to call it PRO-TRAIL (Pennsylvanians Rallied On Trail Route Advocating Improved Location). Jim Oxley deserves credit for coming up with this acronym.

The officers of this organization were: Carol Witzeman, Chairperson; Warren Hoffman, Vice-Chair; and your correspondent [Ralph Kinter] as Secretary-Treasurer. And, we tried to keep our efforts low-key.

PRO-TRAIL eventually evolved into the Cumberland Valley Management Organization [further evolving into the [Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club](#)].

The first task of the PRO-TRAIL coalition was to select the route that we wished to support across the Cumberland Valley.

Of the three choices, the one involving King's Gap had been eliminated, so we only had two to choose from.

One choice would follow the current route across the Valley but would utilize the Iron Stone Ridge/Stony Ridge complex. This was the result of a volcanic sill, which crossed the Valley, but apparently had been offset by a fault in ancient times, as the ridge was not continuous.

This was the route that Murray Stevens and Earl Shaffer had discovered and recommended—back when the Trail was rerouted and when the area was almost wholly undeveloped. A portion had been utilized at the time, from near the Bernheisel Bridge to US Route 11.

At that time, the Bernheisel Bridge was the only covered bridge on the Trail. When Don Brady was President of SATC, it was proposed to demolish the Bernheisel Bridge and replace it with the present concrete structure. Don wrote to the Conference, and their reply was “That they were not interested in covered bridges, only in the Trail.” What a pity. For today, there is a proposal [since implemented, as a walkway hung on the side of the road bridge] to build a footbridge alongside the present Bernheisel Bridge, for the Trail users, since traffic is too heavy, and presenting an unsafe condition. Imagine a scenic covered footbridge for the Trail, in this area.

The second choice would have crossed the Cumberland Valley further east and was known as the “railroad route.” It would have crossed under I-81 through a much-flooded culvert; then, would have picked up the abandoned D&M (Dillsburg & Mechanicsburg) Branch of the Cumberland Valley Division of the former Pennsylvania Railroad, reaching the South Mountains, just east of Brandtsville. This route would be longer and more scenic and would have restored the Trail to its former location in the South Mountains, prior to the 69-mile relocation, of the “fifties.”

However, just west of Mechanicsburg, it would have gone through a very distracting industrial complex. Additionally, the plans called for to run along the banks of the Conodoguinet Creek—right through the backyard of a retired, influential judge and close friend of Congressman Gekas. This could have brought all the Congressmen in the area down upon us. I simply cannot understand what our planners were thinking about, when they suggested this maneuver, when a 400-foot detour could have avoided the problem.

A Committee from PRO-TRAIL surveyed both routes, and after due consideration, elected to support the Ridge Route. However, due to developments along this route, we found it would be more expeditious to reroute through some open fields, rather than follow the Ridge Route the entire way. However, we found we could restore that portion from I-81 to Route 11.

And we found that, in opposition to us, we had the C.A.N.T. Group, the officials of the four townships through which the Trail would possibly traverse, and at least two Congressmen.

The opposition was advocating a so-called sidewalk trail, of gravel, which would have run right through the front yards of the local residents.

It appeared that the PRO-TRAIL Coalition had its problems cut out for it.

[At this point Ralph leaves us all hanging, and we can't ask him to finish the story so someone else must continue.]

Much later, and much further from the road, the Club built a shelter on Peters Mountain.

