



# Expanding Horizons

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The newsletter for friends of Adventures for Women

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Adventurous Women,

It's been a bitterly cold winter. However, if you've gotten out and hiked a bit with AFW, you've probably seen nature at her best. One hike along the Stony Brook from the Visitor's Center in Harriman comes to mind. Although it was cold and windy and the footing was less than good, between the snow and the ice formations along the brook, you'd be hard pressed to find anything more beautiful.

A few years ago we asked the question, "Why do you hike?" and published your responses in our Spring 2009 Newsletter. Looking back on that article I was reminded of how many of you spoke about hiking as calming, blissful, inspiring, meditative, therapeutic, exhilarating, etc. Most everyone spoke of the wonderful sounds and smells, the fantastic views, and of becoming one with nature.

Now that spring is just around the corner, I hope that you'll have the opportunity to meander through the woods, embrace the quiet, and listen to the sounds of the forest as you hike. I hope that you'll walk slowly enough so that you don't have to be watching your feet but instead can take in your surroundings and be rejuvenated by them. Yes, hiking is good exercise. It can help lower your blood pressure, increase your cardio fitness, help you lose a few pounds, and, like running or spinning or many other activities, contribute to your mental health as well. But there's something very special and unique about hiking in the woods. In order to appreciate it, however, you need to slow down a bit, stop talking, put a little space between you and your fellow hikers, and just experience your surroundings. Let your mind wander. Become one with it all. Stop for a second and listen to the ice-encrusted branches tinkle in the wind. Hear the sounds of the brook as it makes it way through the forest. Smell the earth as the new spring shoots emerge. Listen for the birds singing to each other in the treetops. Spot a few deer grazing in a distant meadow. In short, make sure you stop and smell the roses.

*enjoy the journey ... Pisicilla*



*Happy hikers on the Four Birds Trail on Wildcat Ridge, NJ*

## Members' Forum

This is the new webpage recently added to AFW's website ... so you can share your interests, news, experiences, accomplishments and any tips with fellow AFWers. Go to "Our Library", click on "Members' Forum" and read what some members have sent in. And send in yours with an email to [contactus@adventuresforwomen.org](mailto:contactus@adventuresforwomen.org). (Please note: Our website is accessible by members as well as non-members; please be guided accordingly.)

## AFW Annual Public Meeting

Following our bylaws, AFW will have its annual public meeting at 7PM on Tuesday, May 24th at St Alban's Church in Oakland, NJ. All members are welcome to attend – to ask questions or to just observe.

# We've Come a Long Way! (PART 3)

... continuing our look at AFW, past and present

The Adventures for Women experience – solace, friendship and revitalization of mind and body in the midst of life's daily stresses. Betsy Thomason, the founder of AFW and an outdoorswoman, believes that women should learn to be comfortable and competent in the outdoors and, at the same time, learn about their needs, aspirations and what they can become. Along the way, the AFW experience has grown wider and deeper as its members add to its vibrancy ... both in enthusiastic numbers and new ideas. Yet its mission has stayed constant. Now is a good time to pause and take a brief look at the course we've been on.

**Workshops ...** Young in heart and mind and always eager to learn new skills ... that's an AFW woman! From the first workshop that Betsy held in 1981 on map skills to the newest workshop added in 2009 (Intro to Rowing Crew), our members have been showing up for "self-improvement." Betsy's original series of hiking workshops – Hike I (map skills and hike), Hike II (compass skills and hike) and Hike III (following clues to find the "Mystery Mountain") – evolved to Woodswoman 101 and Woodswoman 102 which Priscilla P. and Mary S. started around 2003.

Over the years, we've learned gun safety and target shooting (Shooting Workshop), what's under the hood of our cars and how to replace a flat tire (Auto Basics Workshop). We've learned how to compose beautiful shots (Photo Workshop), stay in good shape (Fitness Walk, Exercise Stretching for Hikers, Nordic Walking Workshops), breathe efficiently and effectively (Getting In Shape for the Outdoors and Breath Play Workshops), equip ourselves for a hike or backpacking trip (Gearing Up for Hiking and Beginner Backpacking Workshops) and find our way in the woods (Orienteering Workshop) and in NYC by subways (City Woman 101). Thanks to the members who shared their passions and expertise and the coordinators who brought in the experts and made all this learning possible!



Smiles of satisfaction after climbing the Crevice in the Gunks



Baby, it's cold outside!

**Book Club ...** It was during a book discussion at one of AFW's "Contemplation Weekends" that Kathy C. got the idea for a book club. Along with two other members, they formed the "Wild Women Book Circle" that met every other month to "discuss books of significance to women, share ideas, friendship, an occasional howl or two, plus food and other goodies". Their first meeting was in April 1997; their first book was "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood. Since then, some of the group's members have left the area and some remaining members continue to meet on an unofficial basis.

**AFW Giving Back to the Woods ...** We all know about AFW's current trail maintenance project – the MacEvoy Trail in Ramapo Mountain State Forest in Oakland. AFW adopted the trail in 1991 and each spring and fall, many of our members show up for our Clean-up Hikes to help clear the trail of litter and debris, under the leadership of Jen B. since 2000 and Sue R. since 2009.

Betsy also led AFW women on Litter Day hikes to a 3-mile stretch of the AT in Stokes State Forest (1987), Greenbrook Sanctuary (1989), Sandy Hook beach (1990), and Women's Federation Monument (1995). There was also a Service Project at Jockey Hollow (1991). AFW re-established the Aqueduct Self-Guiding Historical Nature Trail which required identifying 20 stations of interest along the trail, writing descriptions of each, installing numbered posts, designing pamphlets, some public relations and even a little fund raising.

**Where We're Heading ...** AFW continues to be an energetic and fun group because of its members. To carry on at this level, we count on our members to not only join our scheduled activities but also to share their ideas for new adventures and perhaps even co-lead some events. So, let us hear from you.

# Fun Facts on Harriman-Bear Mountain Park (PART 3)

... continuing with Georgette's\* article in our 2010 issues

## Some Interesting Tidbits

- ☞ Scramble to the top of the Popolopen Torne and you will be awed by the 360 degree view. Take time to read the messages painted on the rocks in the huge cairn. It was built as a memorial to all the members of the US Armed Forces. Hikers often carry rocks with them to the summit to add to the pile.
- ☞ The Stockbridge Cave Shelter was once just a cave. In the 1920s, the Park improved it and also added a fire-place. A natural shelter cut into the rock, it is now the perfect spot for lunch on a cold windy day and a good shelter for backpackers.
- ☞ Climb the Jackie Jones Fire Tower to take in the view. It was once an actual fire tower where someone sat all day scanning the Park for fires. His other duty was handing out "I Climbed the Tower" cards to all those kids, including me, who ventured to the top.
- ☞ The Elk Pen really housed 75 elk that arrived in 1919 from Yellowstone Park. The herd didn't thrive and the remainder of the herd was sold off in 1942. All that is left now is an old rusted wire fence.
- ☞ Many of the shelters, such as the West Mountain Shelter, were built in the 1920s and 1930s. How did the lumber and cement get up the mountain in those days? Burros were used to carry the supplies up.



Coming down a ridge in the Gunks

- ☞ Did you ever wonder what all those old, rusty, abandoned cars were doing along the Pittsboro Trail? They were left behind by the squatters who lived along that trail until they were evicted by the Park around 1965.
- ☞ Dunderberg Mountain was to be the site of the Dunderberg Spiral Railway bringing people to a scenic overlook. Work was started but abandoned in 1891 due to a lack of funds. Tunnels and prepared railway beds are all that remain.

If you have been following Georgette's articles you now know some of the stories of the Park. Remembering Claudius or some other forgotten inhabitant or examining old ruins will make your hike much more enjoyable and remind you of all the stories you can share with newcomers.

*\*Georgette loves to explore every trail and woods road, marked and unmarked, in Harriman, study its Trail Maps and read about its history. Amazingly, she files all this information in her brain and so is always ready with an answer to questions from her fellow hikers. Our favorite response when we don't have the answer? "Ask Georgette."*

*So if you have any questions about Harriman or any of the other places we hike just let us know and we'll see if we can find the answer, or "Stump Georgette".*

## It's All About YOU!

AFW is all about our members, what they are interested in, what they are looking for, what they might want to try. That is why we're here and we want your input. Over the past year, some of you have suggested white water rafting, horseback riding, zipline/canopy tours and even dog sledging! All are fun ideas, perhaps some not so feasible and some others requiring a lot of planning, researching and cost to our members. But let us know if you might be interested in some of these activities and share other suggestions from your own "someday I'd like to try" list. Just click on "Contact Us" on our website or email your ideas directly to [contactus@adventuresforwomen.org](mailto:contactus@adventuresforwomen.org).

## Backpacking? NO WAY!!!

But why not? Last summer brought together 10 women who had always wondered what camping would be like and were not afraid to take the challenge. We took a very short hike in, set up camp, and then took an easy hike in the surrounding area. Mother Nature was with us and we were able to lie on a hilltop that night, viewing the night sky, constellations, meteors and satellites. We watched the sun slowly set in the west and rise the next morning. Some of us experienced our very first campfire and the culinary delight of S'mores and campfire brownies.

If you've ever wondered about camping, an AFW's beginner backpacking weekend is the perfect way to try it. No equipment of your own? We can usually outfit you at no extra cost to you. It's only one night and think of the looks on the faces of your family when you tell them what you're doing. And if you hate it, at least you know you've tried it and you've only wasted one night. Of course, like many of us, you'll get hooked and you'll finally have many things to put on your Christmas and birthday lists! Come join us... after all we are "Adventures" for women!



## In Praise of Easy Hikes

Some may say easy hikes are hard to find and well, to be honest, boring. NOT SO!!!! Easy hikes can be challenging for beginner hikers but also fun and rewarding if you remember two things learned from Priscilla and Mary: (1) Anything is possible if you take it slow, and (2) You don't have to hike the whole mountain, just to the next rock or log to rest. With that in mind, new hikers looking for a starting point or stronger hikers just looking for a nice day in the woods can try AFW's "Easy-Moderate/Leisurely" hikes. The "Easy-Moderate" means that most of the hike is on relatively flat or slightly hilly terrain (remember this is NY/NJ, not the corn fields of Iowa) with usually one uphill (think a great view!). They are always along established hiking trails, through woods and meadows, alongside brooks and lakes. The "Leisurely" part describes the pace, usually hiking 3-4 miles over 3-4 hours with many rest stops along the way. You'll be pleasantly surprised by how enjoyable an easy hike can be.

### Save Your Spot

Our weekend trips are popular and often have a waiting list. Sending in your deposit by the required date is the only way to guarantee your registration. Without payment, AFW will have to release your spot to the next person on the waiting list.



*Having fun at Frost Valley in the Catskills*

### Membership Privacy

AFW does not allow the use of its membership list for anything other than AFW business. For more information on how we protect our membership directory, please see our Privacy Statement on the "Join Us" page of AFW's website.

### Updates and Alerts

Be sure to check the Home Page of our website regularly for changes and additions to the Adventure Schedule.

### Sign-ups & Cancellations

To sign up for an event, go to the "Sign-up" page on our website. To cancel out of an event, please send an email to [contactus@adventuresforwomen.org](mailto:contactus@adventuresforwomen.org), call 973-644-3592, or contact the leader of the event.

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### Welcome New Members

Sandra Baliatico, Anna Barberi, Debbie Bell, Marianne Brown, Carmen Cabuhay, Melissa Canter, Janet Dayson, Ann-Marie Feldman, Roberta Ford, Liz Gallo, Jean Marie Herron, Amanda Hinski, Teresa Hodge, Ellen Isaacs, Virginia Lieneck, Gwen Lindgren, Lucy Ma, Maria Mulry, Denise O'Keefe, Sheryl Paynter, Mary-Ann Pearsall, Leslie Siwakoski, Debbie Slevin, Ryan Walsh, Suzanne West