



# Expanding Horizons

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The newsletter for friends of Adventures for Women

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Adventurous Women,

Back in 1996 our founder Betsy Thomason mused, "Adventures for Women is based on the notion that the wilderness is a great place to learn about yourself." This is still true today. However, I would like to suggest that wilderness does not necessarily have to mean only mountains and forests, but rather any part of life where new, exciting and sometimes intimidating opportunities present themselves.

Over the past few years Adventures for Women has been redefining itself, and in the process, discovering that its members have diverse and often untapped strengths and interests. As our membership expands and grows, so do we. Because, let's face it, we *are* our members. We are an amazing group of women who are not afraid to try new things, reinvent old ones and carve out adventures wherever and whenever the opportunity arises. We are stretching our limits, and in the process, so is the organization.

With suggestions and help from our members, we have expanded our very popular City Paths outings to include not just New York but various places in New Jersey and Pennsylvania as well. Our workshops now include orienteering, kayaking and target shooting for the hiker who wants to learn new skills. We have increased our easy and easy/moderate hikes to accommodate our new, less experienced members, and expanded our strenuous hikes for those who are ready for more challenging ones. But let's not stop there.

I invite you, our adventurous members, to bring your passions, your hobbies, your interests and yes, even your trepidations to AFW. Share your ideas and knowledge. You never know what spark your interest may ignite in someone else, or who might have the same obstacle to overcome. Help us plan, become a part of the process, or just point us in the right direction.

I want to thank everyone who has shared a part of her life with us this past year. We are richer because of the experience and look forward to an exciting new season.

*enjoy the journey ... Pissilla*



A break on Hook Mountain in Rockland State Park

## Expanding Our Horizons ... Beyond AFW

**A**FW leads and we follow ... on hikes, kayaks, bikes and through city streets. But sometimes it motivates us to create our own adventures. And that's what a few of our AFW members did this past season:

- **Judy, Dagi and Jackie** spent a week hiking six of the eight huts in the White Mountains in New Hampshire. These huts are manned and maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).
- **Mary** joined 20,000+ people on a 500-mile bike ride that The Register (the Des Moines, Iowa newspaper) has sponsored annually for 35 years. It's called the Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa, the RAGBRAI for short.

The stories of these amazing adventures are on the following pages of this newsletter.

# HUT-TO-HUT IN THE WHITES ... By Dagi, Judy and Jackie

Think about it. We spent an average of \$72 per night to stay in "hotels" that had the following "amenities":

- Takes up to 9 hours on foot, over rough and steep trails, in rain or shine, to get to
- Share a room with up to 40 people
- No showers, no hot water, and no flush toilets (except in one)
- "Lights Out" by 9:30 p.m.
- Breakfast and dinner with no menu choices ... and you had to eat when they told you to.

Yet, we loved every minute of it and would do it again!

Our week started and ended in the historic town of Littleton, NH.

**Day One's hike** was from Lafayette Campground to the Greenleaf Hut in hot, humid weather. We scrambled over heat-wavering rocks ("The Agonies") past beautiful views of Mt. Lafayette, Mt. Lincoln and rock faces glistening from running streams. We arrived early at Greenleaf Hut, at the base of Mt. Lafayette, and settled in that first evening, adjusting to hut life.

**At 7:45 a.m. the next morning**, we started on what is purported to be the toughest trail between huts. Dagi led as we climbed to the summit of Mt. Lafayette (5,260'), entering the alpine zone for the first time. Wispy, early morning clouds, blown around by strong winds, magically disappeared at the top giving us a 360 degree view. An hour later, we descended into the boreal forest. When we got to the top of Mt. Garfield (4,501'), we had a much needed "boot off" break and enjoyed a view with no civilization as far as the eye could see. With numerous ups and down and underground streams, the going was slow that day and we arrived at our second hut, Galehead, just in time for dinner.

**On Day Three** we started for the Zealand Falls Hut on the Twinway trail, past South Twin, Guyot (4,580') and Zealand Mountains. Not more than 30 minutes into the hike, it started to

rain and it poured all day. The wind, which we estimated to be at 40 mph with gusts well over 50 mph, was intimidating, almost blowing off Judy's pack cover at one point, and catching Jackie so she could not move. Looking around, there were more blow downs than there were standing trees and you just prayed the ones you were walking under were strong. That's when the deafening clap of thunder, lightning and hail came and you never saw three women throw their poles and drop their packs so fast in your life. We waited, started again, retreated and waited, and started again, getting wetter and wetter. Paths became small streams and streams were waterfalls as we headed downhill. We arrived at 4:30 at the hut and everyone there was as wet as we were. Luckily, since everything in our packs was bagged, we had something dry to get into.

The sun does come out tomorrow, as Annie says, and we were able to dry out as we hiked the Avalon-Zealand trail and the Crawford Path on **Day Four**. This day's hike was easier and beautiful, through lush evergreens, ferns, moss, birch trees and other deciduous trees, past lots of streams and little waterfalls ... and we saw moose tracks. We arrived at 3:00 at our fourth hut, Mitzpah Spring, one of the nicest shelters. It was still hot and sunny, so out came a clothesline and we were able to dry our clothes. We were treated to a great skit that evening, as well as an explanation on how the solar panels, wind turbines and composting toilets at the shelter work, or not.

Unfortunately, the rain and wind returned on **Day Five** and we shelved our plan to hike the Presidential Range. Instead, we climbed up the Ammonousuc Ravine Trail, a spectacular trail with no less than four waterfalls, each higher and more beautiful than the last. The trail got steeper as we hiked above the clouds, which is the coolest thing. It was definitely challenging, especially when we had to walk across the top of a waterfall. As we climbed higher, the temperature dropped and the winds picked up. When we finally reached our fifth hut, Lakes of the Clouds, the sustained wind speed was 47 mph with gusts to 64 mph and we were very glad to be inside. Lakes is definitely the largest hut, the most crowded and the noisiest.

**Day Five** was a beautiful day and the winds were mild. We started off at 7:45 a.m. for Mt. Washington (6,288'), and from there along the Gulfside Trail, passing Mts. Clay, Jefferson and Adams. The trail is almost totally above tree line with magnificent views. It was also the most technically difficult and hard on the feet and knees, hiking over vast fields of broken granite boulders. Since this was an extremely difficult trail, we did not summit Mt. Adams and by the time we got to Mt. Madison, we were too tired to even think of climbing it. Our sixth and last hut, Madison Spring, was not a big one and the sleeping area was a little cramped BUT, it had flush toilets!!! Oh, the luxury of it all.

**Day Six** was our last day. We hiked out of the Whites and spent the afternoon playing tourist and walking through the town of Littleton before going back to the motel for a celebratory meal, a



Dagi, Judy and Jackie reached the summit of Mt. Washington on their hut-to-hut hike in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

## Expanding Our Horizons ... Beyond AFW

bottle of wine and a nice soft bed to sleep in. Strangely, none of us slept as well as we did in the bunks in the huts.

### Some final words...

**The huts** were more like large log cabins with clean bunks, bathrooms with cold running water and composting toilets. The staff, all college students and known as the Croo, gave talks on various aspects of ecology and had a wealth of knowledge about the area.

**The food** was fantastic. Breakfast was hot cereal, either pancakes and bacon or eggs and coffee cake, coffee, hot chocolate and tea. Dinner was unlimited homemade vegetarian soups, homemade

bread, ham/turkey/stew/stuffed shells/lasagna (depending on the day), vegetables, rice and a great dessert.

**The people** we met included families from the Czech Republic and Canada, a professor studying wolves for the University of Utah, AT thru hikers and section hikers, and hikers just like us from all parts of America hiking one of the country's most beautiful mountain ranges.

If you can do the moderate/strenuous hikes with AFW, you are more than prepared for this fantastic experience.

## Because It's There ... By Mary

**H**aving said I'd do the ride, I needed to get ready. There's nothing like a little fear for motivation. I was going to spend the spring and summer getting ready for a two-day 150 mile September ride, so I really just needed to step up what I would have been doing anyway. Well, sort of. A two-day ride ... not too bad. I've done that before. But, seven days in a row of rides longer than what I usually do ... scary.

Well, the ride is done and I am amazing. Yep, up every morning, on the bike, moving on down the road. Fifty-seven to 100 miles a day. Hills. Heat. I conquered it all. The 20,000 or 30,000 people who did the RAGBRAI are amazing, too. But mostly it's me. I feel indestructible.

### A RAGBRAI Day

It's 4:30 and you hear the first tents unzip, followed closely by the sound of tent poles clicking and clanking as the tents come down. You don't know who those people are, but you have dark thoughts about over-achievers. It's not like they're going to go anywhere. The State Troopers will stop them when they get to the main road and make them wait until full light, so they may as well stay in their tent and let the rest of us sleep. OK, they'll be to the next town early enough to take a hot shower but is that worth roaring down the road ahead of the crowd, missing the fun in the towns ... But I digress.

At 5:30, the more civilized folks emerge and start to pack their gear. You are among them. You've gauged the line at the port-o-john and have brushed your teeth. It's time to take your gear to the truck, and pump up the bike.

You and your home-girls start off around 6:30. You know that the Fair Trade coffee concession is about 8 miles down the road. You make that goal and the last two to arrive slip into line with the first to arrive. No one minds. It's a RAGBRAI thing, recognizing that people who are traveling together do not necessarily arrive together. It's an easy crowd.

Over coffee, you discuss the breakfast stop. Dad's for waffles? The fire house in the next town for pancakes? Mama Raphael's for the terrific buffet? Farm Boys for a breakfast burrito?

Coffee finished, you mount up and join the throng on the road



RAGBRAI

after yelling "Rider on" so that space will be made for you to slip into the line. Powered by caffeine, you slide to the left and start passing the pokes. You're not racing. It's just that when there are 20,000 riders on the road, you're bound to be faster than someone.

The three of you regroup for breakfast, and then separate for the day. You've learned that trying to connect in a pass-through town is futile. It's too hard to find one person in a throng of thousands of people who are all dressed in black riding shorts and bright shirts.

Sometime in the afternoon, you find each other at the campsite for the night. Gear is retrieved, tents are set up and a celebratory, icy beer is gratefully downed.

Next up - the shower adventure. If you're lucky, there's a shower truck nearby (happened once). If you're really lucky, there's a water park with swimming pools and a fantastic slide right next to the campsite (happened once). If this is truly the typical RAGBRAI day, there is a group shower facility that has run out of hot water. You grab your shower bag and get in line. You talk to the women in front of you and behind you. Everyone is practicing looking at eyes so that the habit is well established before you get into the un/dressing room and shower pit, with ten shower heads and no walls.

Carbed, cleaned and ready for dinner, the three of you discuss the options, usually settling on whatever is closest and might have a vegetable. Church ladies and senior centers are the best. Then, you walk off dinner, check out the entertainment for as long as you can manage, then duck into the tent around 9:30 or 10:00.

## Expanding Our Horizons ... Beyond AFW

### What Happens During the Ride, What You See, What You Do

- Bikes with stereo systems in tow. You sing along until you pass them or they pass you.
- A large group from Wisconsin dressed as cows.
- Men in kilts.
- Bike-a-holics with martini glasses on top of their helmets.
- Sparkling boas streaming from helmets.
- Two people dressed as bananas.
- One Santa and six elves biking in formation.
- Several women dressed as Rag-brides with veils on their helmets and trains flowing from their waists.
- One guy on a Pterodactyl – a recumbent bike with a large sail attached.
- Two guys on big wheeled unicycles for the whole week.
- Fruit smoothies that save you at the end of the day when you have 16 more miles to go.
- Mr. Pork Chop giving his signature yell of “Cho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-p”. The yell takes about 30 seconds and covers several octaves. Somehow he incorporates a gargling sound. It’s an impressive yell. He sells pork chops and that’s it.
- Even if you have one full bottle, stopping to fill the other one because the kids have pulled out the garden hose and free water is just something you accept.
- Sitting on a shady curb in Albert City, grandmotherly Ebal invites us in for apple pie and ice cream. We didn’t for an instant think of saying no.
- Two left turns transform the headwind into a tailwind.
- Checking the day’s ride plan and thinking “Short one today. Only 67 miles.” and meaning it.
- Joining draft lines and keeping up a steady 20 mph.
- Discovering that 3 guys are drafting off of you as you fly down a hill at 26 mph and then, powered by stubbornness, up the next hill at 23 mph.
- Corridor of flags leading into a pass-through town.
- Spotting the eagle when approaching Eagle Grove. Well, it was six feet tall, standing in huge nest in a big elm, and waving. Tough not to spot it.
- A town dressed up as Mayberry and as the Beverly Hillbillies, complete with characters, scenes from the shows and theme songs.
- Riding a mile down a side road to jump off the dock behind the house of a family that opened up their lakeside home to any riders who were willing to peddle the extra miles. Then, finally feeling cooled off on this 95 degree day, having hotdogs and chips and fruit and cold drinks before leaving the lake and returning to the main route.
- The geriatric kazoo band that played for free and stopped for a dollar.
- Spotting Lance Armstrong zooming down the road.
- Pulling over to sit in the shade. Corn fields don’t offer much shade. Trees are appreciated.
- Guy by the side of the road playing an accordion. Or a banjo. Or a guitar. Or a trumpet.
- Misting showers set up from a farm’s water tower.
- Amish farms. Amish farmers selling cucumber chips and root beer floats.
- People cheering you as you enter town and as you leave town.

- Buying water and Gatorade and Propel and water and water and nabbing free water every chance you get.

### The Biggest Post-Ride Disappointment

Discovering that your camera didn’t work. Discovering that all of those wonderful shots you took weren’t really taken. Being very sad when you make this discovery.



Mary at RAGBRAI

## YOU Can Be an AT Hiker!

We’ve all heard about *The Appalachian Trail (AT)*, a continuous marked trail that goes for about 2,160 miles between Mt. Katahdin in Maine and Springer Mountain in Georgia. And we’ve read inspiring accounts of hikers who’ve hiked it all the way.

But did you know that New Jersey has 74 miles of it, from the Delaware Water Gap to the New York State Border in the Greenwood Lake area? Beginning this year, Judy will lead a series of hikes on the AT starting at Route 23 by High Point State Park into New York State. Her hikes, 8.5 to 12 miles long, will take us through a region of the AT that includes swamps, fields, ruins, bridges and other interesting sights, in addition to the expected climbs and vistas.

Please join us on this wonderful experience and get to know this part of the famous trail that goes through New Jersey. Perhaps the experience will inspire you to be an AT thru hiker some day.

### AT Vocabulary

- A *thru hiker* completes the entire AT in 12 months.
- A *SOBO* is a thru hiker starting in Maine in May and going south.
- A *NOBO* is a thru hiker starting in Georgia in March or April and going north.
- A *flip flopper* hikes sections at a time and completes it all in 12 months.
- A *section hiker* hikes it over a period of years, doing one section at a time.

# Jackals, Raptors, Gardens and ESP / AFW CITY PATHS

Now, if you had participated in AFW's City Paths this past season, you would know what that headline means.

## JACKALS

There's the pitch! The batter swings. Crack! It's a high pop-up curving up, up over the first base line. The ball falls down, down to bounce off the top of the visitors' dugout. With a huge bounce the ball is airborne again. Up, then down, and the ball finally drops into the middle of box seats holding eight members of AFW. Wow! Just like on television. Except that instead of spending hours getting to a huge ballpark, we had gone only as far as Yogi Berra Stadium on the campus of Montclair University to see New Jersey's own professional baseball team, the Jackals. The evening was hot, just as a summer night in August should be. The game was closely contested, just as a ball game should be. After the game, there was a 30-minute fireworks display, just as there should be. Thanks to Priscilla for organizing this "hot" experience.

## RAPTORS

On a recent visit to the Raptor Trust, a national leader in raptor conservation and avian rehabilitation, twenty-seven AFW members and friends were fortunate to attend Lauren Butcher's presentation of the Trust's mission to rehabilitate and return to the wild as many injured birds and raptors as possible. She explained the plight that raptors and other birds face as their habitat continues to be diminished by human development. Lauren, the Trust's full-time education director and AFW member, then led us on a private tour of the facility where we were able to get up close and personal with many of the birds. After a picnic lunch Priscilla led us on a hike through the Great Swamp, which is home to a variety of NJ's numerous wildlife.

## GARDENS

Another huge turnout at a City Paths outing! Twenty-seven of us came to Duke Farms in mid-December to tour their greenhouses. Our guides pointed out that visiting the greenhouses was like touring the world – from Japanese and Chinese gardens with their symbolism, to symmetrical Indo-Persian gardens, to classic French and Italian gardens, to deserts with their magnificent cacti. It was that and more as we savored the sight and scents of the various plants ... the magnificent tropical flowers reminiscent of a honeymoon or past vacation, the herb gardens of our grandmothers, the boxwood shrubs surrounding our parents' homes or the orchids our mother grew as a hobby. We also learned that Duke Farms is more than just greenhouses ... it provides seminars and workshops for horticulturists and conservationists of all levels. We viewed a video of Doris Duke's amazing life and then some of us continued on to a tour of the manor house, seeing how the other half (no, other 1%!) lives. Linda did a great job planning and coordinating the logistics for such a large group.

## ESP

Have you ever rubbed elbows with "Scarface" Al Capone? Well, that's exactly what 15 AFW women did on a September trip to the Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) in Philadelphia, the world's

first true penitentiary. Now a museum, it has preserved the original spoke wheel construction, "Eye of God" cell windows, the Quaker concept of solitary penitence ... and Al Capone's lavishly decorated cell. (Who says money can't buy happiness, or at least comfort?) After lunch at a local pub, we walked a few blocks to the Rodin Museum to see the bronze casts of his sculptures that are housed there and marveled at their detailed intricacies and beauty. Thank you, Judy, for organizing a thoroughly enjoyable event.

It's amazing where AFW's City Paths leads us, exposing us to worlds we're eager to learn more about. Be sure to sign up for the excursions scheduled for our new season.



*City Paths excursion to the Raptor Trust*

## Walk, Don't Run

You don't have to run to stay fit. This is what 25 hardy and determined AFW women learned at our outdoors Fitness Walk Workshop on a chilly and overcast morning in November. Two certified personal trainers, Lynn and her daughter Gena, taught us warm-up and cool-down stretching exercises and, in between those exercises, showed us how to power-walk by leading us on one, around and around the Wyckoff Environmental Center. We certainly burned off calories that morning and celebrated by gathering after the workout at a local Starbucks for coffee/tea/hot chocolate and snacks.



*On a "power walk" during the Fitness Walk Workshop*

## Just Call Us "Quick Draw McGraws"

So how does a "gun-a-phobe" turn into Annie Oakley in one afternoon? By attending the Shooting Workshop organized by Mary and run by Easton Fish and Game Association in Pennsylvania each spring and fall. That's where 10 pistol-packing mamas from AFW had the opportunity to shoot pistols and rifles in a controlled environment under the tutelage of very patient instructors. They stressed the importance of gun safety and were not hesitant to remind us at the slightest transgression. Did this experience turn us into members of the NRA? Not hardly! Just seeing the holes the little 22's put in our targets was enough of a reminder of how dangerous guns can be. But, from a purely marksman, targeting shooting sport point of view, some of us are definitely hooked. As Mary put it, if it's something you're afraid of, isn't it better to learn about it?



READY, AIM, FIRE ... members at the Shooting Workshop

## Getting from Point A to Point B

At the December Orienteering Workshop, fourteen adventurous women learned that you don't always have to rely on trail markers to get from one place to another. With some friendly instruction in the classroom and lots of practice out in the field, we learned how to plot our course using orienteering maps and a compass. We learned to read and navigate around thick prickly underbrush, marshy flats, streams and boulders, all for the Holy Grail in the sport of orienteering – that sign on the tree that says you've found another Control on the orienteering course.

Unfortunately, this was on a frigid day and taking our gloves off to read the maps and set our compass took its toll on our poor fingers. We may be adventurous but we're not crazy so, after a quick lunch, we decided to save our orienteering skills for the spring and hopefully milder temperatures. This is really like an old fashioned treasure hunt and we look forward to another try. If you've never done this, come on out and give it a go – we promise not to get you lost! Mary and Priscilla taught us new skills, watching over us as we practiced them.



On the way to Pyramid Mountain

## MacEvoy Trail Spring Clean-Up

**We Need You.** Led by Jen, AFW helps maintain the MacEvoy Trail. Twice a year we ask our members and their friends to don gloves and carry garbage bags as we hike the trail, pick up litter and make sure the trail is safe and clean for other hikers. Please join us on this easy hike Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 9 AM to 12 PM. Please wear hiking boots and bring a pair of gloves, garbage bags and water. Come out and have fun for a good cause!

### Updates and Alerts

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

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