



Steps & Scree

E-news from the Trail Crew Association

Late June 2019

Only the early birds get the discount! July 10 is the deadline for the early registration discount for Centennial Reunion. That's just 14 days away. After that, the price jumps from \$100 to \$150. While you're registering, please also consider an alumni assistance contribution. Details are [here](#)

[Write a few short sentences here](#) about your post-crew life so these wonderful dispatches can continue. In the meantime, read some Centennial news flashes below:

Name: Christa Bahner
Current hometown: Belmont, ME
Years on crew: 2000-2004
Career: Owner/operator Bahner Farm

Name: Lynn "McNutt" Knowlton
Current hometown: Standish, ME
Years on crew: 1990
Career: Public adjuster



Christa with husband Mike and children Nicky and Lizzy

How did crew affect your careerchoice/approach to work? I honestly don't know where or who I would be without TFC. I loved everything about it, and values that I took away from crew are still the core values that I use for decisions everyday. I started looking into agriculture because I



Lynn and George Knowlton with north face of Eiger in background

How did crew affect your career

wanted a job similar to crew, where I got to spend most of my time outdoors engaged in physical labor. Now I can't imagine doing anything else.

One of the most undervalued things about crew, in hindsight, is the personnel management experience everyone gets if you stick around long enough to be a crew leader, or TM. That experience in leading and decision making was critical when I made the switch into ag, and then to running my own business.

How to you use trails in your life today?

It's hard to get off the farm for big trips but we try to get out hiking and camping whenever we can. I love to hike with my kids. I know a lot of farmers who won't take time off for that type of recreation, but we've made that a big priority for our family

How often do you get together with crew friends and what do you do? Never enough! I'm lucky enough to see a few folks once a year or so, and a few more than that. There's a fair amount of texting and emailing with some crew folks, which really helps. We never, ever, ever leave the farm in August, but our whole family is taking 3 days for the centennial, which gives you an idea of how excited I am to see everyone!

Most vivid crew memory? Oh man, too many to list. Working on Goose Eye... maybe my fourth year? Kinsman Ridge patrolling. Listening to YD puke off the top of the van during Long Days my second year. Attempting to drive the 6pack into Grafton Notch. The Endless Staircase during Old Folks my third year. Hearing voices in the last mile of the hut traverse. Packing in.

What life lessons did you learn from crew? All of them.

choice/approach to work? Well I only did one year as I married the head deskie who cashed our checks, built a log cabin with axe and 2 man cross cut saw and have worked together at lots of careers: construction (roofing), parenting of our own crew of 4, (and now 5 adult men) firefighting, and being Public Adjusters locally and in catastrophe locations. I have learned how to work through pain, exhaustion, and survival in not so comfortable situations. Laugh at the strangest situations, and I can still swing an axe when I need to.

How do you use trails in your life today? At times we drive long distances for work. We try to find a trail to de stress and get our bodies moving.

How often do you get together with crew friends and what do you do? Have never been able to cross paths with any of my crew mates except a get together at Shelburne cabin in 1993 with our first son.

Most vivid crew memory? Completing my first rock staircase on Mad Gulf trail. Swimming falling waters trail.

What life lessons did you learn from crew? Even if I'm a bit slow and I have to carry every last shovel, pick, and rock bar left in the pile I will make it to my destination. My mind is a powerful thing. And The members of my team (crew) will not leave me behind/ forget me as I also have their back.

The origins of crew DNA

How does AMC trail crew replicate its mojo so regularly? An outsider might guess that primitive living conditions, modest pay and mandatory turnover would be a morale killer. Instead, a unique esprit pervades, year after year, generation after generation. How do we do it?

(The text and photos below are drawn from the White Mountain trail building history exhibit to be permanently installed at Camp Dodge. A mock up of the exhibit will be ready for display at Centennial Reunion Aug 24.)



Crew has long been fueled by the pent-up energy of youth bucking the conformities of modern life. The archetypal trail worker is Ethan Allen Crawford of the 19th-century frontier clan. He was a failure in business and was jailed for his debts, yet still flourished in his own backyard as a guide, trail builder, and bear tamer. Crew cultivates that frontier spirit, where young men and women can remake themselves.



Crew attracts a number of mountaineer types who experience nature's grandeur as inseparable from an ordeal. Crew life reinforces that association again and again. We put on wet boots and pants in the morning or sweat all day in a cloud of black flies, knowing we might be lucky enough to sleep under the stars that night with a meteor shower streaking the heavens.



Sherman Adams, a member of the original 1919 trail crew, is often credited with setting high standards. Adams came to crew after serving as president of Dartmouth Outing Club and after completing US Marine Corps boot camp training. He quickly became a leader and established a work discipline and many routines still in existence today. Adams later served as governor of New Hampshire and chief of staff in the Eisenhower administration.



Then there's the magic that happens when you load kids with responsibility, give them some direction and send them out in the woods for a week at a time to solve problems on their own. There's empowerment. There's mirth. There's hijinks. (Help here! Does anyone have a high-res copy of above photo of a tree climber Kurt Winkler, who later became a distinguished climber.)

Editor's note: TCA alums Mark Dannenhauer and Rachel Wheeler are organizing a series of Table Talks on various topics at the Centennial Reunion August 24. One topic is the future of recreational trails in the White Mountains, as Dannenhauer tees it up below.)

What's the Big Idea for the third century?

How many 100 year-old artifacts do you have lying about the house? Of those, how many do you leave outside all year? in all types of weather? Of those, how many do you tromp on

over and over again, wearing Limmers? Most White Mountain trails are such artifacts: centenarians or older, abandoned to the elements, tromped upon by Limmers, Hokas, Tevas, the occasional high heel, even bare feet.

The Crawford Path, in fact, is twice 100 years of age. Opened in 1819 to accommodate wagon-borne tourists deposited at the Crawfords' doors by the Tenth New Hampshire Turnpike, itself dating to 1806. Tourist-bearing railroads arrived in Gorham in the 1850s and were soon depositing their spawn throughout the Whites. Hoteliers gathered them up in grand hotels; locals and summer folk sent them streaming uphill from hatcheries in Randolph, Waterville Valley, and Crawfords. Some explorers' feet ne'er so much as touched the ground, jouncing along on horseback.

Amongst the almost innumerable tragedies of the Civil War, trails were mostly abandoned. It was more than a decade following before the Appalachian Mountain Club was formed in 1876, cutting their first trail that same year. This lit the fuse for an explosion of trail building fireworks, first low bursts of local paths, then grand high bursts of regional trails. By 1919, a stunning network of local and connecting trails spread over the mountains like a long-exposure photo of 4th of July fireworks over the Esplanade. Boom! Looking back, the Big Idea of the first century of White Mountain recreational trails (1819-1919): Hey, we can make trails, link them together, and invent recreational tourism at the same time!

Somehow trail building continued through continuing warfare in the Philippines and Europe. As the AMC's trail system grew and grew, further and further, it soon outgrew the capacity of their traditional trail hands, local farmers and woodsmen. Hence, the birth of the AMC trail crew in 1919, acknowledged to be less capable than their predecessors but deemed more reliable.

The era was fecund. Also birthed around that time were an activist's tract, "The Boa Constrictor of the White Mountains, ... a corporation chartered to depopulate and deforest a section of the White Mountains" (1900), the Randolph Mountain Club (1910, "its first task to restore the trails..."), the Weeks Act (1911, shepherded by US Rep. John Weeks, born in Lancaster, whose father was a Crawford client), the White Mountain National Forest (1918, to preserve the flow of navigable streams was the excuse, but the smoke from burning slash from wide-spread logging was blocking tourists' views), the Appalachian Trail Conference (1925). It was the Nativity of Management, at first a motley clan of babes in the woods, by century's end a Marvel Group of environmental superpowers.

The Big Idea of the second century of White Mountain recreational trails was the child of the Big Question: Gee, now we have all these trails, what are we going to do with them? The answer: we'll manage these trails, first to provide access, then, when confronted with too much accessibility, for the trails' own sustainability.

For its first 50 years, the AMC Trail Crew's principal tasks were to ensure access for a sparse hiking public via standardizing, signs, shelters, and bridges. The Crew's second 50 years were spent endeavoring to preserve the trails from an overly numerous hiking public, waterbars, cribbing, bog bridges, rock steps, scree and staircases; the shelters with caretakers, composting toilets, defined dispersed tent sites, fees.

Now, in 2019, TFC is working on the Webster Cliff Trail (1914, cut in four days), the Osgood (1874, re-opened by a summer camp 1904, AMC adopted in 1907), and the Crawford Path (1819). As we embark on our third century of White Mountain recreational trails, what is the Big Question? what's the Big Idea?

Join us at the Centennial for alumni and guest slide shows and films, for Field Trips to see and do trail work, for Table Talks on a wide range of alumni-led topics, including a conversation about the Big Idea for the next century of White Mountain trails. Send me your ideas at ninots@crocker.com -- Mark Dannenhauer

How are your tech skills? Are you handy with editing, web development or data base management? Apply here for a top-tier volunteer role. And meanwhile, stay connected--If your address or email changes... please email leeburnett_maine@hotmail.com