



Trail Crew 2017



Trail Crew Alumni Association Update

Updates for alumni and current crew.

September 2017

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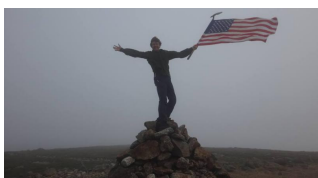


Fourth Year Reflections...

I never thought about trail work growing up. I went for occasional hikes with my family, but I never contemplated who built the rock staircases, bog bridges, and shelters. Five years ago, I had just finished high school when I accepted a job with the Forest Service working as a wilderness ranger in the Eastern Sierra. The work was excellent: sharp saws, enormous trees, expansive views, and minimal 'goofers'. I found myself missing New England and the White Mountains, but I went back to school that fall with a newfound passion for trail work. That winter, I encountered the job opportunity for the AMC Trail Crew and sent in an application. A few months later, I heard back from "Salz" (David Salisbury) that I had a job on the crew, and that I should arrive in May. Much like the majority of incoming first years, I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

The first three years were a busy blur. **See below.**

The morning after Bash 2016 was a rude awakening to being Trail Master (TM). Groggy-eyed and hungover, I found myself replying to questions with less than confident



answers. A first year had broken his leg the night before, the cabin was a mess as usual, and the entire summer crew was trying to leave without actually cleaning up. I thought I had a decent idea what being TM might entail, but I quickly learned otherwise.

Once again, I returned to school during the off-season, but this time with greater responsibility and connectedness to the Trail Crew. With the help of Zack Urgese (Trail Supervisor) and fellow 4th year Thor, we worked our way through a few dozen interviews. I took inventory of Hutton and the Tool Bay, and made a list of things to order in preparation for the season ahead. With the help of the rest of the leadership, I brainstormed ways in which we could increase public awareness and appreciation about trail work in the White Mountains. Lastly, I made about a half-dozen lists. Lists about what to order, lists about what I had to do before patrols began, lists about what to do before woods weeks began, etc. Some nights before I fell asleep, my mind would drift to the upcoming summer, and I would sit up and write down another thing that I needed to do. By the time April turned to May, I was ready to stop answering emails about trail work, and actually get out there and *do* the trail work.

While I suspect that it will be easier for me to reflect on TFC 2017 a few months after it has concluded, I do have a few end of season thoughts. We were a crew of only 13, which is unsustainably small. The AMC Trail Crew is able to maintain its standard of excellence if, and only if, a healthy hierarchy of first through fourth-years exists. If the crew continues to operate with such low numbers, I worry that work standards, inventiveness, and crew culture will suffer. With that said, the crew was able to operate at a high level this summer and set some serious stone throughout the Whites. See the forthcoming Trailmaster report in Chips & Clippings for more details on work accomplishments.

As my time on the AMC Trail Crew closes, I would like to express what a meaningful four years this has been for me. The memories I have made on this crew are

the most vibrant that I have, and the friends I have made here are among my closest. It truly has been a time in my life unmatched in intensity, commitment, and strength. As I transition to looking for year-round employment, I am searching for jobs that imitate the TFC work culture. While some jobs may come close, I am confident that I will never truly find a job that matches the mental and physical focus of the TFC. Thank you to all those I have had the pleasure of learning from and working alongside.

Foo!

Sam "Archie" Kilburn
Trailmaster 2017





First Year...

I was one of eleven first years in 2014. There were only seven upper years, and I know now that they, understandably, had their hands full trying to keep us all under control. One first year left after the first patrol, and another had to leave a few weeks later due to health reasons, but the remaining nine of us remained until the end of the season. We were a competitive bunch of first years, both with each other and with our upper years. I spent the majority of my first year making mistakes and trying to learn from them. I learned what it means to be on TFC, I learned to push beyond what I thought possible, and I learned and re-learned to endure unpleasant experiences. It happened slowly and was almost imperceptible, but my internal fibers were changing from goofer to mutant.

The season ended and we all began our fall obligations. Some stuck around for fall crew, some returned to other jobs, and some, like me, returned to school. After just completing my first season on TFC, I quickly found that school was the last place I wanted to be. I had a hard time transitioning from living and working in the woods, where successes are measured by how many rocks you set or how sharp your axe is, to school, where successes are measured by the arbitrary grade a professor gives you. I missed the physicality of life on the trail and I missed the wild nature of those I worked with. Thor (14-17), Smathers (14-15, 17), and Washburn (14-16) visited me for a weekend at school. We spent the nights wrestling each other in my living room and moving the biggest rocks we could find. I'm certain we frightened my classmates, but it provided all of us a little taste of TFC during the long off-season. After my fall semester, I took a leave of absence from school. I returned to the Whites to work, first as a guide in the valley leading clients on hiking and climbing trips, and then as a spring caretaker at Carter Notch Hut. Back in the Whites was exactly where I wanted to be. May soon arrived, the snow began to melt, and the AMC Trail Crew returned to Hutton Lodge once more.

Second Year...

Eight of the nine of us came back for a second year in 2015. We were joined by Supertramp, a first year in 2013, who had returned for his second go-round. Once again, with nine folks in my year, we were a rowdy, headstrong bunch. With Switchback being the only third year, we were asked to step up and help crew lead. While the possibility of being a second year crew leader was exciting, it required that we all do a lot of growing up - fast. Luckily only Napoleon and Smathers, two of the more mature members of our year, were able to head a woods project before Stitch (05-08, 15) showed up to take over as the third crew leader. While crew leading kept Stitch, Switchback, and Todd busy for the remainder of the summer, I found that I was able to settle in to my second year routine. For the first time I was given charge of my own project. I gained confidence in my rock work abilities and my decision-making as a trail worker. I felt a sense of responsibility to the TFC, and to upholding our standards of superior trail work.

My second season came and went just as fast as the first, and I once again found myself back in the world of academia. I had an easier reintegration the second time around and remained in school. I found a community of similarly-minded folks with whom I shared similar passions and sentiments. When, at last, May arrived; the stoke was back and I was ready to hit the trail.

Third Year...

During the entirety of my third year on TFC, I spent time in only two woods camps - the Champney Camp and the Mahoosuc Camp. I started off the summer crew leading in the Mahoosucs, where we were re-bridging a significant section of the Mahoosuc Trail on either side of Full Goose Shelter. I spent the first two weeks working on replacing two wooden ladders with metal rungs. After my lungs had become sufficiently saturated with carcinogenic rock dust, I switched to helping the rest of the crew replace bog bridges. Lumber had been flown in for us, but we quickly found that the logs were flown to incorrect locations. Our legs and backs were the only remedy available. What should have been a fairly streamlined bog bridging project, turned out to be weeks and weeks of hauling stringers up and down steep Mahoosuc trails. It was grueling menial labor, and it took a toll on all of us, perhaps most so on the first years. After Long Days I passed off the Mahoosuc crew leading to Washburn, and went to work with Nova for his crew lead on the Champney Falls Loop Trail. The majority of our three weeks was spent working on only one rock staircase. The only source of rock was from a large boulder atop a 30' cliff. We used our largest rock drill to slice up the boulder, and then used a highline to fly the rocks down to the trail. The resulting rock staircase is uncharacteristic of traditional White Mountain rock work - all of the steps have been cut to size and have sharp ninety degree angles. As my third year came to a close, conversations about who would be Trailmaster began. I was among those who raised my hand when Switchback asked who wanted the position. A few weeks and many hours of discussion later, I was handed the Trailmaster keys, a worn out Beech-Nut hat, and a thick leather journal. My time as Trailmaster had begun.

Annual Reunion - Mark your Calendar!

Saturday, November 12th

Attend to hear about planning for

the 100th Anniversary of Trail Crew (2019)!

Visit the Web site soon for complete information.



Visit TCA Web site - amctca.org!

Read preliminary information about our 100th Anniversary on the **new Centennial page**.

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