

April 2000

### **Presidents Letter**

The race has been run, the votes have been counted and it is official. I am your new section president. Joining me on the executive committee are: Dick Krompegal, 1st Vice President, Trails and Shelters; Sarah O'Hare, 2nd Vice President, Activities; Jack Sanga, Treasurer and acting Secretary; Jim Robertson, CT Section representative to the GMC Board of Directors; and Norm Sills alternate CT Section representative to the GMC Board of Directors. Bob and Arlene Rivard continue as our Trail Talk Newsletter co-editors as does Marjorie Hackbarth as our section reporter to the Long Trail News.

I would like to thank Jim Robertson for his 10 years of service as Section President and for taking on the job of Director to the GMC for the next 3 years. To Dick Krompegal I know that a simple thank you could never be enough for the 15 years of service he has provided, and continues to provide, to our section and the Long Trail. Because of his dedication, and others like him in the hiking community, we all have wild places to enjoy and trails to hike.

The Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on March 18 at the Cheshire Grange. A special thanks to Marjorie Hackbarth arranging an interesting speaker and to the Robertson, Rivard and Sanga families who came out in force to keep our dinner from running into the red.

If you have not sent in your membership renewal for 2000 yet please do so. At the end of 1999 we had 130 registered members but we are considerably behind in renewals for 2000. Please send your check, made out to the Connecticut Section GMC, to me: at the address above.

See you on the Trail,  
Ken

### **Burr Pond State Park February 13**

Not knowing exactly what the snow conditions would be in the northwest corner of the state, our small group gathered at the boat-launch area at Burr Pond anticipating the use of snow shoes. The snow on the 2.5 mile Wolcott Trail following the shoreline of the pond was sufficiently packed to support our weight. However, the rains of the days prior made for icy conditions and, therefore, slippery and slow hiking.

After a mile, we turned south onto the John Muir Trail. Unsure if it was hikeable, we found that a snowmobile had broken a track that enabled us to make the gentle ascent. After we hiked on it for about a mile, the snowmobile's track had ended. Snow shoes would have proved useful at this point but we had left them in the car. We decided to trudge through the snow anyway, up to the wooded summit of Walnut Mountain. At the peak, the elevation was 1,325 feet. We paused for a rest and a snack at the top, where the view was limited.

Retracing our steps down, we eventually connected with the Wolcott Trail again and continued our hike, stepping carefully to avoid slipping. The trail took us through a woodland of hemlock, birch and mountain laurel. Many massive glacial boulders dotted the southern end of the pond. The winter's stillness was punctuated only by the tapping of a determined woodpecker and the booming sounds of the shifting ice on the pond.

Having hiked about six miles, we were ready for our traditional pizza. A short drive north to Kent Pizza in Winsted concluded our visit in northwestern Connecticut.

*Hikers: Ken Williamson, Maria Falvo, Mary Horne, John O'Neill  
Leader: Sarah O'Hare*

### **Duck Pin Bowling February 20**

The sport may never be the same. Nine bowlers showed up and began by all getting strikes. Unfortunately those bowlers were on other lanes. Our pins were laughing at us, realizing how safe they were. We began bowling in the dark, literally. The lights were off, the

April 2000

strobe lights were going. For those of us who grew up in the 70' s, (and yes there were some of us), the only thing that was missing was the BeeGee' s music.

The kids loved it. There were bowling balls that glowed in the dark. Drew Sanga took it upon himself to be ball boy. Every time someone on our lane bowled, Drew would select and deliver the next ball they should throw. His timing was a little off. He would deliver the next ball just about the time you turned around from the release.

There was some debate as to whether we should have the gutter guards (bumpers) up or down. But after listening to the whining and crying and begging I agreed to ask the alley to raise the bumper. This stopped most of the whining by the adults. The kids didn' t care one way or another.

Sarah O' Hare and her son Tom had a side bet about who could bowl the best. Sarah won the first game 81 to Tom' s 75. For any of those who have attended previous GMC events, you all know how supportive of Tom the rest of us were. Due to our encouragement (outright taunts) Tom rallied to bury his mom on the second game. Tom triumphed with a blazing 85 to his mom' s 73. Tom' s total pins = 163. Sarah' s total pins = 154. Good thing Tom won total. I think if he lost, he would have had dishpan hands for a month.

Olivia and Drew had an intense battle going the first game. Olivia ended up with an 82. Drew got a strike in the 9th frame to pull within 2 pins. He ended up with an 80. On the second game, Drew ran out of gas. I think it was from running up and down the alley to give everyone their bowling ball.

On the other lane, the Robertsons had their own bowling competition. Brenna and Kerry decided to be good sisters. They both bowled 73 so they were exactly equal. Their second game separated those that were serious. Brenna bowled a 66, while Kerry edged her out slightly with a 70. Both are real good bowlers. They even brought cupcakes which they gladly shared with everyone.

Watching our President in action was a real treat. Couldn' t figure out if he was bowling or playing billiards. Jim' s judicious use of the bumpers to cleverly bank the balls resulted in several spares and even a strike. His first game was an impressive 101. On his second game, he attempted to not use the bumpers. The result 85. Jim, stick with what works.

Jack was in rare form the first string. He had a mind blowing 120. (Never using a bumper). The second game, was a respectable 98. Lee has decided to take bowling lessons from her kids. The first game was 74 with the second game a 62.

The festivities were supposed to start around 2:30. Due to poor alley management and the fact that our alleys kept being given to other bowlers, we started around 2:45. A generous intermission between strings was fueled by birthday cupcakes from the Robertsons. After bowling the second string, we were done around 5:00. Everyone agreed it was a good way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Bowlers: Olivia Sanga (82, 82) wins the consistency award; Drew Sanga (80, 66) awarded ball boy; Lee Sanga (74, 62); Jack Sanga( 120, 98); Sarah O' Hare (81,73); Tom O' Hare (75, 88) and the only one to actually improve from first to second game; Brenna Robertson (73,66) awarded cutest smile; Kerry Robertson (73,70) awarded most magnanimous sharing her sister' s birthday cupcakes; Jim Robertson (101,85) (three words, bumpers, bumpers, bumpers).

*Leader: Jack Sanga*

### **Stratton Pond Snow Shoe Trip February 26 & 27**

OK kids what did we learn? We learned that it' s better to have green license plates than blue ones, but I guess we already knew that. We learned that the speed limit in Wilmington, Vermont, is 25 mph. We also learned that when going faster than 25 mph in Wilmington it' s better to be the lead, or middle, vehicle so as not to learn all these lessons the hard way.

The weather report said it was going to be a wet, gloomy, lousy weekend in Vermont. They were partially right, as it was raining all the way to the trailhead at Stratton Mountain. But on arrival the rain stopped and we were treated to a warm (especially for February) walk into Stratton Pond. I am sure the winter lasted 6 weeks in Vermont this year. The first weekend of winter was on the January snowshoe trip, and this trip was the first weekend of spring.

The new shelter at Stratton Pond is incredible. We were joined that night by a group of 8 on an EMS-sponsored outing. Two others at the shelter, along with our group of 6, comfortable and spread out in the new shelter.

April 2000

Although a good blanket of snow covered the ground, the weather was great. After a pleasant hike in on Saturday we set up our gear and went for a hike around Stratton Pond. I know it must have been spring because no one cared to venture very far out onto the ice. On Sunday' strip over Stratton Mtn., most of us would have gladly traded our winter wear for a pair of shorts. Bright sun and temperatures in the 50s although the wind at the summit made the trip of the fire tower "interesting".

*Hikers: Allen Freeman, Jim Robertson, Jack Sanga, Norm Sills, Sue Spring and Ken Williamson*

### **Goodwin State Forest March 5**

The Goodwin State Forest is supposed to be a wildlife sanctuary for observing birds and animals. Where' s the wildlife? Perhaps winter was keeping them dormant, for the forest was unusually quiet. Pine Acres Pond was still heavily iced over and so too, was Brown Hill Pond. Not quite thawed enough for the ducks to return, we assumed.

The hikers followed the trail north then onto an old tote road which was thick with mud but revealed deer tracks, motor bike and ATV tracks. The clouds had rolled in by this time, threatening rain. Fortunately for us it came down as freezing rain and for only a brief time. The northernly destination was to Orchard Hill which displayed an old house' s stone foundation and fireplace. Turning south we hiked on the blue blazed Natchaug Trail passing Black Spruce Pond, the park' s third pond, and returned to our cars. Having hiked approximately eight miles we were ready for the usual pizza.

*Hikers: Bob Schoff, Ken Williamson, Mary Horne, John O' Neill  
Leader: Sarah O' Hare*

### **Shenipsit Trail Hike March 11**

This hike along the Shenipsit Trail meandered through birch and hemlock covered ridges of Ellington and Somers. It started in the kind of weather that led one writer to remark, "March is the month God created to show people who don' t drink what a hangover is like." So I was surprised that 7 people showed up ready to brave the cold, slate gray skies and spitting rain. The general mood of the group was jovial, even once the bottom dropped out less than halfway through.

The first segment of the hike wandered through a network of old tote roads, passing what appeared to be several local hangout spots. This section of trail needs serious maintenance to remove the unsightly bonfire pit and garbage along the tote road. This section of the trail also shows signs of heavy mountain bike usage. The rain increased shortly after we reentered the forest, hard enough to require rain gear to be slipped on. Most of the group continued ahead while two stragglers (among them the leader) lagged behind, fumbling over a poncho and admiring the beautiful hemlocks.

The group soon reunited and continued towards Soapstone Mountain. Another group of hikers, heading south down some steep ridges, encouraged us that the views at the top were worth the climb. Then, at Soapstone's base, we encountered some excitement. A woman holding a baby wrapped in a pink jacket came behind us, yelling, "Help!" She was actually hiking with the group we'd met a few minutes before and had gotten lost. After venturing ahead, she'd made a wrong turn on one of the Shenipsit Forest's many tote roads. We gave her an update on her group's location, suggested a short cut, and wished her luck in catching up with them.

From a distance Soapstone Mountain doesn't seem so impressive. On the ridge where we passed the other hiking group, the fire tower and the radar dome on the summit about ¾ mile away seemed like just a big hill. The climb from that "big hill's" base to the summit rises about 300 feet in less than a half mile, though, making for some good cardiovascular exercise. The steep trail is well angled and set on rock stairs in places to minimize erosion. The hillside it traverses is quite pretty until the last hundred yards or so, where logging has removed much of the birch cover.

The observation tower was a natural spot for lunch, especially since it offered a degree of cover on the exposed summit. While trying to dry off a little, we munched on bagels and sandwiches and peanut butter covered rice cakes. The lunchtime conversation was stimulating and educational. Ken instructed us on the physiological causes of sickness: mainly that germs and viruses make us sick, not cold or rain. Grace reinforced Ken's lesson each time someone forgot and suggested that they might get sick from being out in the pouring rain. The views from the top should have been awe-inspiring; on clear days, it is possible to see Mount Greylock and Mount Monadnock from the tower's deck. Only Ken and John were hardy enough to venture to the top to admire the cloud-obstructed views.

April 2000

The rest of the hike was downhill. My inexperience as a GMC leader, however, was exposed during this last section. A sign warned hikers to bypass a section that was being harvested and a decision whether to press on or take the proposed detour had to be made. A more senior member firmly announced, "Press on!" and everyone followed (me included). We were soon wandering through unmarked cutover and had to regroup on the paved entrance to Soapstone Mountain State Park. I had blown my first opportunity to make an executive decision that could have avoided danger! After much wandering and grumbling for at least 1/20th of a mile, the trail soon resurfaced, and the hike continued after I confirmed that all were safe and not too shaken from this brush with being lost.

We reached the cars after only 3 hours and 15 minutes. Here we faced a dilemma. The intended length of the hike was supposed to be almost 8 miles, but the cars had been parked about .8 miles shy of the actual trail end. There were two options: trudge at least 40 minutes more for the glory of having done the entire section or climb into the warm cars and head for pizza. Pizza won out, after much deliberation. Over a large House Special and medium Vegetarian (both excellent choices) at the Italian Villa in Somers, negotiations over my accounting for our actual mileage began. Everyone begged and pleaded for me to call it 8 miles; Ken even devised an algorithm to make it 15 miles, but I figured no one would believe that one. So, 7 it was -- 7 quick, fun, cold, and wet miles.

*Hikers: John Barker, Mandy Brink, Dave Chatel, Regina Chatel, Grace King, and Ken Williamson  
Leader: Brooks Truitt*

### **Nehantic Trail April 2**

Nothing happened. No one climbed a tree. Or fell. Or got lost. It didn't rain or snow. All equipment was accounted for at the end of the trip. We all stayed dry. Everyone had the same number of fingers and toes they started with. Don't get me wrong, it was a most enjoyable hike but it sure makes this write-up hard to do.

*Hikers: Mandy Brink, Regina Chatel, Sarah O' Hare, Ken Williamson*

## **Congratulations!**

Connecticut Forest and Park Association recently presented awards to two GMC members:

Norm Sills - Edgar L. Heermance Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail Award

Herb van Winkelen - Certificate of Merit

## **ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE**

### **May - June 2000**

**Sunday, May 7 - Mattabesett Trail Maintenance Work.** Meet at Guida's on Rte. 66 in Meriden at 9:45 a.m.

*Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com*

**Sunday, May 14 (Mother's Day) - Cycling, Seaport Metric Century.** 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. start times. Starts in Groton for a 100 km. trip around southeastern Connecticut. This ride is sponsored by the Pequot Cyclists. Entry fee and helmets required. Contact leader for further details as they become available.

*Leader: Ken Williamson (860) 535-2622, e-mail: Ksub@aol.com*

**Friday - Sunday, May 19-21 - Long Trail / Appalachian Trail Maintenance in VT.** We will base at the Kid Gore Shelter working the southern 5 miles of the CT section. This is in a remote area - participants must be experienced backpackers and prepared for black flies. Call or e-mail by May 16.

*Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com*

April 2000

**Saturday/Sunday, May 27- 28 - Backpacking Trip.** Contact leader for details.

*Leader: Stephanie Buhl (860) 563-8203, e-mail: buhlsm@pweh.com*

**Saturday/Sunday, June 3- 4 - Trails Day 2000.** Call (860) 346-TREE for details.

**Sunday, June 4 - Mattabesett Trail Maintenance Work.** Meet at Guida' s on Rte. 66 in Meriden at 9:45.a.m.

*Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com*

**June 9-11 - GMC Annual Meeting at Long Trail Lodge in Sherburne, Vermont. See Long Trail News for details, or call GMC headquarters, (802) 244-7037**

**Saturday, June 10 - Canoe Trip down the CT River.** Spend a lazy summer day canoeing or kayaking. Must bring your own canoe, or be partnered with someone who has a canoe.

*Leader: Jack Sanga (860) 648-9614, e-mail: jsanga@aol.com*

**Sunday, June 11 - Heublein Tower Family Hike.** Meet at parking area on Route 185 between Bloomfield and Simsbury at 1 p.m. About a 2 mile walk to the tower. 4 mile round trip.

*Leader: Jim Robertson H: (860) 633-7279, W: 860-285-4688, e-mail: jrobert685@aol.com or james.e.robertson@us.abb.com*

**Saturday, June 17 - Day Hike, Rock Spring (a Nature Conservancy Preserve), Scotland.** Short hike, gentle terrain. Three miles with optional short trails. Good for families.

*Leader: Sarah O' Hæ (860) 563-7018, email SEOHARE@aol.com*

**Friday - Sunday, June 23 - 25 - Trail Maintenance in VT.** Will stay at The Story Spring Shelter, 1/2 mile from the road. We will work the 4 miles south of the shelter. May blaze north. May need to defend from black flies. Call or e-mail by June 21.

*Leader: Dick Krompegal (860) 667-4205, e-mail: rkrompy@aol.com*