



Tennessee rails

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Night of the Boar

— Semi-non-fiction by TTA Member, Gene Hawkins —

It was the doldrums of August. We needed a couple of days in the woods. It was Mike England who suggested going to Fiery Gizzard. He and I and Patricia would hike the Fiery Gizzard Creek from Tracy City to Raven Point, camp for one night, and return the following day by way of the Dog Hole Trail. At the last moment, Patricia decided that she was absolutely indispensable at work and couldn't possibly join us. In retrospect, Patricia's female intuition was right on target.

Early Thursday morning, we set out from Grundy State Forest at Tracy City. It was a splendid day with cloudless sky and chirping birds. We hiked the Little Fiery Gizzard Creek to its confluence with the Big Fiery Gizzard. From the confluence, our trail entered the cool, damp, hemlock forest of the creek gorge. We passed numerous waterfalls which the creek formed as it descended its stairway of rocks: Blue Hole Falls, Black Canyon Falls, Sycamore Falls. It was an idyllic day — until Mike stepped on the bees' nest.

Mike was in the lead, and I followed by a few paces. From my rear vantage point I saw Mike's boot sink into the bees' underground burrow. The furious bees erupted from that hole like smoke from a jet's afterburner, and covered our bare legs thighbone to anklebone.

I determined that the prudent course of action in this crisis was to

place as much distance as possible between myself and the bees (i.e., run like hell). My path, however, was blocked by Mike, who had chosen this inopportune moment to demonstrate a new dance step he had just invented.

I addressed Mike with some urgency and suggested that he move certain portions of his anatomy with all deliberate speed. Still perfecting his new dance step, he failed to move with sufficient alacrity. At which point, I collided with him broadside and knocked him flat on his face, leaving the prints of my Vibram-soled boots on his backside.

The bees, Mike and I all proceeded down the trail with remarkable vigor. I was astonished how rapidly two men can move when pursued by a swarm of highly agitated bees. When we reached the creek, I quickly decided it was an appropriate time for a swim. I jumped in, gear and all. Mike deliberated only briefly before concurring with my opinion and plunging in also. The bees, fortunately, decided they had more important things to do.

Mike and I stayed in the creek awhile to soak our bee-stings. Mike was ticked off about me running him over. I had to remind him that it was he who had stomped on the bees in the first place. Whereupon, he made various suggestions concerning myself and the bees, suggestions which were not only

disgusting, but anatomically impossible as well.

In due time, we moved on down the trail. We moved more slowly now, our equipment water-logged and our lower limbs raw from the bee attack. We were so occupied with our tribulations that at first we failed to notice the dark clouds which gathered above. A thunderclap got our attention.

"What was that?" I exclaimed, alarmed.

"An F-16," Mike lied.

Normally a little rain is no particular concern to veteran packers like Mike and me. A little precipitation just adds to the flavor of a good trip. But this time there was a problem. At the terminus of the trail we had to ascend a bluff to reach Raven Point Campsite. In dry weather, the bluff was merely impossible. In rain, it would be suicide.

Forgetting our bee-stings and wet gear, Mike and I raced to reach the bluff before the rain. I doubt that Guinness has a record for the Fiery Gizzard Dash, but if there is one, Mike and I hold it.

We started our ascent just as the first raindrops fell. I had regained the lead by now, and preceded Mike by a few paces as we scrambled up the bluff. It was a rugged climb, and both of us acquired a nice collection of bruises,

scrapes, and abrasions. In my haste, I dislodged a good many rocks, which Mike skillfully caught with his head. It was difficult to hear all Mike's words, but most of them seemed to concern basic bodily functions. He seemed unduly agitated, and I thought it prudent that he not catch me at this particular time.

We reached Raven Point and set up our camp near the bluff we had just ascended. The rain fell steadily now, and we ate inside the two-man tent we were sharing. By eight o'clock we had run out of dirty jokes and went to sleep. We were tired and would have slept soundly — had it not been for the boar.

When I sleep, I snore. In fact, I don't just snore; I wheeze and snort and rattle and grunt. Mike and I have shared a tent many times, and he has always slept soundly through my snorts and grunts. I don't know why on this particular night they woke him up, or why he imagined my snorts sounded like those of a boar.

I felt an elbow in my ribs. Actually, anytime I share a tent with Mike I get elbowed in the ribs. But this time he was deliberate and persistent.

"Wake up," he whispered, sotto voce. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" I mumbled sleepily. In the dim light I could barely discern Mike sitting bolt upright in the tent, his eyes big as saucers.

"That snort," he whispered urgently. "There's a dang boar right outside the tent! Heard him snort!"

Instantly, I was wide awake. Both of us strained to hear the next snort. All our reflexes were on full red alert.

I should never have moved my right foot. Mike, wired to the max by now, was certain my foot was the boar. He pounced on it with a vengeance, determined to kill it before it killed us. He held the beast down with all his strength and beat it severely with the butt of a three-cell Eveready flashlight.

"I got the blankety-blank boar!" he hollered.

"You got my blankety-blank FOOT!" I yelled. But he was not dissuaded by my reason. He continued to clamp my leg fiercely and pummel my foot with his Eveready.

How a small two-man tent contained the ensuing melee without splitting apart is a credit to the Sierra Designs Company. Within its nylon confines, Mike and I managed to resolve our boar problem, relocate the tent a dozen yards, and add eleven new and colorful phrases to the English lexicon. The tent survived in much better condition than did Mike or myself, although its YKK zipper was partially welded by one of our more colorful phrases.

The next morning the rain had stopped and we headed back to Tracy City. It was a long and arduous journey. I hobbled along on a right foot that was badly bruised and battered from the boar bashing. Mike nursed a nasty-looking black eye the boar had administered during the battle. Both of us scratched at numerous bee-stings and multiple abrasions. Mike's Eveready was busted beyond repair.

I never did convince Mike that there wasn't any boar in our tent that night. He still insists that he single-handedly "whipped that boar's butt." As for my battered foot, Mike says I got that when I knocked him down and ran him over. If I doubt him, Mike says, he'll show me the bootprints on his backside.

Annual Meeting

If you haven't already done so, send in your registration for this year's Annual Meeting to Betty Porter, 3056 Clearbrook, Memphis, TN 38118 (901-363-0213). Total cost is \$20.50 per person if staying both nights and ordering breakfasts plus the barbecue supper. This year's meeting is being held at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park just north of Memphis.

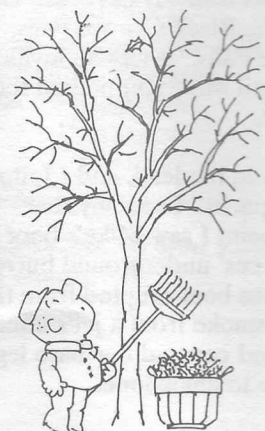
Jerri Bull says they will provide paper cups, but to bring your own special coffee mug, if preferred. Also, if any of you want to go to Memphis early or stay later, there

are plenty of Memphis members who would be glad to provide a place to stay. Now that's hospitality!

Friday night, Mack Pritchard of the Conservation Department, will treat us to a slide presentation on the natural history of this area. This will begin at 7:30 p.m. leaving plenty of time for Bob Barnett's proposed "night hike" on Beal Street later.

Evelyn Tretter reports that the Goodlettsville K-Mart has donated a \$10.00 gift certificate and that Wal-mart has donated a Tetherball set,

both of which will be added to the growing pile of door prizes for the meeting.





Editor's Tidbits

- By Dot Fowler -

Can you believe we've rolled around to Fall again? I would say the summer *whizzed* by but I don't think we ever had that much of a breeze.

Consider this your traditional pre-Annual Meeting pep talk. It's not too late to attend, even if you haven't pre-registered. Call Betty Porter and tell her to save a spot for you. This should be a great meeting since our Memphis Chapter is very active and are superb hosts.

What do we do at the Annual Meeting, you may ask? Well, we *eat*, talk, *eat*, award, *eat*, hike, *eat*, auction, *eat*, nap, and *eat* some more. It is almost sacrilegious to have a TTA function without lots of good food. Throughout all these activities, there is a lot of laughter and good fellowship.

I strongly recommend that you try to come on Friday so you don't miss any of the planned events. The pot-luck supper on Friday night is usually fantastic. This year we have an extra treat as Mack Pritchard joins us for an after dinner presentation. After the speech, the die-hards may go off on a moonlight hike. Then again, some of us may jaunt off to view the wildlife of Memphis. You never know...

Saturdays are always jam-packed with meetings, award presentations, visiting, and naturally, hiking. These Memphis hikers trade a lack of steep hills for distance. Be prepared for some hikes of eight miles or more. On the other hand, tenderfoots, such as myself, may be seen heading for a leisurely hike around the Memphis zoo.

Saturday evening, another feast is prepared. This year we will chow

down on Memphis barbecue. After a brief respite, the infamous auction begins. While this auction actually serves a serious purpose — raising funds for TTA projects — one quickly forgets this as auctioneer David Stidham gets us laughing. Somehow, through the gales of laughter, David also gets our money. Bring your checkbook!

Sunday, most folks are a bit slower getting out of bed. A few more groans are heard and limps seen as we gather over breakfast. Those with time permitting go on morning hikes. Others begin to pack up for the journey home. Most will tell you what a fun weekend it has been and will travel home, happy to be a part of TTA.

That's a typical TTA Annual Meeting. So how 'bout it? Come join us October 7-9. I bet you'll be glad you did.

News From Our Parks

Radnor Lake Natural Area 615-377-1281 (9-11 a.m.)

- 10/1 Cumberland Wildlife Foundation Raptor Program
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- 10/2 Lakeside Nature/Flower Walk
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- 10/5 & 12 Tennessee Ornithological Society Bird Walk
- 10/8 Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
 - Ridgetop Star Hike
- 10/9 Hall Farm Wildflower Walk
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- 10/15 Early Morning Canoe Float
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
 - Junior Naturalist Evening Program
- 10/16 South Cove Habitat/Flower Hike
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- 10/22 Fall Migration Bird Walk

- Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- Young People's Owl Prowl Hike
- 10/23 Wild Native Foods Display
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
- 10/29 Early Morning Canoe Float
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion
 - Adult Moonlight Owl Prowl
- 10/30 North Ridgetop Wildflower Hike
 - Radnor Lake Canoe Excursion

Warner Park Nature Center Nashville, 352-6299

- 10/1 & 6 Bird Hike — 8:00-11:00 a.m.
- 10/7 Bird Banding Day — 9:30-2:30
- 10/8 Photography Class — Outdoor session, 7:00-9:30 a.m.
- 10/8 Photography Class — Indoor session, 10:00- noon

- 10/19 Bats and Spiders Program (Adults) — 7:00- 9:00 p.m. Kids' class meets on 10/29 from 1:30-3:00
- 10/29 Discover the Nature Center — 8:00-4:30
- 10/29 Fall Foliage Hike — 9:00-noon, 2 1/2 miles
- 10/29 Fall Stroll, Young & Old — 1:00-3:00

Fall Creek Falls Pikeville, TN, 615-881-3708

- 10/22,23 Fall Colors Weekend — Bicycle tours of the park, walks, hikes, and slide shows.
- 10/29 Wild Foods Day — Field trips, workshops, food tasting
- 10/31 Halloween Celebration — Fun and games, movie, and prize for best costume.

**South Cumberland State
Recreation Area**
924-2980 or -2956

- 10/8 Greeter Falls to Stone Door —
Meet at Stone Door Ranger Sta-
tion at 10 a.m. 6 miles, moderate
- 10/9 Big Bluff Overlook — Meet at
Stone Door Ranger Station at
1p.m. 3 miles, moderate
- 10/15 Greeter Point Overlook —
Meet at Stone Door Ranger Sta-
tion at 10 a.m. 2 miles, easy
- 10/15 Laurel Gorge Rocktop —
Meet at Stone Door Ranger Sta-
tion at 2 p.m. 1 mile, very
strenuous

- 10/16 Cater-Savage Excursion —
Meet at Stone Door Ranger Sta-
tion at 10 a.m. 3 miles, moderate
- 10/16 Naturalist at the Door —
Meet at Stone Door Ranger Sta-
tion at 3 p.m. 2 miles, easy
- 10/22-23 Fall Color Overnighter —
Meet at Savage Gulf Ranger Sta-
tion at 10 a.m. Saturday. Provide
own food and equipment and pre-
register by Oct. 20. Should be
back by 3 p.m. Sunday. 14 miles,
easy
- 10/22 Raven Point Excursion —
Meet at Visitor Center at 10 a.m.
2 miles, easy

- 10/22 Small Wilds Walk — Meet at
Foster Falls Parking Lot at 2 p.m.
5 miles, easy
- 10/23 Big Creek Rim Trail — Meet
at Stone Door Ranger Station at
10 a.m. 7 miles, easy
- 10/29 Dog Hole Overlooks — Meet
at the Visitor Center at 10 a.m. 7
miles, easy
- 10/30 Lost Cove Cave Tour — Meet
at the Carter Natural Area Park-
ing Lot at 10 a.m. Bring sturdy
shoes, a good light, lunch, and
drinking water. 4.5 miles,
strenuous

Upcoming Hikes

MEMPHIS CHAPTER

- 10/22 Ft. Pillow State Park —
details this issue
- 11/5-6 Ouachita Trail — details
next month
- 11/27 Annual Shelby Forest
Thanksgiving Hike — details next
month

NASHVILLE CHAPTER

- 10/22-23 Indian Town Bluff — no
details received. Assume can-
celed
- 10/22-23 Standing Stone & Cum-
mings Falls — details this issue
- 11/6 Laurel Snow Water Falls —
details from Kevin Kimbro next
month

- 11/20 Frozen Head -- TBA

STATE

- 10/7-9 ANNUAL MEETING
details this issue or call Jerri Bull,
901-363-4408
- 10/1-2 C.T. Backpack, Section 9 —
Details this issue
- 10/29 C.T. Halloween Hike—this
issue

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Mail dues and address changes/corrections to: TTA, P.O. Box 4913, Chattanooga, TN 37405

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All submissions for the newsletter due no later than the 15th of each month.

Come Hike With Us!
Tennessee Trails Association
P.O. Box 4913
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