

1974

That September Eleanor Centa invited me to go hiking with the Trail Club. It was the beginning of the Wednesday Trail Club, a new group started by Kay Way of Kennett Square. The Trail Club had a Saturday group started in 1939 but Kay thought there might be enough interest to get some women hiking in the middle of the week. Sometimes it would be just Kay and me and maybe one other but very quickly it grew until we had 40 or 50 hikers, hiking in places I had never been. It was a wonderful way to see areas not visible from a car. I bought my first pair of hiking boots and initiated them by stepping in a mud puddle. One time a reporter was writing an article about us and commented on our Howdy Doody lunch boxes, leftovers from our kids.

We had so many wonderful times it is hard to write about any one episode in particular. I met some great people who were interesting and it opened a whole new life for me. Each member was responsible for leading a hike and they needed a person to be responsible for asking members to lead hikes to be listed in the Trail Club bulletin. For a while I was responsible. Everyone was so agreeable and eager to help it wasn't difficult at all. After

Fliv Daly retired she became a hiker and for a few years we were co-leaders. In the early years Dot Green and Rosalie Powell heard about the group and drove over from New Jersey every Wednesday. They soon were hooked too and to this day all those many years later they are still hiking.

DuPont gave a Golden Handshake to some of their employees, perhaps in 1982, and many men joined the Trail Club at that time. They walked faster and longer so it was time to make another suggestion.

Jane Maynard and I suggested a Thursday group to be called "Short and Easy", which meant we wanted to keep it to four miles and did not want to drive as far as we had been driving. And as you would expect it too brought about another 40 or 50 hikers. The Thursday group and Wednesday group are thriving still.

Once again it was time for a change for those of us getting older so I suggested a group called Ramblers. That never really did succeed. Gay Jones and I were responsible for it but we could never decide on a day or where to go each week. Sadly it folded.

Over the years we had lots of "remembrances" that we still like to recall but I think the favorite was our group trip of fourteen members to England and Wales in 1982.

One day in the early spring of 1982 we were hiking down in Maryland near Gunpowder Falls and I decided it would be fun to hike in England. I mentioned it at lunch and asked for a show of hands and lots of hands went up. Barbara Davison was a great gal, had worked at the Experimental Station and knew Curt and was an avid hiker. She had walked in so many interesting and foreign exotic places and told me she had a catalog of CHA (Countrywide Holidays Association) in England and would help me plan it. So off we went.

We had fourteen; fifteen would have given me a free ride. We used a travel agent at the bank who had been a friend of El Centa's. I wrote the letters of contact and collected the money, and we chatted together about where we wanted to go and what we wanted to see.

In the meantime I decided I wanted to contribute some money for my expenses so I mowed a few lawns and then Bette Reese told me Marian Dafter was looking for someone to work in her retail Thrift Shop on Concord Pike, close to Silverside Road. I started working there and saved the money for the trip. Marian was a little difficult to work for but it served my purpose of making some money toward the trip.

In the group were the Warwicks, Barkers, Greens, Powells, Margaret and Ed Rothfuss - she with the matching shoe laces in her hiking boots, with whatever she wore! I'm not kidding but we all liked Margaret, Barbara Davison, Jane Maynard, Jim Laughlin and me. We left the latter part of September 1982. Our first week was in Whitby, via York, and the second week was in Llanfairfechan in Wales, via Chester. If we had to do it over

again we would stay longer in York and Chester, etc. We all then convened in Bath, where Curt met us.

The men all enjoyed it so much that Fred Warwick and Hal Barker and Pete Powell decided to retire from DuPont when they returned home. I think Willard Green had already retired. So they too joined the Trail Club.

The time we all remember most vividly was Willard Green's hike in Greenwich, N.J. when we were caught in a real hurricane and had no idea it was happening. Even a State Trooper stopped us to warn us and we ended up in a friendly house dripping water all over their floor.

I think I can take credit for suggesting we hike some place and stay overnight so I led the first hike where we stayed in a hotel overnight in Easton, Pa. The hotel was near a canal where we planned to hike, which was easy walking. We had dinner later in a German restaurant. I think Willard was the only man on the trip. He had bought a new pair of hiking boots but hadn't broken them in and he still remembers the blisters! Spring Flings and Fall Frolics of four days are now held every year with accommodations for over 20 and usually with a waiting list. Trips overseas are a yearly event for lots of the members. In the early days of Wednesday hikes we hiked six, eight or ten miles. They still do in many cases.

On our trip to Wales in 1982, we hiked to the top of Mt. Snowdon, 3,560 ft., the tallest mountain in Wales and walked back down. Some of us thought we would be able to come back down on the train, but if you rode up on the train you planned to ride back down so there was nothing for us to do but hike back down. I was 65 years old and thought that would be a nice epitaph on a my tombstone! The leader said we would stop for a cup of tea at the base of the mountain but the tea shop was closed and on the way back to the bus pick up she became lost.

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