



Northeast Passages

From the Green Mountain Club's Northeast Kingdom Section

www.thecompass.org/nekgmc/

An Inexplicable Day

By the Reverend Martin Fors, aka "Rusty"

OUR PURPOSES

To maintain and establish trails and shelters in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

To sponsor outdoor-related activities.

To promote awareness of the trails of the Northeast Kingdom.

To promote education about the environment of the Northeast Kingdom, including issues of stewardship of lands and wildlife.

To make the mountains of Vermont play a larger part in the lives of both the Section's members and the general public.

MEMBERSHIP

Sign up online with a credit card at: greenmountainclub.org/packbask.cfm.

Or, contact the main club at: 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677.

(Be sure to choose the Northeast Kingdom section.)

All phone numbers herein are in area code 802 unless otherwise noted

“This is crazy,” I thought. I’d been trying to hitch a ride for 45 minutes at the Long Trail trailhead on Route 140, and I didn’t care which direction I went— either west to Wallingford and Route 7, or east to East Wallingford — because I needed to use a telephone.

Forty-five minutes! I wondered, “Was it me? Did I look so decrepit? Or was it that these folks around here just don’t like old geezers carrying backpacks?” Cars and trucks whizzed by me with hardly a look and, when they did, it was with an angry face ... Little did I know.

It had started out as a most wonderful day after a restful, encouraging night at Little Rock Pond shelter. I had arrived there a bit discouraged because I was trying to catch a fellow end-to-ender named Woodchuck. He was just ahead of me, by 45 minutes at one point, but now a thunderstorm was brewing, and by 4 P.M. it was time to get comfortable in a shelter. A friendly mouse and I spent a quiet, restful night together and when morning arrived, I felt refreshed for an early start — with Minerva Hinchey shelter as my goal — feeling confident that I would see Woodchuck at the Whistlestop restaurant or at the Clarendon shelter.

The hiking day was full of surprises, reminding me why a southbound AT thru-hiker I met near Peru Peak had exclaimed, “Hiking in Vermont has been the most beautiful experience of my life!” My first surprise of the day was coming upon Aldrichville in the midst of nowhere.

Aldrichville is the name of a small village in the woods — now long departed — but identified by archeologists with a plaque containing a few artifacts and stone walls. Surprise number two was in two parts: the incredibly beautiful evergreen forest at White Rocks Mountain and the one-half acre stone village that elves had apparently made near the summit!

Which brings me full circle to the beginning of my story. While descending the steep new gravel reroute of the LT/AT by the

Keewaydin intersection just before Bear Mountain, my right knee began to bother me and with each step worsened until I realized that somehow I had seriously re-injured my knee, which I had first hurt on Mt. Moosilauke. Sadly, I knew that I had to leave the trail...

I’d been trying to hitch a ride for 45 minutes. Forty-five minutes! I wondered, “Was it me?”

“This is crazy,” I thought. I decided to give up my attempt at hitchhiking and donned my pack, heading west toward Wallingford, limping along assisted by my hiking poles. Eventually, I came upon an automobile at an intersection, stopped at a stop sign, a lady inside. “This is my chance,” I thought and stood in front of her car pointing to my knee and asking for a ride. Rolling down her window she said, “Sure,” and made room for my pack. As I shut her car door I heard these words, “Our nation is under attack.” It was September 11 at about noon. Her car radio was tuned to the worsening news and I listened.

I now knew why the faces had been angry. It was an inexplicable day.

