

The Long Distance Hiker

The Newsletter of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association



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'ALDHA News That Fits We Print Since 1983'

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ALDHA OUTREACH IN MAINE, MINNESOTA

■ We make our presence known at the Trails End Festival in Millinocket and the big outdoor trade show in Minneapolis. **Pages 4-5**

PHOTOS AND STORIES FROM THE GATHERING

■ Last fall's Gathering and work trip at Williams College, in words and pictures. **Pages 7-12 and 48**



MONTY DODGE

BILLY GOAT PROFILED IN BACKPACKER MAG

■ A look at Backpacker magazine's great profile of veteran ALDHA member and legendary thru-hiker "Billy Goat." **Pages 16-19**

OTHER STORIES

■ Former coordinator Frank Krajcovic looks back at our early years. **Pages 20-22**

■ ALDHA will be busy at this summer's ATC Biennial in Maine. **Pages 24-25**

■ A new venue has been announced for the A.T. Hall of Fame dinner. **Page 28**



'YES, WE CAN'



LENNY COLE

Dr. Jacqui Lowman is carried up to the summit of Mount Katahdin in 2015 as part of her Beyond All Limits campaign. With help from an ALDHA member she met at last fall's Gathering, the paraplegic and her team aim to do the entire A.T. this year. See **Pages 13-15**.

New Thru-Hikers' Companion ready for purchase at ALDHA

The Long Distance Hiker

The Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion was in stock and ready to fill hikers' needs in late December. Thousands of copies of last year's book were sold, and plenty of copies await this year's buyers.

The cover features a photo of sunset on the Appalachian Trail at Saddleback Mountain in Maine, taken by Jerry Monkman.

How much are you willing to pay for an old edition? See item on Page 6.

It also includes the latest, most up-to-date trail mileage from the current year's Databook (the official length of the A.T. this year has increased 0.7 mile, to 2,189.8 miles).

See more information about the book on **Page 36**.

Ron Burger steps up as coordinator

Jim Sample quits post weeks after Gathering

The Long Distance Hiker

Citing health reasons, Jim Sample has stepped down as ALDHA coordinator, tendering his resignation just a few weeks after the fall Gathering.

Assistant Coordinator Ron Burger immediately took over the reins in keeping with the bylaws, and the board voted to affirm that move during the Southern Ruck in North Carolina on Jan. 15.

Kip Redick, a former coordinator, was voted in to fill Burger's vacancy in the assistant coordinator's job. Both positions will come up for election at this fall's Gathering.

Ron, whose trail name is "Graybeard," has been overseeing ALDHA's outreach efforts over the past year since he himself was appointed to fill a vacancy in the assistant coordinator's job early last year. He was in the midst of his first term as an at-large board member when Jim asked him to step up to assistant coordinator on the resignation of Russell Ledbetter.

Experienced in Leave No Trace ethics, Ron has conducted workshops on backpacker etiquette at past Gatherings and other trail events. He was one of the members of the first, and so far only, search and rescue mission conducted by ALDHA, which occurred in May 2014 in the wake of the disappearance of hiker Gerry Largay in Maine.



HDC

BURGER



BEYOND *all* LIMITS

By BILL O'BRIEN ♦ Editor-in-Chief

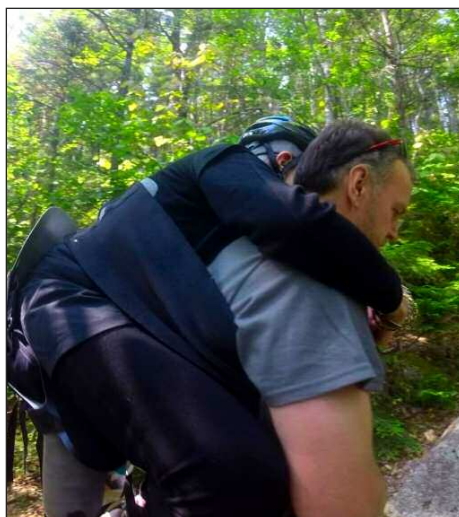
The word “can’t” isn’t in the vocabulary of a Maine professor who is confined to a wheelchair and afflicted with enough ailments to keep anyone else at home. Just ask the guys who climbed Katahdin with her in 2015 — and by *with her* we mean *with her on their backs* — and see what they have to say about “can’t”. Two years later, Jacqui Lowman has set her sights on an even higher goal: Doing the entire A.T.



LENNY COLE



GABOR DEGRE BDN



PHOTOS BY LENNY COLE

Dr. Jacqui Lowman is carried up Mount Katahdin by way of Chimney Pond during an expedition in 2015 that took three days. You can read all about her adventure in a well-documented story by Aislinn Sarnacki for the Bangor Daily News, online at <http://bit.ly/2jsvAYo>

While it would be unfair to compare the physical disabilities of other people who have overcome great handicaps to thru-hike the A.T. — people like Bill Irwin and Bob Barker or any number of those who've hiked with prosthetic limbs — Jacquelyn Lowman stands out in one very important aspect, and yes, it involves that dreaded word.

She *can't* walk at all.

In order for her to travel from one end of the A.T. to the other, someone will have to hoist her 65-year-old body on his or her back at Springer and carry all 100 pounds of her for several minutes at a time before someone else takes her for a few minutes, then someone else, and so on, as the relay team slowly advances over 2,189 miles of up-and-down terrain, day after day, week by week, through all sorts of weather, in the heat and in the cold, until 14 states later she is back home again in Maine.

Don't say can't.

Some of her miles will be covered in a specially designed wheelchair with independent wheel suspension and shock absorbers — something that sounds like a moon rover but isn't currently available to anyone on Earth. But if it works out here, it could change the lives of countless others who've always dreamed of getting outside more. Still, in order for this prototype vehicle to move, someone will have to pull it or push it (or both).

Don't say can't.

She has the resources. She has some volunteer sherpas (mostly men with strong legs, and she's



Lowman, in black, with her crew at the summit sign on Baxter Peak.

looking for more carriers, including women). She has a hiking partner (a past three-time A.T. thru-hiker she met at the Gathering, in fact). She has a support team back home (including some of her college students in Presque Isle, Maine, who'll be updating her website, posting photos and video, etc.). She has a core support crew who will be nearby or in specific areas (like Maine, where some of the ones who took part in her groundbreaking climb to the summit of Mount Katahdin will want to help out). She has hopes for a driver to help move her van northward as her team progresses (and who can move the van closer at a moment's notice). She has an itemized itiner-

ary (week 1: about 100 miles, but that is flexible, and when asked about that, she admitted it was a bit ambitious). And most importantly, she has the will power (much of it instilled in her by her late father).

Don't say can't.

And did I mention she has Saint? That's her black labrador assistance dog who will make the journey with her, although Saint won't be much help in sharing the load. Saint's main task, it seems, will be to cheer up Lowman and all of her helpers as they try to grind out the miles, and to be there as a canine envoy of sorts sniffing out potential good samaritans. "After all, who can pass up the chance to help the adorable Saint?" Lowman asked.

Regarding her core support group, without which the effort will not be possible, she admitted she still has a ways to go, with her start date in mid-March quickly coming.

Don't say can't.

"We still have lots of opportunities to be involved. I would actually be concerned if we thought that we had it all nailed down because as we know, life always happens and people have to change their plans," Lowman said.

The support website, located at www.beyondlimitsawaken.org, has a place where people who want to volunteer can offer their services in a variety of different ways, including as sherpa or porter. She asks people to describe themselves and their personality type, explaining that she needs people who can handle tough situations, constructive criticism and living and working with others as a team.

"I have been incredibly fortunate to line up some very key people," she said. A professor/friend of hers who works at Clemson University is coordinating things at the southern end. He's been getting his students involved, such as lining them up to do the start of the hike as an alternative spring break.

"The goal is to have a full team for the first two to four weeks," Lowman said, trusting that her team will grow once the news hits the trail grapevine. (Think Bill Irwin, post-Hot Springs, in 1990.)

Like many people who dream of doing the Appalachian Trail, she attended last fall's ALDHA Gathering to soak up as much information

"We're doing this to bring a message of hope to so many. The CAN'T that holds us back is not the physical but the voice inside our heads. We want people to try — and be amazing. People will be changed forever."

as she could. She says she was "astoundingly lucky" in the midst of hundreds of A.T. thru-hikers to have found someone willing to be her hiking partner.

It's Teri "Hopper" Hanavan, originally from Louisville, who has section-hiked the A.T. three times and has also hiked parts of the Benton MacKaye, Bartram, Art Loeb and Foothills trails.

"She's invaluable in terms of planning," Lowman said. "What I need for gear, how to make this happen — well, I could go on and on. And I met her at the ALDHA Gathering."

Hanavan, 48, believes it was fate that led her to attend Lowman's Saturday morning workshop at the Gathering. A woman of strong faith, Hanavan believes divine intervention put "Dr. J" (Lowman's trail name is already picked out) on her path. "I had not intended on attending her workshop at the Gathering but there I was," she said.

She has a seldom-used degree in therapeutic recreation that will finally get a workout on a unique project. "I also have a self-created degree in the Appalachian Trail. I can still hike. I have the time. Why not?" she said. "And darn it there has to be a disabled person to use those wheelchair-accessible privies that are being installed on the A.T."

While Lowman was at the Gathering, she had a lengthy chat with Laurie Potteiger, information services manager of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and herself an A.T. thru-hiker. "We talked about the concept of 'The Trail Will Provide.' I know that as we get going, the word will spread and hikers will want to join us."

Don't say can't.

Besides the innovative wheelchair that's being constructed spe-



"CROOKED STICKS" H. DEAN CLARK

At last fall's Gathering in Williamstown, Mass., Lowman chatted with Laurie Potteiger, not pictured, about the nature of an A.T. hike. At her side is the ever-loyal Saint, Lowman's assistance dog.

cially for this expedition, Lowman's pack is also being tailored to her needs. In her case, the pack won't be *on* her; she will be *in* it.

"One of our major goals and interests with the hike was to develop adaptive equipment that does not

now exist," Lowman explained.

She said the carrier that was used on Katahdin (see pictures on the previous pages) worked well, but it won't be suitable for the A.T. So her designer/fabricator came up with an improved carrier, which he

has dubbed the "Jac Pack." After field tests last fall, the designer is fine-tuning it for the hike.

"We see lots of applications for this equipment, such as helping with any of kind of Search and Rescue," she said, citing examples such as a hiking accident, a sports/recreation injury, natural disaster, warfare, etc. "With the chair as well, we see an opportunity for more than a million Americans who would not previously do so to get out and hike and enjoy nature. That's a big goal."

Don't say can't.

When Lowman talks about how word of her endeavor will spread through the trail community, she isn't kidding. All during the Gathering there was an undercurrent of discussion about the merits of her undertaking, with questions about whether it was a selfish act to expect others to carry her from Georgia to Maine just so she could claim to have done the Appalachian Trail. Similar comments online greeted the news of her ascent of Mount Katahdin in 2015. Lowman knows there are folks out there who don't understand what she's trying to do.

"This hike is not about getting a person with paraplegia up the A.T. It's a team coming together to do something together that many think is impossible," she said, noting that she's the "little baton" that's getting passed along the way. "If it wasn't hard, if there were no risk, if there were no challenge, there would be no opportunity. Coming together, there is nothing that we cannot achieve. The shared difficulty gives us an opportunity to be extraordinary."

Don't say can't.

The porters who carried her up Katahdin two years ago did a video in which they explained why they did it and what they got out of it. Watch it at <http://bit.ly/2kbGdzT> and you'll hear a refrain familiar to anyone who has ever done the A.T. or anything else that was difficult.

"They defied all the odds and were transformed. We formed a human rope in which we all made one another stronger. We built community and expanded ideas of participation and leadership," Dr. J said. "Hiking the A.T. is always a means to transformation. In this case, that is magnified. We are better together, and in a time of division, that's important to remember."

Don't say can't. □