

Interview with Bill Newton

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By Stuart English

Trail maintainers are often a different breed. Many never hike. While CMC hikers regularly take 6, 8, and 12 mile hikes; trail maintainers toil all day on two or three miles of trail, digging new tread, sawing, lopping, and weed eating, so the hiker will have a better path.

For the past six years, Bill Newton has led CMC's largest crew of trail maintainers. Known as the CMC Pisgah Friday Crew, they maintain approximately 150 miles of trail in the Pisgah Ranger District, the Green River Gamelands, Holmes State Forest, Carl Sandburg National Park, the Kellogg Center and parts of the Appalachian Trail. Soon Bill will relinquish his duties and will be sorely missed. In a recent email interview, he responded to some questions.

When asked about his predecessor, Bill said that it was Harlow Hoskins, who founded the crew in 1982. "Harlow was a neighbor and it was he who drew me to trail maintenance. The ink on my retirement papers was not yet dry when he talked me into working on the trails. I was not a dedicated hiker by any

means, and I thought going into the woods and clearing trails for people I would never meet or even see very often was one of the dumbest things I had ever heard of. Long days in all kinds of weather carrying chainsaws or weed eaters or digging in the dirt and moving impossibly large rocks just didn't make much sense to me. But he talked me into trying it and I have truly enjoyed every minute of it. It is the people who are on the crew that make the work fun, and knowing we are giving a little something back to the community makes it all worthwhile.

“As to what I am proudest of – I think the construction of a new trail to replace a washed-out one in Holmes State Forest was it. Not because of the trail itself, but because we managed to get it named the ‘Hoskins byway’ in honor of Harlow. But if you really want to write about trail maintainers...some of the previous maintainers – they are the ones who really started this thing. Dick Roberts, Harlow Hoskins, Dick Johnson, Al Kohan, and many more have done far more than I ever thought of doing.”

You may never meet Bill Newton on a hike. But when you walk on the trails of the Pisgah Ranger District, stop occasionally to think about him and all the others. Their legacy is everywhere you step.