

PUB THEOLOGY AT MCMAHON'S | COVER PHOTO CONTEST (DETAILS ON PAGE 67)

Warrenton Lifestyle

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MAGAZINE

MOUNT KILIMANJARO

CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE NOW AT

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TANZANIA



From Warrenton to Kilimanjaro

Local resident John Beasley makes the climb

new

Special Sections! » Piedmont Homes » Summer Camps & Private Schools

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ON THE COVER

Photo courtesy of John Beasley.

Correction: We apologize for an error in the February article on The Runaway Bride 5K, not all the photos were by Stephanie Messick Photography, some photographs were taken by Lieb Photographic: liebphotographic@gmail.com and Rachel May Photography: rachelmay@rachel-may.com. We thank them for allowing us to use their photos and have provided their contact information if you wish to contact them for photography work.

Hikers Inspired by a *Trendsetter*

Grandma Gatewood:
first woman to thru-
hike the Appalachian
Trail solo

BY ANDREAS A. KELLER

Grandma Gatewood is considered a trendsetter. She was a strong, independent, elderly woman who reinvented herself, revolutionized hiking, and inspired ultralight backpacking. She fully understood what she had accomplished when she told her daughters, “When I am dead and gone, they’re going to erect monuments to me.”

Building a New Future

After caring for a family and reaching the end of one’s working life, most of us look forward to the promise of leisure in retirement. This was not the case for Emma Rowena Gatewood.

She was born in 1887 in Ohio to a farm family of 15 children, and at the age of 19 married a school teacher, P. C. Gatewood. Together they had 11 children. She lived through the horrors of a highly abusive marriage for 33 years, and would often escape violence by running into the woods where she found peace and solitude. In 1940 she succeeded in divorcing her husband and raised her youngest three children on her own.

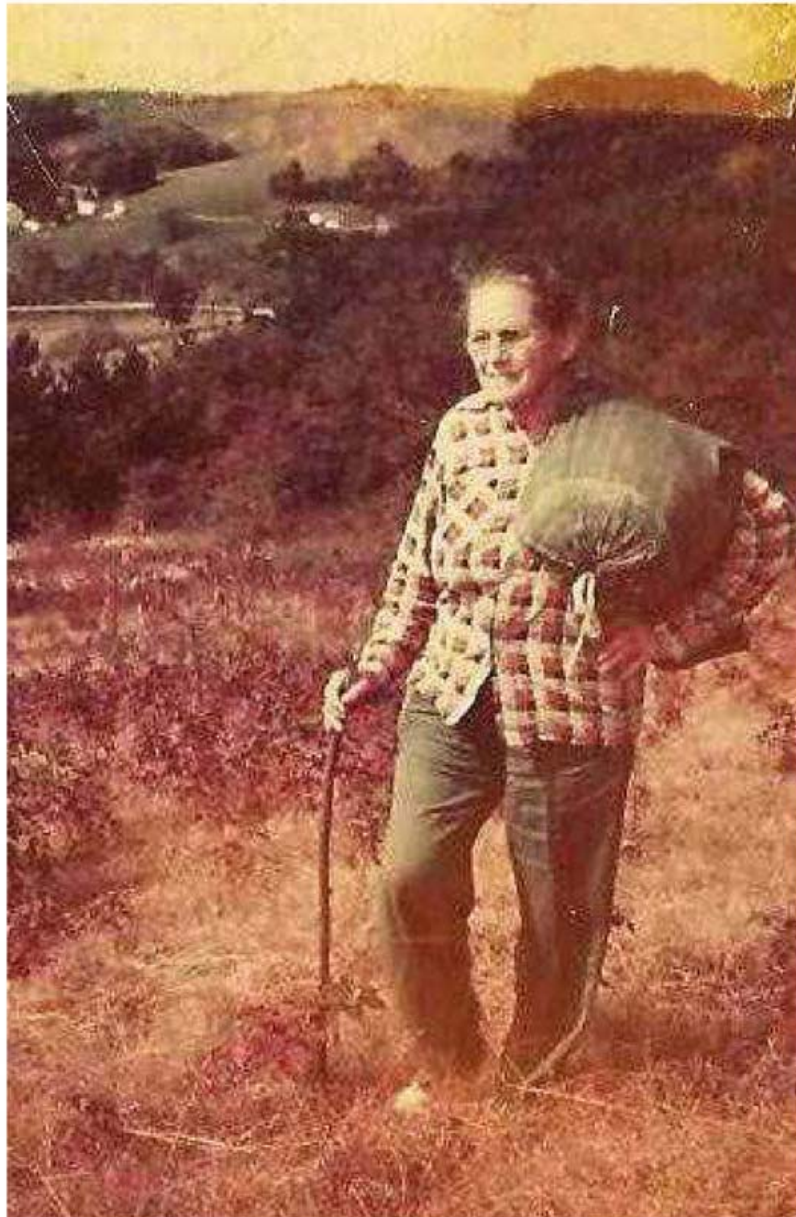


Photo via Eden Valley Enterprises’ Grandma Gatewood project. edenvallejenterprises.org

Determination

In the early 1950s, Emma Gatewood stumbled upon an article in an old *National Geographic* magazine romanticizing a hiking trail that stretched for 2,050 miles along



Top: (source: wikipedia image) Emma_Gatewood_414x425
Bottom: via Eden Valley Enterprises' Grandma Gatewood project. edenvalleyenterprises.org

the Appalachian mountain range from Georgia to Maine. When she learned that no woman had ever hiked the Appalachian Trail, she felt challenged and told her daughter, "If those men can do it, I can do it." Her attempt in 1954 to hike the AT ended in failure after eight days. She broke her glasses, got lost, and the rangers looking for her told her to go home. She did not tell anyone at the time about her ill-fated adventure.

One year later, Emma Gatewood, at the age of 67, was determined to succeed. She started out in Georgia at the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. In one continuous hike, she finally reached Mt. Katahdin in Maine after 147 days. Emma Gatewood became a national celebrity known by the trail name "Grandma Gatewood," the first woman to thru-hike the AT by herself.

When Grandma Gatewood was asked by a reporter about her impression of the trail, she said that the *National Geographic* article she read made her think "...it would be a nice lark. It wasn't." She added, "...this is no trail. This is a nightmare ... I would never have started this trip if I had known how tough it was, but I couldn't and wouldn't quit."

And again....

In 1956, Grandma Gatewood hiked the AT again, making her the first person to successfully tackle the trail twice. By this time, she was a superstar. And then she tackled it a third time at the age of 76. This time, she hiked it in sections, but was still the first to complete the AT three times. Over the span of 18 years, between the AT, the Oregon Trail, and many other hikes, she had hiked more than 14,000 miles.

Legacy

Grandma Gatewood, both a superstar of endurance hiking and a national celebrity, inspired the movement of long distance hiking.

Grandma Gatewood's shoes (source pinterest)



"I would never have started this trip if I had known how tough it was, but I couldn't and wouldn't quit."

She had opened the "door" to the Appalachian Trail to other women, and to the general public, and in doing so she increased not only interest in hiking but also in maintaining the trail. In 1964, during her third hike on the AT, four other thru-hikers completed the trail, and by 1971 twenty-one thru-hikers finished the 2,050 mile trail.

Our hiking club, Boots 'n Beer, reveres Grandma Gatewood and has benefitted from her experience. We have also come across others who have also been inspired by her during our local hikes, which sometimes cross the AT where it comes through our area. Last year, we met a young German lady who was thru-hiking. She had completed 900 miles, logging between 15 and 22 miles every day. When I asked her what motivated her to do such an adventure she answered, "I read this wonderful article about

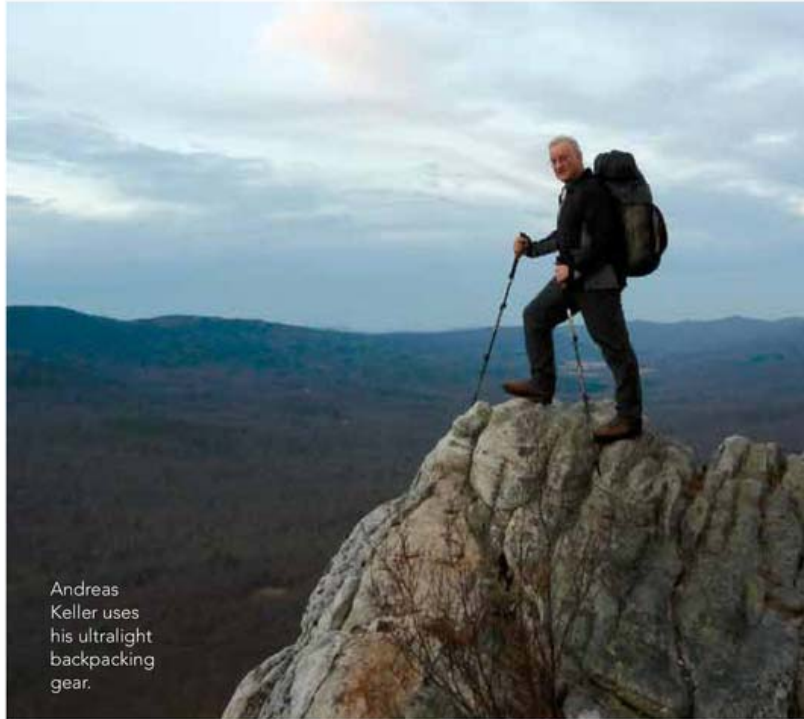
the Appalachian Trail in a German magazine and decided that I could do this. Now I am here, and I am tired, but I want to reach Katahdin by early August." She shouldered her backpack, waved goodbye, and bounced off, back into the green tunnel.

We have also learned the benefits of ultralight backpacking, following Grandma Gatewood's pioneering practice of paring down what you carry to the bare essentials to keep your pack light. I try to keep my backpack as light as I can, around 20 pounds (although it's a struggle), and I know my back thanks Grandma Gatewood every step I hike on the trail. I am also proud to carry with me a rain cape by the name of Gatewood Cape. At only 12 ounces, it serves me as a rain cape or as a tent. Grandma Gatewood has been not only an inspiration for women hikers, but for me, as she inspired me to become an ultralight backpacker.

To Grandma Gatewood's indomitable spirit, Boots 'n Beer raises a pint of beer to one of the early pioneers of our beloved Appalachian Trail. ❖



Andreas A. Keller is a passionate hiker, avid backpacker and a charter member of Boots 'n Beer, a drinking club with a hiking problem. He can be reached via email at aakeller@mac.com.



Andreas Keller uses his ultralight backpacking gear.

Ultralight Backpacking

In 1970, at the age of 83, she was asked what she thought about the latest lightweight backpacking gear. Emma advised, "Make a rain cape, an over-the-shoulder sling bag, and buy a sturdy pair of Keds tennis shoes. Stop at local groceries and pick up vienna sausages ... most everything else to eat you can find beside the trail."

In a self-made drawstring knapsack she carried a few essentials: a coat, a shower curtain to keep the elements at bay, a Swiss Army knife, a flashlight, a bottle of water, a pencil, and notebook. In a Band-Aids box she kept some matches, bobby pins, iodine and Vicks salve. She hiked in dungarees and tennis shoes, so, just in case it would be needed,

she also stuffed a gingham dress and slippers into her handmade sack that she carried slung over her shoulder. Knowing how to feed herself off nature's bounty along the trail, her food supply that she carried was equally sparse—tin cans of vienna sausages, raisins, peanuts, powdered milk, and bouillon cubes.

At the outset of her journey, the weight of her shoulder bag slowed her daily mileage progress. After gaining confidence in her ability to live and forage in the wilderness, she was able to pare down to the absolute essentials for her long trek. She had reduced the weight of her backpack from 25 to 17 pounds. Today, Grandma Gatewood is rightly considered the pioneer of ultralight hiking.