

AT from WV 9 to US 50 Ashby Gap, VA

06/06/1999- Went to Bill Isham's house in Hagerstown, MD to help Bill take the roof off of one of his houses and meet Charlie Johnson to do this hike. It was a hot day, and there was insulation flying around all over the place. But we not only got the roof removed, we even gutted the entire interior of the house by 1pm. We ate a great meal prepared by Bill's wife Chris, showered and set off for what was supposed to be a 48 mile 5 day backpacking trip southbound along the AT between WV9 and US522-Front Royal, VA.

We made the necessary stops, got the cars shuttled and were on the trail by 4pm. It was still hot, upper 80s, but the temperature was going down as dusk approached. The first 3 miles were slightly uphill, but pleasant. We stopped in at the David Lesser Shelter to find Sly Fox, whom I met the 3rd day of my spring AT hike, and Biohazard. We told them that it was all downhill to Harpers Ferry so they set off towards WV9.

We then proceeded another 3 miles to the Blackburn Trail Center. This is an old former vacation home that PATC has fixed up and used for meeting purposes. The caretakers were very friendly and made us feel at home. Amazingly, we were the only 2 in the BTC hiker hostel that night. We were concerned about the predicted heat the next couple of days. So we agreed to get up at 5am and leave by 7am.

06/07/1999- The goal today was to do 8 miles, get to the Bears Den Hostel at Snickers Gap, take a 3 or 4 hour siesta in the middle of the day, and then do 3 more miles in the late afternoon to the Sam Moore shelter. That sounded good in theory. But by 10am the temperature was in the 90's. The terrain was all up and down and rocky. By the time we got to Bears Den at 1pm I was exhausted. I had drank over 100 ounces of water in 8 miles! Again the caretakers were very nice to us. We bought alot of cold soft drinks and Ben & Jerrys as well as took showers to cool off.

We left at about 4pm. The next 3 miles would be grueling. There were all ups and downs. The temperature was still up there. We later found out that it was 97 that day, and would be 100 tomorrow. This was an unhealthy situation. However, we were locked in for at least another day. We got to Sam Moore shelter that night and again talked strategy.

The others in the shelter were also concerned about the heat. We all agreed to get up at 4:30am the next morning so that we could hike at first light.

06/08/1999- The others in the shelter were also section hiking but north. They decided to abort their trip at US7 and go rafting instead. Sounded wise. We set out south at 5:15am. Immediately, there were major ups and downs, the temperature was skyrocketing and we didn't feel all that hot. The goal was 7 miles and the Rod Hollow Shelter, which we arrived at by 10:30am. What was really neat was that I passed about 6 people that I had hiked northbound with earlier this spring. This included Dogman, Citrus, Thor, Yogi and Patch. It was great to see them again! We took a 5.5 hour siesta at the shelter. During that

time 2 other thru hikers came in and did the same for various periods. It got very hot during the afternoon. Unofficially, it was 100 degrees. We set off again around 4:30pm and got to the Ashby Gap General Store around 6:45pm. It was here that we decided to abort the remainder of the hike due to the high temperatures. We camped behind the store. I called Nancy and she said that she would come and get us tomorrow. Right before we went to sleep, Hillbilly and Heavy Pack, who I saw last at Jenkins Shelter near Bland, VA, rolled in. So there were 4 of us behind the store that night. I slept well even though there was a lot of noise from the constant stream of tractor trailers going over Paris Mountain that night.

06/09/1999- Nancy came and shuttled us back to my car at 10am. Charlie and I then hiked a short section of the AT north of WV9, ate lunch at Cindy Dee's Restaurant in Knoxville, MD and then went home. This was a tough section that we did. I was sad that we had to cut this hike short, but glad that we would not have to endure another day of this heat. We intend to complete the remaining 20 miles of this hike either this fall or next spring.

Mike C



