

## Jonathan Clement

Start: April 2 1974; Springer Mountain, GA

Finish: September 23, 1974; Katahdin, ME

Stove: unleaded gasoline powered cook stove with cook kit

*"... During the first stormy and difficult weeks on the Trail, I wondered at times if I had made the right decision to embark on such a trip."*

On September 23, 1974, I climbed Katahdin via the Hunt Trail. It was an early Fall day and I saw my first snowflakes of the season. While it was exciting to be at the top of that beautiful peak for the first time, what made the day most memorable for me was that I was finishing my end-to-end trek of the Appalachian Trail which I had begun on Springer Mountain on April 2. This was a hike that I had dreamed of doing for many years. During the first stormy and difficult weeks on the Trail, I wondered at times if I had made the right decision to embark on such a trip. Looking back on it now, it was one of the most extraordinary experiences that I have ever had, and one that I will never forget. There is a certain magic about a long distance trail, just as there often is with an old railroad or highway. The Appalachian Trail took me through a kaleidoscope of terrain, vistas, weather, historic sites, towns, people, flowers, wildlife, and experiences. Being on foot, brought all those things very close to me on a very physical and personal level. Remembering the trip and recounting my experiences, often stir emotions that are difficult to describe, and are probably best understood by others who have experienced a long distance walk of their own.

In preparing for my hike I did as much reading about the Trail and about hiking and backpacking as I could. I found the books *"The Complete Walker"*, by Colin Fletcher, and *"Appalachian Hiker; Adventure of a Lifetime"*, by Edward Garvey, to be extremely helpful in my choice of hiking equipment. Although I had extensive experience in day hiking in the Catskills, Adirondacks, and Taconics, I had never backpacked for more than three or four days at a time. I spent several months planning my hike, using the ten trail guides covering the length of the Trail, and the Appalachian Trail Conference Mileage Fact Sheet. Guide books, food, and supplies that I thought would not be readily available in the towns along the way, were packaged at home and readied for mailing. I set up a mail drop schedule based on an average speed of twelve miles a day. I took three weekend "shakedown cruises" in the Fall that were very helpful in getting me acquainted with my gear, although they did not particularly prepare me for hiking day after day with a 40 to 50 pound pack. With a great deal of anticipation, and some trepidation, I headed south to Georgia to begin my adventure.

I would stop into towns on an average of once a week to pick up mail and food, relax in a motel or B&B, and get a much needed shower. My overall daily mileage average was 13.5 miles. My longest day was 25 miles in Virginia. Once I was in shape, 20+ mile days weren't too hard to do. I carried 40-50 pounds in a large Kelty pack. My primary gear consisted of a light one-person tent, an unleaded gasoline powered cook stove with cook kit, and a lightweight down sleeping bag. I carried a 35mm Asahi (Honeywell) Spotmatic II single lens reflex camera that had a 50 mm lens, along with a 200 mm telescopic lens and some extension tubes for closeups of flowers.



Jon on Katahdin  
Photo courtesy Jon Clement