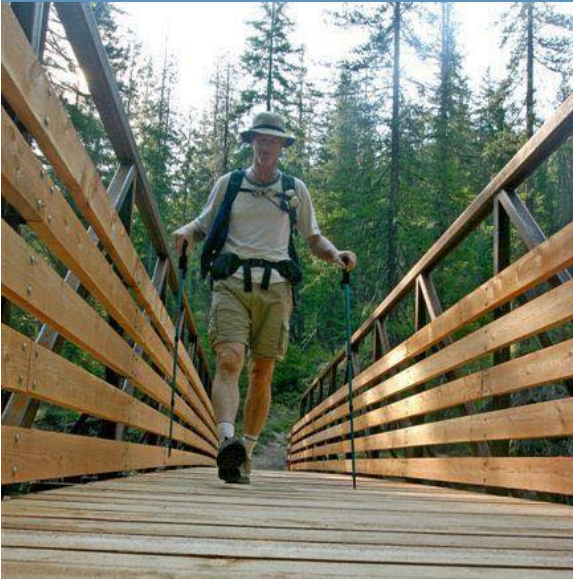


GAZETTE

Newsletter for the American Long Distance Hiking Association West

SPRING 2015, ISSUE 1



"To see the world, things dangerous to come to, to see behind walls, draw closer, to find each other, and to feel. That is the purpose of life."



REMEMBERING GREG "STRIDER" HUMMEL

by Chris "Freefall" Sanderson

I always looked forward to the end of April. It meant the beginning of the hiking season, and nowhere was that more apparent than at Annual Day Zero Pacific Crest Trail Kickoff (ADZPCTKO) in Southern California. Hikers from all parts of the country (the world!) flocked to tiny Lake Morena County Park to prepare for a thru-hike, reunite with friends, geek out on ultralight gear, and simply celebrate culture and fellowship surrounding the PCT. ADZPCTKO is like a family reunion, where a committed tight-knit group of hikers gather to put on the premier hiking event on the west coast. Recently, that family mourned the loss of its patriarch and founder, Greg "Strider" Hummel.

I had the opportunity to work with Strider for 10 years to plan and organize the event, and undoubtedly he profoundly enriched and influenced the development of my character. In a community noted for enthusiastic people, he stood out as REALLY enthusiastic. That willingness of give back out of an abundance of enthusiasm came to be part of the PCT experience, as did his easy-going good humor -- and over time the character of Strider shaped the development of many, many of us in the hiking community. All of us are better for our too-short time with Greg.

The first Kickoff I helped plan in 2005 was an organized disaster. I took the liberty of scheduling events every hour from 9am to the end of the day - the schedule was jam-packed. **Continued...**

Don't get me wrong, everything went well, everyone had a great time, and hikers left Lake Morena better prepared for a thru-hike than when they showed up. I was a wreck though. I ran around with a bullhorn announcing start times for presentations, introduced our presenters, ran around the campground announcing the next presentation, and got the next one going at the top of the hour. I had no time to visit with my friends, and I was overly stressed out at an event whose DNA was about relaxing.



Strider is remembered for many things, including being one of the truly inspirational president's in ALDHA-West's 20+ year history – Photo by Monte Dodge

The Kickoff organizers felt that the schedule was a bit much, and I resisted. I thought that was just how it was going to be from year-to-year, and we had a lot of people wanting to present the next year. Strider talked sense to me, expressing concern about my welfare. He also reminded me that the event was simply about hikers getting together to relax, enjoy themselves, talk trail, and that -- dammit! --I should do the same. He was right. We eased up on the schedule in 2006, and even more in 2007, and all the Kickoffs afterwards just got more enjoyable for me.

Along with Paul Hacker, Strider led "Geology of the PCT" at the Kickoff, and I attended that presentation every year he did it. I loved the presentation so much that I recorded it on video in 2011, and it can be watched on YouTube at: [Strider - Geology of the PCT](#) Check out the video, and observe Strider combining together his passions as a geologist and a PCT thru-hiker for a delightfully informative and humorous talk about the formation of rocks that make up the Pacific Crest. He loved the PCT, and his 1977 hike clearly shaped a sense of wonder and beauty that today infuses the whole culture of the PCT world. I always left that presentation so fascinated -- but even more, inspired -- to take the PCT experience into my own vocation and career.

I regret that I did not become a member until 2011. When I attended my first Gathering in Wenatchee, he was standing there at the registration table area, and his eyes lit up, and he shouted out “Freefall!” and gave me a big hug. Strider was so personable, lovable, and he would always take time to sit down with me and talk trail over a beer. God, I loved his enthusiasm!

In 2013, Strider began to suffer what was later diagnosed as ALS. While this terrible disease may have affected his motor activity and speech, it did not dampen his spirit or love for the trail community that had brought him so much joy and purpose. Every year, Strider and I would get the pavilion set up for presentations by hanging black plastic on the windows. In 2014, I was not counting on his help to set up, but there he was, holding up the plastic while I pushed tacks in the wood molding around the windows. It was business as usual -- even though he was sick and knew what the future held for him. As always and to the end: Strider was an example for all of us, and certainly for me -- willingness to contribute to people he loved, enthusiasm for a trail he loved, willingness to give back to a community that came to love and depend on him, easy-going good humor for walking through nature's beauty with friends.



Paul Hacker and Greg Hummel, co-founder of the Annual Day Zero Pacific Crest Trail Kick Off (ADZPCKO), cross the Bridge of the Gods during their 1977 thru-hike.

Tick-borne Disease: Time to Get Real, by McIntyre Johnson

In late February a small ripple in the news stream was little noticed by hikers: an otherwise healthy man, bitten by a tick in the Kansas area, contracted symptoms that worsened with time despite extreme medical intervention. Later investigation by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention would show the culprit was the first-ever U.S. instance of Bourbon virus transmitted by tick bite. The man was dead in 11 days.

A careful reading by this author of current medical understanding of tick-borne disease suggests our understanding, certainly within the hiking community, is inadequate. Most hikers manage bears, stream crossings, hypothermia and thunderstorm risks. Ticks are too often treated as a nuisance, or in worst case, an occasion for a course of antibiotics if some vague bullseye rash shows up.

The issue is changing. First, the numbers and kinds of illness grow with every research study. Skipping details (see CDC as further reading), there are at least 17 serious pathogens potentially transmitted by ticks. Lyme disease is only one of the threats available through a creature sometimes not much larger than the period at the end of this sentence. The science of ticks is early days.

Second, much doubt and debate rages around diagnosis and treatment. Again, skipping details, if you are worried about diagnosis and treatment you are already going to have to get off trail -- and in a big way. See Bob "Beaker" Turner's excellent account in this newsletter of *What Can Go Wrong*.

What is NOT in question is the most fundamental issue: prevention. A simple web search -- REI, CDC, Backpacker magazine -- will bring up the usual and reasonable recommendations about long-sleeve shirts and pants and tucking pant cuffs into socks.

But, if the little blighters don't like your taste they won't bite you and they can't make you sick. Enter DEET, Permethrin, and a host of other time-honored "insect repellents." Most of them work most of the time. A number of smart and well-intentioned companies make various kinds of mostly liquid stuffs that keep small dangerous critters off your body and out of your bloodstream. One company -- not the only -- is Sawyer, best known for water filtration systems that work pretty damn well.

Based in Florida and serving various military and wilderness trekking needs, Sawyer advocates a "layered" prevention system that seems, to this old hiker, like the most interesting idea in three decades. Anyway, I'd be willing to give them a shot. Patrick Hurst, sales rep for Sawyer, himself an avid hiker in AT tick country, described to me the "process" for tick discouragement (and mosquitoes, chiggers, but alas not the IRS). Says Hurst: "The science and practical application is changing course, right now. It's all about prevention and luckily that's where the industry and Sawyer are making the biggest progress."

Step one: spray every fabric with their (or some other reputable company) Permethrin product. Tent, backpack, all exposed clothing, including the critical areas of socks and shoes at ankles but also hat, gloves and pants. Stuff works well and long -- like more than a month on tents, or several soap washings for clothing, before you need to reapply. Next apply one of their topical insect repellents to bare skin -- think legs exposed by hiking shorts, arms by short-sleeve shirts. 100% DEET comes to mind. Neat trick: in a few weeks they will introduce a **gear safe** 14 Hour lotion, not spray, of Picaridin that should work well as a second layer and be a very viable alternative to DEET.

Ticked Off on the CDT

*Forget about Lions and Tigers and Bears –
The Most Dangerous Animal
May Be the Size of a Rice Grain*

by Bob Turner

2014 . . . was my year to hike the CDT. It was also my year to learn about tick-borne illness.

I was in the best shape ever for a thru, running regularly and even working out at the gym during the winter. To top it off two friends who were planning to hike it had both asked me to join them -- Wolverine and Bigfoot. My hike started on the Columbus route at Palomas, Mexico, on April 17 with Wolverine, (Chris Hillier). I'd met Wolverine when we hiked the AT in 2011, then met him at Snoqualmie Pass on his 2012 PCT thru hike. Wolverine was the reason I was on the CDT this year. We made good miles doing between 20-30 miles a day.

I had no problem keeping up, not even go through the first week break-in ache-in.

Wolverine and I made it to Chama, New Mexico, May 24. Recent snowstorms and one the night before had dumped about five feet of snow -- we thrashed hip deep through the snow for more than an hour going only about a quarter mile. Navigation was a nightmare. We eventually walked out to Cumbres pass and caught a ride back to town.

In Chama we split our ways, Wolverine wanted to hike a continual line and I was going to flip to Wyoming head north to Canada and then flip back to Colorado. Chama was also the place I met up with Bigfoot, (Jim McAnulty), the other friend that had asked me to join him. Bigfoot had started at Pie Town, where he had left the trail in 2013.

With five other hikers we took a rental van to Denver. There we split up by age; the three of that stayed together were all over 60.

The three of us, Bigfoot, Hamburger, (Detlef Korner), and I cruised through Wyoming, enjoying the wild flowers running springs and wild horses. Because we were ahead of schedule we slowed our mileage to 20-25 miles a day.

When we got to the Winds we were again confronted with the exceptionally high snow pack, exceeding 200 percent of normal, and we had to reroute through Pinedale to Jackson. The fact that I had already hiked from Idaho through Yellowstone and the Winds back in 2004 made the decision more palatable. Once again we were hit by another big snowstorm June 16-17. This time we were in the comfortable cabin of an old mountain man, but that's an entirely different story.



Bob "Beaker" Turner takes a snack break, Sept. 11, 2014, just west of the Ahern Drift in Glacier National Park, in 14 inches of new snow.

The storm dropped another 14-18 inches of snow so we ended up road-walking to Jackson.

Bigfoot had to drop out due to health issues, but Hamburger and I headed north through Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone.

In Montana, we hiked up the Madison valley and over the Tobacco Root Mountains to catch the trail on the east side of Butte. We hiked earlier, longer, and faster, once again averaging about 25-28 miles a day. The ticks in this area were awful. During one lunch break I pulled off 5 ticks crawling on me.

At Rogers Pass, we decided to go into Lincoln, Montana, to recharge our phones, touch up our food and pick up bear spray. This was an unplanned spur of the moment re-supply.

In Lincoln, all was going well. We had our ice cream, I had my bear spray, and we were sitting in a cool refreshing restaurant charging our phones and eating. That was when my trip started to crash.

First, I suddenly lost interest in eating, food almost nauseated me. Second, I started feeling weak -- very weak. The word malaise came to mind. I was too weak and sick to move on so we got a room at the 3 Bears motel. I didn't eat dinner that night, nor did I get up for breakfast in the morning. Hamburger headed out to the trail and I spent the day sleeping and drinking Gatorade. On the second morning I decided to stay one more night and if I wasn't feeling better I was going home.

Sunday, July 20, I hitched a ride out of town, started hiking about 9:30, and though I didn't feel great, as the day went on I felt better and better. When I shut down for the evening I had covered 24 miles and two passes. I felt great

During the next week, I had days where I ached like I had the flu; sometimes it would go away with some Ibuprofen, sometimes not. I was still hammering out the miles. From Lincoln, with a re-supply at Benchmark, to East Glacier, I covered 170 miles in 7 days. I felt indestructible, except for the aches. I knew I had Canada in my grasp, and Colorado was going to be the icing on the cake.

The day in East Glacier I felt awesome, strong, good appetite, eager to wrap up this section to Canada. However, the morning of July 28 I awoke to the most awful aches imaginable. Every step jarred my body like massive electrical shocks in every joint. Still I headed out of town with another hiker to Two Medicine -- a 10-mile jaunt. Bad as I felt it took me only about 3 hours to get there. The aches never lessened. The following morning, July 29, I awoke with severe aches and a wet sleeping bag -- I had sweated so hard through the night it was soaked. I was done. I hitched a ride out to Hwy 49. From there I tried to hitch a ride back south to East Glacier. I waited for over a half an hour before a truck came to the stop and sat there for a little bit. I thought they were deciding which way to go. Finally they turned my direction and pulled up. The window came down and the woman asked if I was OK. When I said I was sick, they offered to take me the 4 miles south to town. We had the usual chit chat about my hike and where we were from. Just outside of town I asked where they were headed for the day. Their reply was, "North up to St. Mary's". They said that they thought I looked like I need some help, so that is what they did -- now that's real Trail Angels!

From East Glacier I rented a car and drove nonstop, 370 miles, to home. I went directly to the Urgent Care facility where I was able to see a doctor.

After describing my symptoms, giving a time line of my tick encounters (I had pulled out two ticks in the 3-4 days before any symptoms showed) running some blood tests and sending a sample off for further screening, the doctor put me on antibiotics for a suspected tick borne illness. He also said to get plenty of rest and avoid crowds as I was very susceptible to infection because of low white blood cell and platelets.

Not only was I physically sick, now that I was really off the trail I was very much depressed. I felt like I had failed. All the time away from my wife, Dragonfly, the expense of the trip, the lost summer with my grand kids also left me feeling guilty.

Four days after seeing the Urgent Care doctor the test results came back negative for Lyme, Colorado Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Recurring Remittent Fever. This really added to my funk as I wondered what it was that had affected me. When I finally saw my own physician he explained that immunoglobulin tests for Lyme can be unreliable 100 percent -- on my records he put it down as "probable tick borne infection."

It took me most of two weeks to feel back to my usual healthy self. By then I had missed my window for finishing the CDT by mid-September. With all the catching up on things I had missed while on the trail it was hard to think about getting back on it, but equally hard not to. Near the end of August Dragonfly and I drove to Benchmark, Montana, to re-supply my friend, Wolverine. He had seven days hiking to get to East Glacier and asked me to join him there for the finish.

After some consideration I decided to take him up on that offer. I met up with Wolverine at East Glacier on Sept. 5. We headed back to Two Medicine on the 6, exactly 40 days since I had left the trail and on my 63 birthday. I was concerned that with all the time off I wouldn't be able to keep up, or I would get sick again, maybe Wolverine and I wouldn't reconnect like we had. No worries.

Our trekking was fantastically perfect for the first few days. At Many Glacier we were pummeled with snow, about 6 inches in the valley, and up to 18 inches in the high mountains. We met up with other hiker friends and after waiting out the storm for a day headed for our last two days on the trail.

As we gained elevation the snow got deeper, but we mostly on got about 14 inches of snow on the trail. Snowplow (full name), the youngest at 29, pushed a mean pace while us older guys followed shortly behind. We covered almost 30 miles that day, finishing at Waterton Lakes the next day, Friday, September 12. It was a great finish to an almost perfect CDT hike. I know now not to wait for symptoms to go away. I know I am strong and can continue hiking for more years to come. I have friends that are always my friends. Hiking alone is amazing. I will finish Colorado in 2015.

About Next Time . . . Three Things I'll Do Differently, by Bob "Beaker" Turner
From experience comes wisdom -- sometimes anyway

#1 -- Next time in tick prone areas I will use more DEET and/or permethrin treated clothing.

#2 -- for 3-7 days after any tick bite I will be more in-tune to what my body says, I'll watch for loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, weakness, malaise or general blah. Any or all can be symptoms of tick-borne infections.

#3 -- With any of those symptoms get to a medical doctor, ASAP. The efficacy of the treatment is greatly increased the sooner it is started.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

by Whitney "Allgood" LaRuffa

ALDHA-West friends and family -- the hiking season is underway and so is your ALDHA-West.

But first, let's stop our exciting discussions of the future to say thank you very, very much to our recent past. Greg "Strider" Hummel, ALDHA-West president for two terms 2007-2011, past away recently and we, as community and as friends, have lost one of the pioneers of long-distance hiking. Chris "Freefall" Sanderson knew Strider, and in this newsletter has reflected on Strider's legacy of kindness, humor and enthusiasm -- which is our future.



With this newsletter we have a new format, reflecting the fast-pace changes within the hiking world. We're moving from a quarterly publication to monthly, to include the latest news from hiking and hikers, gear, and "opportunities and challenges." In this inaugural issue you'll find a first-person description of What Can Go Wrong by our own Bob "Beaker" Turner. Bears? Hypothermia? Injuries? Would you believe ticks???

Now, about you, the members of ALDHA-West: we have many activities and opportunities to give back (see Greg "Strider" Hummel article) and none is more fulfilling than the emerging program of Rucks, well known in the East with the AT family and now established in the Portland, Oregon, area.

We're expanding and ALDHA-West is in the forefront. Recently, we had our first winter Ruck and Backpacking Clinic near Portland, following a fantastically successful first-ever Ruck last summer. Serving the growing hiking world ALDHA-West is co-sponsoring with Continental Divide Trail Coalition, a first-ever Winter Ruck and Backpacking Clinic March 14, at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, Colorado. Help out by joining our presentation team now.

Here's why these Rucks are especially important: Recently ALDHA-West helped sponsored a Ruck in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Our own Phil "NoWhereMan" Hough and Bob "Beaker" Turner worked hard to make it a success. Only about 30 people pre-registered and only 25 of them even showed up -- but **more than 40 other hikers showed up**, eager to learn and become part of the Next Steps in the developing story of long-distance hiking. ALDHA-West can be an important part of shaping that next chapter -- and we need YOU to be part of the story. Get involved.



THE MISSION OF THE AMERICAN LONG DISTANCE HIKING ASSOCIATION-WEST ALDHA-WEST IS: TO PROMOTE FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNICATION AMONG LONG DISTANCE HIKERS, AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT LONG DISTANCE HIKING.