

## Peggy's Travel Blog Spring 2009

There aren't any words sufficient to express my gratitude and appreciation for the kindness and help the members of the Southern Appalachian Backcountry Horsemen (SABCH) gave me during my spring travels. I hope you will enjoy reliving some of our adventures as you read my trip diary.

My spring trip began in Savannah, Georgia, where I spent most of the winter. My young Rocky Mountain Horse got shoes and I stuffed my truck and trailer with food and hay. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, I drove straight through the skyscrapers of Atlanta on I-75 to my friend **Nancy's** in Cumming, Georgia. It was a short trailer ride from Nancy's to the beautiful trails on Jake and Bull Mountains, where the dogwoods and wild iris had just begun to bloom.



On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Nancy and I traveled to Ft. Mountain, Georgia to join old friends from the South Florida Trail Riders on their annual spring excursion. **Lynne Walsh** joined us at Ft. Mountain for a trail ride, and I followed Lynne to her farm in Ooltewah, Tennessee. The next day, Lynne and I met **Liz Higgins** for a ride on the section of the Georgia Pinhoti Trail in Villanow Georgia. The Georgia trails were bursting with trilliums, columbines, wild azaleas and iris.



April 23rd was the start of a wonderful long weekend in the Smoky Mountains with **Frank and Anne Landers** in Greenback, Tennessee. **Sue and Larry Gilfillan**, Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia members from Blue Ridge, GA, **Helen Chamberlain** (Secretary, SABCH) and **Brickie Sands** of Friendsville, TN completed our adventuresome group. Frank and Anne treated us to a tour of their 1750's era stone home and a wonderful supper. (<http://www.samuelfrazierhome.com/>).

The next morning, Helen departed alone at 5 am on a mission to complete a 38 mile loop in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, while Sue, Larry, Frank, Brickie and I took a more leisurely (though still exciting) ride in the Abrams Creek area. Helen called late-day (5:30 pm) from one of her few high-country cell reception spots (on Jenkins Ridge Trail) in the Smokies and reported that warm weather and trail conditions were going to extend her ride into the evening. Luckily, Helen returned at 4:30 AM, just as Frank and Sue were gearing up for a search and rescue mission. Never one to miss a trail ride, Helen was back in the saddle at 9 am to join Frank and me for a ride on the Tremont Loop. We were too early in the year for the Silver



Bells, but we enjoyed the cascading waterfalls, rushing creeks, hillsides glowing with Spring Beauties, Trout Lilies, and a rare cluster of Showy Orchids.



On April 26<sup>th</sup>, I followed Frank to **Carey and Nancy McHugh's** beautiful farm on Tellico Lake near Madisonville, Tennessee. **Leslie Smith**, an avid horsewoman and Natural Resource Program Manager, USFS, Tellico Ranger District of the South Cherokee National Forest joined us for a tour of the trails on the McHugh's property, pointing out some of the wildflowers for us: fire pinks (right), wild phlox, sweet shrub, and many others. Carey told us an interesting story about how he will be providing ground support to a group of trail riders on a "Ride Across the Smoky Mountains" from Bryson City, North Carolina later this spring.



That evening I arrived at **Linda Norton's** in Charleston, Tennessee, amidst a buzz of social activity surrounding the arrival of endurance champs **Jeremy and Ellen**, and their 5 gray Arabians. How fast are they? Ellen just won a 100 mile race in 8 hours on the FEI circuit.



On April 27<sup>th</sup>, Linda's sister **Sherrie** and her husband **Ellis** joined the rest of us for a trail ride at Lost Creek near the Hiwassee River in South Cherokee National Forest. My young Rocky would not be able to keep up with the Arabs, so I had the pleasure of a very fast and fun ride on Linda's Foxtrotter, Dozer. We were at a full gallop running up the mountain when Jeremy and Ellen passed us like we were standing still. That certainly put our speed in perspective!

The section of trail sandwiched between Lost Creek (near the junction of Lost Creek & the Hiwassee River in southeast Tennessee) and several large shale formations covered with wildflowers was one of the most beautiful trails on my trip. If you ride this area, you will appreciate how much work Linda and Sherrie did to clear and maintain this trail. It was getting quite warm and Dozer enthusiastically dove into the clear water of the beaver pond for a swim to add a perfect end to a wonderful ride.

April 28<sup>th</sup> was another beautiful day, and Linda, Sherrie, Jeremy, Ellen and I joined **Tazz Reid** and **Joanne Mitchell** for a ride on Starr Mountain. We owe a big thanks to Tazz, who cleared the dead fall from the trails before our ride, and to Tazz and Joanne for their work getting several equestrian safe bridges installed over sensitive wet areas. Tazz pointed out several flame azaleas that had just burst into bloom.

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, I met Liz Higgins and Lynne Walsh for a ride in Cohutta. We started at the Cottonwood Patch Horse Camp in north Georgia, and rode along the beautiful Conasauga River trail. Liz pointed out several blue holes where the river was not only wide but deep. I spotted several wildflowers that I could not identify, so I will be looking them up in my reference books. After the ride, Liz took us to one of the most beautiful waterfalls I've ever seen, with clear water cascading down layers of solid shale rock. At the end of the day I camped overnight at **Kenny Higgin's** farm in Chattanooga. Dutch and I both appreciated the opportunity to see his very classy farm.

The morning of April 30<sup>th</sup>, I rinsed the dust from the Cohutta off my rig and headed northeast to Parrottsville, Tennessee, to join the BCH of East Tennessee for their Spring Roundup at the Meadow Creek Mountain Rustic Resort. The fabulous weather I enjoyed during my adventures with the SABCH ended, and a raining weekend ensued. We did get in a ride each day, in between the showers. The ridge of Meadow Mountain is filled with Lilies of the Valley, and the view from the Fire Tower was spectacular. **Herb** (with me, right) and **Cathy Heinze** were great hosts and made me feel very welcome.



The rain continued on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, so I packed up and drove up to Buena Vista, Virginia, for a fun visit with **Deb Sensabaugh**, the president of the Golden Horseshoe BCH Chapter. The weather never relented, so I didn't get to saddle up and ride again. After checking the forecast, I headed back to Maryland a few days ahead of schedule.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, I arrived at my home club, the League of Maryland Horsemen, in Marriottsville, Maryland. We have a campground with electric hookups, a heated clubhouse, hot showers, and a full calendar of trail riding activities. Check out our web site at [www.lomh.net](http://www.lomh.net) and come visit! You made me feel so welcome and comfortable, that I can only hope that I will be able to return the favors to each of you in the future. Thanks to all of you once again!

## *Peggy Bree and Dutch*



*Me and Dutch*



*Frank Landers, SABCH, on Tanner*



*Gorgeous trillium in the Smokies*



*Helen Chamberlain and I enjoy Tremont*



*A relic of pre-park logging days in the Smokies*

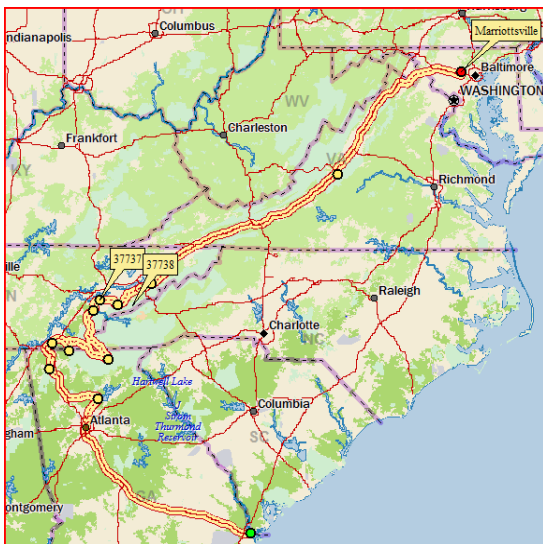
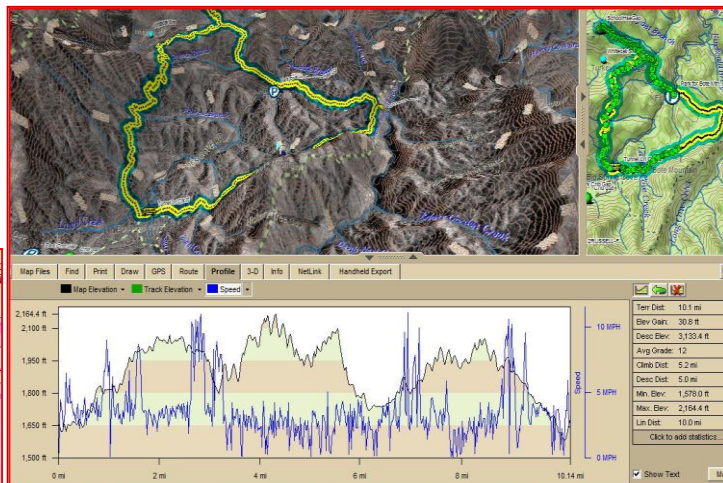


*Sue Gilfillan on Renegade*



*Brickey Sands & Larry Gilfillan*

*Frank's GPS log of a typical trail ride in the Smoky Mountains*



*My route through the southeast, from Savannah, GA to Marriottsville, MD with many fun stops between*

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