

## **Club Activities of January 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> - Toward a Putman Memorial [1978]**

[This Cabin Committee Report, written by committee members Harold & Margaret Crate, details a busy few days spent in Nelson County, Virginia-- visiting with a realtor, getting information, and then trying to locate the mountain property the club was interested in purchasing; going to the county courthouse to view information there about the property; talking with National Forest officials at their office in Buena Vista about the same subject; meeting Maxie Campbell to talk about the possible use of his old hunting cabin; and finally, most importantly, meeting Mrs. Putman (and some family members) for the first time, face to face, and discussing their ideas about a memorial cabin]

Our club president [Jacque Jenkins] had been contacted by Mrs. Phyllis Putman of Fairfax, Va. with reference to establishing a memorial to her son Doug who had been victim of an auto accident. Mrs. Putman was willing to provide funds for a memorial to be built and administered by the club.

With this, Jacque arranged a meeting of club members with Mrs. Putman, her son-in-law Lyn Kline, and her daughter Debbie Kline. The meeting was held at Safari Campground near the Blue Ridge Parkway on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1978 to discuss further the Putman family wishes and to present the club's position and preliminary efforts toward a memorial. Some recollections of the 5<sup>th</sup>—8<sup>th</sup> of January are as follows:

Jacque had spent time on the 5<sup>th</sup> visiting realtors in the Nelson County area (basically this is to the east of our section of the A.T.). At the Strout Realty Co. in Lovingston (operated by Irene Hughes and Patricia Price) she was informed of a parcel of land of about 15 acres which was for sale and located near the Blue Ridge Parkway along White Rock Creek. Detailed description and plats on the land were not immediately available but were in the hands of a surveyor. The asking price was \$5,000. The afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> Jacque was joined by Harold and Margaret Crate and time was spent investigating other leads on available mountain land. Maxie Campbell, who owns the cabin at Maupin Field Shelter, was visited in his store in Nellysford. He was most hospitable and interested in the club project. Maxie owns land along our section of the A.T. and was asked if he'd be willing to sell some small acreage for the project. He would not commit himself without discussing it with his wife, however. The next effort was to try to locate and visit the 15 acre plot previously mentioned. It was expected to be a short distance off the Parkway just southward of Reeds Gap in the area of 20 Minute Cliff overlook. The property contains springs and old cabin foundation. Without detailed directions it was not deemed worthwhile to walk the area and the short time remaining that afternoon was spent in locating and contacting Ranger Joe Kelly who is superintendent of rangers for this district of the Parkway. Ranger Kelly was quite helpful although he could not pinpoint the location of the property in question. He showed great interest in the club project and imparted information on who had and did own land in the area. He was not sure of the status of present land ownership but suggested we talk with Mr. Saylor Coffey who was of one of the original families in the area and who had spent many years in the Park Service and was now retired.

On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> we located Salyor's home and were made welcome by him and his wife. Some time was spent in his home discussing the history of families who had owned land in the area of our interest. Mr. Coffey owns land adjacent to the 15 acres and though he could identify the property personally it might prove difficult for someone not familiar with the landmarks to find. He did help to narrow the area in which the property should be found. The next stop on the 6<sup>th</sup> was the District Office of the Forest Service in Buena Vista. Although the rangers were attending a meeting in Harrisonburg, the lady who met us was extremely helpful in producing and explaining the property maps maintained in the office. The maps identify National Forest lands and also show privately owned lands within and adjacent to the Forest. There are ongoing attempts by the Forest Service to fill out the boundaries and gaps in government land ownership and we were shown their records along this line. The 15 acre tract is not precisely pinpointed but apparently is of interest to the Forest Service. In fact, Patricia Price had earlier mentioned she advised the Forest Service she would let it be known when the 15 acres of land was to be sold.

We next journeyed to Lovington to view the tax records and maps for Nelson County. The personnel there were very helpful and produced a great deal of information on land location and ownership. Their maps are not detailed location maps but rather show relationship and general bounds of properties. Descriptions are of size and nature of the land with details of ownership. One other piece of property in our area of interest was noted that contained some 12 and a half acres. Subsequent inquiry however (E.N. Taylor, of Waynesboro) established the property was not for sale but would be held for inheritance. The late afternoon was spent talking to Irene Hughes at Strout Realty. She arranged to have the property descriptions returned by the surveyor and to be mailed later to Jacque.

The morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, Jim and Alma Hall and their daughter along with Herb Coleman arrived at Safari and some general discussion of the club project was held. Shortly before noon Mrs. Putman, her daughter and son-in-law arrived. An exchange of ideas and information followed. Mrs. Putman explained the background of her idea. Her son Doug enjoyed music and the natural beauty of the outdoors. Through her daughter a song was to be written which would essentially encompass her son's life. A biography of his life had been furnished a musician friend of the daughter. Mrs. Putman had read her son's trail handbook and his notes therein. Our section of trail was selected for the memorial because of his interest and appreciation of the area mentioned in the notes. The Putman's requirements for the memorial were not elaborate. It should be a resting place for her son's ashes. It should be in an unspoiled wilderness type area and should help the area or part of it to remain so. It should be a perpetual memorial. It should display or have an appropriate wilderness or natural view. It should be in the area so enjoyed by her son and relatively near the A.T. he walked. It should be used for the enjoyment and peace of the natural surroundings. The Putmans would want the use of the facility but did not indicate prolonged or extensive use. She expressed no desire to limit the use of the facility but of course would not like to see it misused or abused.

Mrs. Putman does not do extensive hiking but does not require vehicle or very close vehicular access to the site; she would walk in. A semi-primitive facility is satisfactory and modern accommodations are not necessary. Other than the foregoing, she was willing to trust the judgment and experience of the club in details. (I do not recall that she asked to approve or even review plans but this would be an obvious courtesy.)

Jacque then explained the club's condition and situation and reviewed what had been done up to that time. Ideas of the type of memorial were expressed, among them a shelter on the trail, a hostel type of facility and a cabin similar to the PATC cabins. The latter suggestion seemed to get the greatest interest and support. The idea (was) that the facility would be built, hopefully and primarily with volunteer efforts from within the club, and that the facility would be legally established to pass in order to the A.T. Conference and then to the Forest Service. The club would provide the services, planning and management necessary to establish the facility and to insure its perpetuity. It would be our cabin, owned and maintained by TATC—the Douglas Putman Memorial.

Although heavy fog had set in, the entire party ascended to the parkway, to the 20 Minute Cliff overlook. Obviously the view was non-existent but the relationship of the proposed site to the club's section of the trail was established. Mrs. Putman seemed satisfied with the area, however, and again expressed her desire to rely on the judgment of the club for the overall effort which she would not have time to undertake.

The Putman family left in the later afternoon to return to Fairfax (the daughter and son-in-law reside in Carolina).

The club members remained in the area overnight and reviewed the events of the day. It was left to establish committees to follow through on the project.

*Prepared by  
Harold and Margaret Crate*