

Douglas Putman Memorial Cabin & Phyllis Putman [Aug. 1980 Newsletter Article]

[This is a letter to the club from Douglas Putman's mother, Phyllis Putman. It was published in the Aug / Sept 1980 TATC Newsletter. Mrs. Putman was kind enough to share some of her thoughts and feelings about Douglas, and about the cabin project that she envisioned and financed. She also tells us a little about herself and her family, and about her hopes for the cabin. Someone in the club included a short introductory paragraph for this newsletter article]

(To honor her son, Phyllis Putman initiated and funded our club's ongoing cabin project; and has written us an account about how she decided on the cabin project, about her son's tragedy, and about herself and her family. We are grateful to Mrs. Putman for sharing her thoughts with us)

I, Phyllis Putman, am presently a Social Studies Teacher and Department Chairman at James W. Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Va. I came to teaching 15 years ago, after I had raised my children, and I thoroughly enjoy working with high school juniors and seniors. Deborah, Doug's older sister, has a degree in accounting from the University of North Carolina and is presently working to become a S.P.A. Doug's younger sister is currently working on a degree in English and will graduate from George Mason University next year. Doug's father is a real estate specialist with the U.S. Navy.

The decision to support the Douglas Lee Putman Memorial Cabin was the result of a family effort and has received the wholehearted support of Doug's father and sisters.

My son was taken from me suddenly, on July 19, 1977. Even after three years, I say this aloud to test the reality of it. We go through life, warning our children to be careful, dreading the consequences, but never really thinking that the worst will happen, and a child will be taken from us. The first thing one asks is, "Why my son?" But then I have to ask "Why not?" There is so much suffering in the world that one cannot expect to be exempt. But I am an optimistic, hopeful person and have always believed that what we cannot undo must be accepted. So, for me, the answer was simple-- use the insurance money that was awarded as result of Doug's death for some worthwhile purpose.

I recognized that aside from his family, Doug had two loves: music and the outdoors. In fact, he was planning to go camping the week-end after the accident cut his life short. To fulfill my purpose, I reached out to the Appalachian Trail Conference, and found my way to the Tidewater branch, for Doug had hiked that section of the Appalachian Trail when he was a student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. Doug loved hiking the trail and was always trying to get someone to hike with him, but barring that, he would go alone! After some talk and a genuine concern on the part of Jacque Jenkins, and the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club, the Douglas Lee Putman Memorial Cabin was born. I hope the availability of this cabin will encourage young men and women to seek joy and a sense of fulfillment in being a part of nature and the out-of-doors. I think Doug would have liked that.

By Mrs. Phyllis Putman

[People that love and treasure the cabin should be thankful that Mrs. Putman's initial phone call

to the club went to then president Jacque Jenkins. Jacque was a contemporary of Mrs. Putmans and, like her, had grown children about the same age. Jacque had also been involved in the ongoing quest by our club to build or obtain a cabin, and so was especially receptive to (and appreciative of) Mrs. Putman's offer. The two of them developed a rapport and relationship that did much to make the cabin a reality—for all involved]