

In Remembrance of Herbert Rockwood Coleman Jr.

(Died May 7, 2004, age 76)

A collection of memories from his friends in the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club





Editor's Note: Herb was one of TATC's nine charter members, the folks who first formed the club in 1972. He stayed active in the club all the years since its founding, and was president of TATC for two years in a row, 1984 and 1985.

As you will read, those of us who knew Herb enjoyed his gregarious personality and sage advice on a host of outdoor topics. Many of us shared hikes and paddles together with Herb as a leader or fellow participant. Herb supported the concept of building the TATC cabin and contributed his personal labor to various aspects of it. He

was involved in the community as well, being an employee of a business known as Bay Camping in Virginia Beach.

The following stories, as submitted to me by their authors, or gleaned from other sources, have been kept intact, retaining their voice and style, with only minor editing.  
~~Mal Higgins]

### **HERBERT ROCKWOOD COLEMAN JR.**

Obituary published by Richmond Times-Dispatch from May 9 to May 12, 2004.

Also published online at

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesdispatch/name/herbert-coleman-obituary?pid=2212497>

Herbert Rockwood Coleman Jr., 76, of Virginia Beach, died Friday, May 7, 2004 in Virginia Beach. Survivors include two daughters, Beth Clarke of White Stone, Va., and Pat Agard of Ft. Thomas, Ky.; one son, Herb Coleman of Glen Allen, Va.; six granddaughters, Moriah Clarke, Hannah, Becky and Sarah Agard, Kaitlin and Ashley Coleman; and one sister, Martha Jane Myers of New London, Conn. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, May 14 at Community United Methodist Church in Virginia Beach. A graveside service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 15, in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Richmond with a reception to follow at his son's home. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Red Cross. Arrangements are being handled by the West Chapel of Bennett Funeral Home.

[Editor's Note; Mal Higgins—I attended Herb's memorial service at the Community United Methodist Church in Virginia Beach along with at least a dozen members of Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club. The service bulletin included the congregation singing "Amazing Grace" and Herb's granddaughter Hannah Agard sang a solo, "Here I Am, Lord". Remarks were provided by Dr. Keith Almond and Dr. Fenton Wicker.]

### **TRIBUTE TO HERB COLEMAN** **By Marilyn Horvath**

[First published in the TATC Appalachian Hiker, August-September 2004 issue]

One of the Club's firsts: Herbert Coleman Jr., who passed on last month (editor's note: Herb died May 7, 2004), was an inspiration to so many of our hikers. He will be remembered by this hiker, especially for the fact that he paid attention to even the least of the hikers whom he led. I remember how, in St. Mary's Wilderness or Ramsey's Draft, he had us hang our sleeping bags on lines to air as we awakened. And as we hiked, in line, he placed a strong hiker at the end, and he knew where we all were. That felt very secure especially for me as a beginner.

Across streams he had rocks put in place, and when I slipped off and landed full back into the icy water, he was there and I couldn't believe I was out before I got wet! Now that's a leader you'd want!

Supervising our meals (with samples for himself), he saw that our tents were properly placed. He induced me to put a pebble in my mouth to keep from getting thirsty. It worked all day until we made camp and he showed me a broken limb that could crash down on my spot. I looked up. But then I swallowed the pebble.

Our early leaders I thought of as giants: and Herb was one of them. He was an early president. He was beloved in his Church and by the people of the Red Cross for whom he voluntarily drove blood for hospitals every Thursday, sometimes long into the night.

He pleased the ladies, young and old, with his dancing right until the end, never minding that some proficiency was lacking there. But he had style. Plenty of it. And that, as you'd say, made all the difference.

Herb, we'll all miss you. Who knows if the Club would have become as great without you.

### **In Remembrance of Herb Coleman By Mal Higgins**

Those who knew Herb remember his warm and friendly personality above all. He led TATC in its early years with a steady hand as its president. He enjoyed a good joke and told plenty. Outside the club, he was an employee of a business known as Bay Camping, which sold RVs and lots of camping gear, too, but was not a backpacking store. A pipe smoker, Herb would light up with his pipe during evening leisure hours in camp.

One of my favorite memories occurred in 1981. I had been a participant at that time in two or three of the annual winter backpacking trips to the New York Adirondacks, led by Otey Shelton. The protocol in those days was that at the conclusion of the TATC monthly meeting of January or February, those who were going would have their backpacks with them at the meeting, fully loaded with food, clothing and gear. Our preparation had occurred over several days of packing, rearranging, adding and subtracting weight.

We would pile into Otey's 9 passenger van and drive all night to New York, arriving after daybreak. No overnight motel in those days. We would grab a bite to eat, typically at the Noonmark Diner in Keene Valley, visit the outfitter store The Mountaineer, and head to the trailheads.

On one occasion, Herb decided the night of the TATC meeting that he too wanted to join us. Otey said OK, so we piled into the van and drove to Herb's house around 9:30 p.m. Herb explained to his wife he was joining us, and proceeded to throw a few food items into his last minute pack. Among the items were numerous individual size packs of raisins. We were anxious to get driving and kept telling Herb to hurry it up. Who knows what he forgot?

But we did get underway and arrived at the Adirondacks trail head for Marcy Dam. For the next several days in the Adirondacks, Herb apparently had not much to eat but raisins, and would barter and trade with us for other food items. We teased him unmercifully about his raisins, but shared what we had. I think that was the only Adirondacks trip Herb made with us!

**In Remembrance of Herb Coleman  
By Jim Newman**

I met both Herb and Sig [Ignatius "Sig" Signorelli] at a cabin gathering during the late 80s. I remember Sig as the center of attention at the dinner table as we enjoyed an evening meal. Sig was full of interesting stories punctuated by hardy laughs, while Herb was more reserved. Both were smoking; Sig with his cigar and Herb with the pipe. On another cabin event, I had joined Rick Hancock for a ride up and hitched a ride home with Herb, Herb was driving his full-sized General Motors car—maybe a Buick. We carried on casual conversation all the way down I-64 as Herb puffed his pipe.

**In Remembrance of Herb Coleman  
By Mark Connolly**

I moved to Virginia Beach from Maryland in August of 1984, and looked for an outdoor activity group that would offer more outings than provided by the local Sierra Club Group, which seemed fixated only on letters to the editor and supporting environmental lobbying. Outings were a neglected afterthought. So, probably from an ad in "Portfolio" magazine, I was delighted to discover TATC that fall of 1984, and started going to meetings in what is the Advent Episcopal Church on Norfolk Avenue, across from the golf course, when Herb Coleman was the president of TATC. I remember his professorial manner in conducting the meetings, and, when outside, his pipe and stalker/Irish walker hat. Sort of a try at Sherlock Holmes. When I joined, the TATC Putman cabin had been completed, and I didn't know much about how much the founding members had put into either the start of the organization or the cabin construction, but I was impressed with the folks I met.

**In Remembrance of Herb Coleman**  
**By Reese Lukei**

Herb was indeed a character. Herb was the first to try to educate club members as to proper camping etiquette. He worked at a camping store on Bonney Road in Virginia Beach. He would dress up as a backpacker, and wear his wide brimmed Mexican sombrero to get our attention. When TATC would participate in local parades like the St Patrick's Day Parade in Ocean View or Veteran's Day Parade in Va Beach he would wear that colorful sombrero. Most of the time had a pipe in his mouth but usually not lit.

**In Remembrance of Herb Coleman**  
**By Rick Hancock**

2 Herb Coleman stories.

I met Herb at a Sept. TATC meeting. He was the President. That Jan. I was elected Trail Supervisor (totally skipped Asst. Supervisor). We went on a fall maintenance trip and that evening it **POURED DOWN RAIN!** For hours it rained steady and out of the cold mist came a group of UVA students on a trip. A bunch of us were piled up in the shelter and we made room for more bodies so they could cook. I had driven my 4X4 Suzuki in on the Love Gap Fire Rd with tools in the trailer. Shortly after dark I got the taste for some ice cream. Another guy and I drove to Waynesboro and back appx. 40 miles with 13 half gallons.

Second story is short and sweet. Herb and I were on a TATC backpacking trip. Pretty sure it was Punchbowl to Brown Mt. Creek. When he was getting ready to climb in his sleeping bag he was wearing a pair of red plaid boxer shorts. He kinda did a little shimmy dance before climbing in his bag. I'll never forget the look on a couple of females' faces nor those long skinny legs!

Herb was a good guy and a good friend. I miss him along with a lot of other "old timers."