

A Woman walks entire Appalachian Trail

By [Debbie Juniewicz](#) - Thursday, September 27, 2012



When Yvonne Entingh takes a hike it is anything but a walk in the park.

The Bellbrook woman recently returned from a three-month, 900-mile solo hike on the Appalachian Trail. Entingh, 54, has been hiking the Appalachian Trail in sections since 2008 and has now completed the entire 2,184-mile trail, which spans 14 states from Maine to Georgia.

"I still think it hasn't quite sunk in," Entingh said. "There were people who thought I wouldn't succeed or I couldn't do it but I never doubted myself."

Laying claim to having traveled all 2,000-plus miles of the trail is remarkable but even more so for the grandmother who began hiking only five years ago.

STARTING OUT

It all began with a MetroParks backpacking class in 2007.

“Growing up, I saw my father and brother go on a lot of backpacking trips but I didn’t go – it was a guy thing,” Entingh said. “But my mother and father did instill in me a love of nature. I took the class because I wanted to try something different.”

With her three daughters grown and out of the house, Entingh had time for a new hobby and hiking fit the bill.

By Memorial Day weekend 2008, she embarked on her first solo hike in Tennessee – 33 miles. Then there was a 90-mile hike later that year and she went on to conquer a 245-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail in Georgia in 2009. Then there were hikes of 245, 206 and 415 miles as she chipped away at her goal of completing the trail.

“I knew what I was capable of and I was confident enough in my ability,” she said.

Entingh’s confidence instilled the same feeling in her daughters.

“My mom has always been an outdoorsy kind of person,” Brittany Albert said. “The main thing we worried about was her being by herself but there were regular check-in points and she always had a detailed plan.”

FAMILY EFFORT

While none of Entingh’s daughters were available, the Bellbrook hiker did have some company during part of her most recent trek as her 6-year-old granddaughter Addison spent 12 days on the trail with her.

Little Peacock, Addison’s trail name – Entingh’s trail name is Princess Doah – hiked with her grandmother from New Jersey to New York. It wasn’t a spontaneous decision as Entingh and her granddaughter had been hiking together for years and even went shopping and prepared food together for the trip.

“I was a little nervous when she left,” Albert said of her daughter. “But I trust my mom and I trust Addison.”

Little Peacock and Princess Doah’s fame soon preceded them.

“Word travels fast on the trail and we had people come up to us and ask if we were the grandma and granddaughter team they had heard about,” Entingh said.

Fellow hikers wanted to have their pictures taken with Addison and her grandma with the hopes of encouraging their own family members to hit the trail with them.

HARD ROAD

While there were countless exhilarating moments and periods of utter peacefulness, it was not an easy trek.

There was rain, fog, sleet and many treacherous conditions to contend with. And Entingh had to battle more than the elements as she also had a bout of Norovirus while she was in upper New Hampshire and southern Maine.

“I’ve always told myself when you’re not able to carry on physically, then your mind does the work,” she said. “You can’t go onto the trail with defeat. There’s an adventure every day, you just have to have a good attitude.”

But even with her positive attitude, Entingh struggled as she was wrapping up the rugged 281 miles in Maine. The western section of Maine includes steep, 4,000-foot mountains, which most consider the toughest part of the entire Appalachian Trail, as well as the notorious mile-long boulder scramble of Mahoosuc Notch.

“My body was wiped out, and I was completely fatigued,” she said.

It was memories of her father, who died in January, that carried her through to Katahdin, the trail’s northern terminus.

“I dedicated the last portion of my trip to my father,” Entingh said. “He taught me to persevere and never give up.”

DREAM COME TRUE

Whether it’s hiking, backpacking or skydiving, Entingh urges aspiring athletes of all ages to give it a try. She was in her late 40s when she took her first backpacking class.

“A dream is only a dream until you step out and make it a reality,” she said.

She suggests taking a class, connecting with a MeetUp group or the Dayton Hikers to get started.

What’s the next dream for the Bellbrook woman who has the entire Appalachian Trail under her belt?

Entingh is looking at owning and operating a bed and breakfast or hostel somewhere along the Appalachian Trail.

Link: <http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/entertainment/woman-walks-entire-appalachian-trail/nSKfM/>