**Tuesday, April 5, 2016**

Game on.

**Wednesday, April 13, 2016**

Greetings from historic Wellsboro, PA.

**Monday, April 18, 2016**

Waiting out the heat in Morris, PA.

**Wednesday, April 20, 2016**

Greetings from Miller’s Store, Blackwell, PA. At the junction of the Mid State Trail and the Pine Creek Rail Trail. What a cool place!!

**Friday, April 22, 2016**

Happy hiker is at Happy Acres Resort/Restaurant, Waterville, PA. The joints are grateful for the respite. It is a gorgeous area.

**Friday, April 22, 2016**

Heard my first black-throated green warbler of the hike this morning. Greetings to my NH friends, Audrey Eisenhauer, Kim Votta, and Ken Vallery.

**Tuesday, May 3, 2016**

Greetings from State College, PA! Came off the ridge a few km shy of Detweiler Junction; will pick those up on Friday to complete the MST portion of my southbound trek. The weather for the better part of the past week has sucked; glad to get out of it for a bit of R&R. Tonight’s agenda: (1) shower, (2) laundry, (3) crash.

**Friday, May 20, 2016**

Greetings from Hancock, MD!! \*SO\* stoked to be here!! No hiker/cyclist visit to Hancock is complete without an overnight at the bunkhouse at C&O Bicycle. This hiker/cyclist is in heaven!!

**Thursday, June 2, 2016**

Greetings from Front Royal, VA, where I’m spending the weekend with Tom and Sharon Johnson, AT and GET folks extraordinaire. Have made it to Bergton, VA, about one third of the GET. Am well, having a ball. It’s the Appalachian trek I’ve been longing for my entire life. An AT thru-hike is an undergraduate degree. The GET is graduate school. Make no mistake: the GET is not “a shorter, easier version of the AT.”

**Friday, June 17, 2016**

Greetings from Hidden Valley B&B, on the GET in Warm Springs, VA. A very, very special place.

**Friday, June 24, 2016**

Greetings from White Sulphur Springs, WV, a day after the deluge and devastating flooding. The village is only one of too many in two states that yesterday saw terrible property damage and loss of life. I’m presently camped behind Bethesda Church, the hub of relief activity here. The outpouring of donations just today was overwhelming. We fed many folks on site as well as traveled out into the community to deliver food and supplies to those cut off from roads when flood waters destroyed bridges. I will stay and help until power is restored to the area, area businesses can once more open, I can collect my resupply box from the post office, and can shop for food. I have no way to charge my gizmos for a time, so I’ll update again once I’m able to. (Jo Someday Swanson, coming down Slashlick Creek Road this morning wasn’t the brightest idea I’ve ever had.) Please keep Virginia and West Virginia in your thoughts and prayers. This will be tough to recover from for years.

**Friday, June 24, 2016**

Lloyd MacAskill, Slashlick Creek Road is impassable. The creek rose five to six feet in places and still was running hard this morning. It took me several hours to reach WV 92 from the ALT trailhead. The water crossings were getting increasingly sketchy as I moved downstream, and I finally decided to stay on the south side of the creek for safety, which entailed lots of bushwhacking. The roadbed is very badly damaged in many places, there are several blowdowns from the wind event around 1 p.m. yesterday, and the road is washed away just west of the FS gate.

**Saturday, July 2, 2016**

Greetings from Narrows, VA!

**Friday, July 8, 2016**

Greetings from Hinton, WV! Lunch at Pizza Hut, overlooking the New River, which is still running high and muddy.

**Wednesday, July 13, 2016**

Greetings from Mullens, WV!!!! Halfway, y’all! It’s all downhill from here!!

**Sunday, July 17, 2016**

My last day in Mullens. I’ve had an incredible time here: meeting so many folks, including Tim McGraw, president of the TuGuNu Hiking Club, and Beth Lewis, this year’s local VISTA volunteer and AT NOBO 2015; \*\*finally\*\* getting to meet and hang out with “Hillbilly Bart” Houck, Jo “Someday” Swanson’s partner in crime on the GET in 2013; eating my way through a council-on-aging lunch, church dinners/picnics, and the annual McGraw Family Reunion—courtesy of Tim McGraw, who knows the time and place of every “food” event in the area (just another unusual resupply point, Peter Fleszar). My “home base” for the next several days, while I make my way along the long roadwalk to Matewan, WV, is the lodge at Twin Falls Resort State Park. Tim will be serving as my shuttle for some of those days, something he did for Jo and Bart in 2013. I’ve been remiss in not posting photos as I’ve gone along; I hope to have some time in the evenings this week to post some selected pix. Stay tuned!

**Saturday, July 23, 2016**

Greetings from Matewan, WV!! Long, hot days this week making my way across southern West Virginia. I loved it all. Big thanks go to Tim McGraw; I could not have done this big section without him. On to Kentucky!!

**Sunday, July 24, 2016**

Greetings from Breaks Interstate Park, VA!! Heeding the sage advice of “those who have gone before,” I arranged for a shuttle across the even-for-me sketchy roadwalk GET section of northern Kentucky between Matewan, WV, and Elkhorn City, KY. A big shoutout to Shad Baker for the ride.

**Sunday, July 31, 2016**

Greetings from Whitesburg, KY!!! I’ve just finished the Birch Knob and Highland sections of the Pine Mountain State Scenic Trail, part of the GET. This trail is, in a word, amazing. More to come!

**Monday, August 1, 2016**

A big shoutout to Jim Rogers (and his awesome hiker dog Charlie) and John Foy, who were out on the PMT Highland Section over the weekend. They gave me a ride into Whitesburg and are new friends of the GET. You guys rock!

**Monday, August 8, 2016**

Greetings from Harlan, KY! The dog days continue. I’ll be a \*much\* happier hiker once the temps back off.

**Friday, August 12, 2016**

Greetings from Middlesboro, KY!!! Cumberland Gap NHP was an incredible experience; \*so\* much history here. Next up: the Cumberland Trail! Looks like I’ll be in Tennessee for a while. It continues to be HOT HOT HOT. Moving ahead the best I can . . . when I can. This, too, shall pass.

**Tuesday, August 16, 2016**

Greetings from Caryville, TN! Overnight in town to clean up and resupply before setting out again. The Eagle Bluff section of the Cumberland Trail was spectacular. Kudos to those folks who keep it maintained.

**Monday, August 22, 2016**

Greetings from Wartburg, TN!! I’ve just finished the challenging New River Segment of the Cumberland Trail, which has not seen maintenance for quite some time and which gave me a lot of frightening moments, but I managed to make it safely to each day’s goal. I’m taking a short breather in town to try, once again, to give a short rest to an ongoing itchy skin rash from wearing “toxic” clothes for days at a time through heat, humidity, and rain. Add in silt, and it’s a match made in hell. Looks like temps in the 80s will still be with me for a while. Oh well. This, too, shall pass. And I can’t forget to thank the rangers at the Frozen Head State Park Visitor Center, who took pity on the backpacker that appeared out of the torrential downpour and gave her a ride into Wartburg. You rock!

**Saturday, August 27, 2016**

Greetings from Crossville, TN!! Over the past few days I battled . . . ah, hiked . . . the Obed Wild & Scenic River Segment of the CT. An amazing feat of engineering and trailbuilding . . . but because it does not get the maintenance attention it deserves, the problems detract from the beauty. \*\*Trails do not maintain themselves.\*\* Many thanks to my new friends Shauna Wilson Anschuetz and Cain Monday for getting me out of a bind yesterday and seeing that I got into Crossville. The newest GET trail angels.

**Monday, August 29, 2016**

But there is no joy in Crossville—hiker Kathy has struck out.

―with apologies to Ernest Lawrence Thayer, “Casey at the Bat”

**Monday, August 29, 2016**

Only mad dogs, Englishmen―and backpackers walking the Cumberland Trail connecting routes―go out in the midday sun.

**Wednesday, August 31, 2016**

This is the day the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! Loose translation: Bring it on!!

**Saturday, September 3, 2016**

Greetings from Spring City, TN!! Great little trail town, everything within a short walk. Quite a week from Crossville to here! The morning I left the KOA, I stopped at the convenience store in Crab Orchard (was a BP, now a CITGO) and what a shock to see Cain Monday, my excellent trail angel from last week, drive up! He then scrapped his plans for the morning, instead to become my local guide and historian for the Black Mountain portion of the Grassy Cove Segment. What otherwise would have been a handful of trail miles inside the green tunnel was instead a unique walk through the natural and human history of this special area. Thank you, Cain!! Trail conditions on the CT between Crossville and Spring City, as expected, ran the gamut. On my way to Spring City on Rt. 68, I came across two brand-new eateries in Grandview: Ice Cream Shack & More and The Yolk & Hull. I got to spend some time with the folks at both of them; \*so\* cool to hear their stories and that for them, as for me, they are seeing their lifetime dreams turning into reality. The excitement was palpable. For many months, I’ve been blessed to be walking through good places meeting good people. The journey continues. Forward is progress!

**Thursday, September 8, 2016**

Greetings from Soddy-Daisy, TN. It is with great regret―but also great relief―to report that because of concerns for my health and safety, I’ve abandoned the Three Gorges Segment of the CT. The unrelenting heat, many large blowdowns and frightening scarcity of water along the trail, and the realization that physically I could not carry on for the few more days needed to complete this segment convinced me to bail out yesterday at Retro-Hughes Road. That still left me with about 14 miles of roadwalk to Soddy-Daisy but it had to happen. I’d so looked forward to seeing the new Big Soddy Creek bridge. I’ll be on my way once again soon.

**Saturday, September 10, 2016**

Greetings from Chattanooga, TN!! An 18-mile roadwalk yesterday, with an oh-dark-thirty start to try and beat the heat, brought me across the iconic Walnut St. Pedestrian Bridge into absolutely the \*coolest\* small city I have ever been in. I headed for the electric shuttle stop, almost walking by Rock/Creek Outfitters. I went in, and there talking with the staff guys was thru-hiker Last Minute (hey, Jo Someday Swanson), who already knew I was on my way into town (thank you, Sourdough!). A surprise meeting for both of us; hope to run into him again!! Greg Foster (Sourdough) and Anne Lautzenheiser drove in and picked me up, and we met up with Pat Carver at Clyde’s On Main for a bit. So much fun with old friends that I’d never met until yesterday. I am staying at a most unique hostel, The Crash Pad, which has simply blown me away. (Matt Vaughan, its award-winning design is incredible.) Tomorrow I set off once again, very soon stepping into Georgia, bound for the Georgia Pinhoti Trail. Sourdough will be my trail angel this week; I’ve been looking forward to GET-ting here for a very long time, and my short time here is proving to be very special.

**Saturday, September 17, 2016**

Happy Saturday, y’all. “On the Road Again” with “Georgia on My Mind.” (Yes, GET-ting a bit punchy about now.)

**Monday, September 19, 2016**

Pushed an insanely long day into Cave Spring, GA. Couldn’t wait until tomorrow to shout it out. Will post a longer note soon!

**Thursday, September 22, 2016**

Greetings from Cave Spring, GA!! It’s been a whirlwind two weeks on the long Georgia roadwalk from the Cumberland Trail, through Cloudland Canyon State Park, and on to the Georgia and Alabama Pinhoti trails. I traveled roads, trails, and soon-to-be GET. This has turned out to be just what I’d hoped for my trek: to reconnect with old friends of the GET and to make new friends for the GET. The long list of folks I had the privilege of “crossing paths” with include Chuck Peters; Coleman Thompson; Cynthia Stinson (Mentone Inn); Pat, Mike, and Holley (Lula Lake Land Trust); Joe Endres; Robbie Richter; Greg Foster and Duke and Anne Lautzenheiser; Pat Carver; Joe Lloyd; Daliah Macon and “Last Minute”; Barbara Maluchnik at the Cloudland Canyon overlooks; Scott Anderson and Tom Pounds (Friends of Cloudland Canyon State Park); Cave Spring (GA) Historical Society (The Peddler, Donna, and the Hearn Inn); Chris Carter and friends from Covenant College; and all of the folks who stopped and chatted with me on my way through their communities. Thank you all for being an important part of my big adventure. God bless!

**Thursday, September 29, 2016**

Greetings from Heflin, AL! I’m taking a bit of a breather to try and cool off the worst case of heat rash of my entire trip. Wow, this stuff is insanely itchy. For too long, the days have been way too hot for hiking, the nights way too hot for sleeping. Tonight the power is out: just up the road, an 18-wheeler took out a power pole; the whole town is in the dark. Pulling it together to head out once again, this time for the final leg of the Pinhoti Trail/GET. Still several challenging trail days ahead; little rest for the weary. I might treat myself to a night at the Cheaha SP lodge. After all, this IS my vacation! G’nite, y’all.

**Sunday, October 9, 2016**

A sunny, cool, crisp, breezy autumn morning, standing on the summit of a central Alabama mountain known as Flagg. A perfect ending to My Biggest Life Adventure. Remembering my late mom and dad, who have been in my thoughts every day. A special shoutout to my aunt, Jane Talpey. I made it for both of us!!

**Postscript**

**Friday, November 4, 2016**

I walked, with exceptions for safety concerns (weather, road, trail conditions), from Corning, NY, to Flagg Mountain, AL. I did not, on a case-by-case basis, thru-hike all of the component trails. However, if I deviated from a trail section, I walked around it (equivalent or greater number of miles) and, except for a few instances, did not get rides.

I want folks to know that I did the best I could. I hope that my [alternative] roadwalk adventures helped to showcase areas that the GET goes through, that folks are the same everywhere, and that rural America is alive. This wasn’t a “thru-hike” according to any current definition, and I am devastated that my own effort was so crappy. A GET Sobo will \*never\* be pretty.

A southbound thru-hike, no matter when it begins, can’t escape the mid-Atlantic summer. New foliage growth creates many problems for a hiker; the level of trail maintenance is highly unpredictable, especially where the trail traverses national and state lands. As you move south, water resources will become scarcer. Day after day of highs from 85 to 105°F (which started for me on the Pine Mountain Trail in mid-July) can be a major drain and downright dangerous if you’re not paying attention. When I finished my hike in early October, daytime highs in Alabama were still in the mid-80s. I didn’t have trouble with mosquitoes, but I encountered horseflies in Kentucky and Tennessee and chiggers in Georgia and Alabama. The mid-Atlantic region in summer is simply not a happy place to long-distance backpack.

Folks who come out to “do the GET,” expecting to cruise a superhighway like the AT, will have the shock of their lives. It is not a trek for the faint of heart; you have to have something deep inside to power you every day. Mine was the need to experience that whole section of the country on foot, meeting people living real lives. It was better than I could have imagined. And I could take my time. I had a blast \*every\* day, made tons of new friends for the GET along the way, and have absolutely no regrets. This was the old-school hike of my dreams, my #1 bucket-list item.