



## BMTA

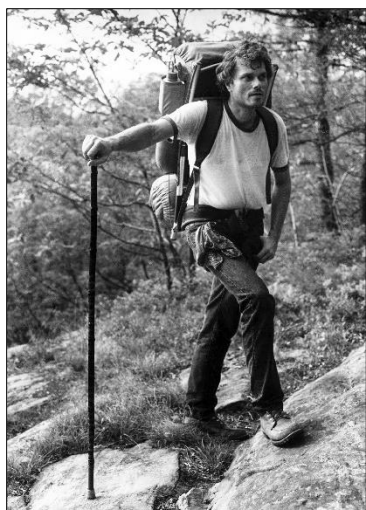
# FOUNDING MEMBERS

By George Owen and Joy Forehand

### DAVID SHERMAN

#### Founding Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail

During the 1970s David served as director of the Office of Planning and Research for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), at which time he was reading and researching the life and career of Benton MacKaye. He discovered MacKaye early on had proposed a route for the Appalachian Trail that would come down the more western main range of the southern Appalachians. Sherman began mapping and proposing a route which follows much of today's Benton MacKaye Trail -- it would be about 95 percent on public land.



*Used with the permission of the  
ATC Archives*

Dave Sherman - 1980

At the same time, David began talking to some individuals who would become BMTA's "Founding Members", (David is one of six). The Benton MacKaye Trail Association and work on our trail began in 1979-1980.

Subsequent to his high position in the GA DNR, David went on to an outstanding career in both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. Serving in both agencies, he is credited with gathering new authorities and funding to complete protection of the Appalachian Trail corridor. After Congress enacted the 1978 Appalachian Trail amendments to the National Scenic Trails Act, he played a leadership role in securing the tracts of land necessary for preservation of the AT's scenic, ecological, and cultural values. Sherman was appointed as acting project manager for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Later, when invited by the U.S.

Forest Service to join that agency, he held the critical position of Deputy Chief of Land Acquisition for that entity.

Long honored as the "Founding Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail," David was inducted into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame as part of the third class of five honorees.

Many of our "old-timers" in the "know" are quite aware, quite sure, the Benton MacKaye Trail would not now exist if it had not been for David's vision for a trail known for its beauty and peaceful solitude as well as his contagious enthusiasm as he encouraged others to "build the trail". He often helped behind the scenes in ways and

contacts beyond most folks' knowledge. Thus, the Benton MacKaye Trail and our association stand as one of his most significant accomplishments!

### **ADDITIONAL FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL**

#### **MARGARET DRUMMOND**



*GATC photo*

Margaret Drummond

Margaret served her adult life as professor of microbiology with the medical school of Emory University, Atlanta. While at Emory she also rose to become president of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club. After her retirement from Emory, she served several terms as chair of the Board of Managers of the Appalachian Trail Conference (now Conservancy). Margaret also served for years on the board of the American Hiking Society.

She is credited with leading a small group who protested when, in the mid-1980s, some of the BMTA leadership wanted to stop and officially complete the BMT at a point in Georgia. At the time, the leadership of the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests did not want to have another long-distance trail enter their states. Margaret was quite successful in her effort to continue the northward trajectory of the BMT! Margaret passed away early in the 21st century.

#### **LYMAN EMERSON**

Lyman, originally a descendant of one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's relatives, came to the start of the BMTA through GATC, where earlier he had been Trails Maintenance Director. During his employment years in the Atlanta area, he served as an official at Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Lyman and his wife Vivian, a vice-president of the Georgia Botanical Society, were heavily involved in the construction of our trail in Georgia. Lyman passed away in the late 20th century.

#### **GEORGE OWEN**



*BMTA photo*

George Owen

George, a native Floridian, served in the hospital management field and other jobs in Atlanta where he and his wife Sandy raised two sons. During the 1980s, he oversaw the layout and construction of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia. Prior to that he was both Maintenance Director and then Construction Director for GATC, where he oversaw partial relocation of miles of Appalachian Trail side trails (including half of the Approach Trail) as well as the layout and construction of the Duncan Ridge Trail. He served as an early BMTA president,

and later held several BMTA board positions. He now resides in Blairsville, GA, and through his two sons has four grandchildren. He is still active in BMTA and helps to maintain trail.

### **NANCY SHOFNER**

Nancy Shofner grew up in Lakeland, Florida, two blocks from George Owen. She graduated with a degree in library science from Emory University and subsequently became librarian at Southern School of Technology (now part of Kennesaw State University) until her retirement. She also was a “backbone” member of GATC. Among her many jobs and responsibilities for GATC, she was for years editor of the Georgia portion of the Appalachian Trail guidebook for GA-to-Smokies and was editor of the 381-page *Friendships of the Trails*, the first history of the GATC. Our oldest founding member alive, Nancy is now retired to Blairsville, GA. She still hikes and is involved with the local pet shelter.

### **RANDY SNODGRASS**

Randy came to Atlanta in the mid-1970s. He came from the Washington, D.C. area where he worked for The Wilderness Society. In Georgia he was the Southeastern Director for The Wilderness Society. While in this position he also became quite involved in the early efforts to establish the BMTA, especially since all the founders were at that time also involved with The Wilderness Society. Subsequently, Randy became our first BMTA president. In that position Randy did much of the legal work necessary to establish our incorporation as a 501 (c) (3) as well as putting in place the fundamental principles for dealing with the IRS, postal service, etc. Unfortunately, after serving as BMTA president for only a few months, The Wilderness Society moved him out of the Southeast to another position.



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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