



Voice of the Wapack

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President's Note

Winter is over, the snow is gone in the valleys and will soon be clear in the high woods as well. It's time to check trail conditions and clear small branches. No major tree damage was reported at our board meeting a few weeks ago, the ice was not bad this year. We are fortunate that Wapack and side trails are on mostly solid, well drained ground. At this time of year there can be a temptation to walk around significant mud, but it's best to keep to the middle and don't widen the treadway.

The organization still has two main goals or jobs: keeping the physical trail in good condition for hiking, and protection to allow continued access. Our section captains and special projects trail crew keep the first part going well. We continue to get compliments on the trail condition. The second part has been successful over the years, we consider over 60% of the main trail protected in some way. However, some of the landowner agreements have not been reviewed for over a decade. This year, I'm organizing our records of those agreements, verifying the contact information, and aiming to review the status with those contacts. Supporting those efforts are the operations of the organizations. That includes the basics, like insurance, government reports, and



Along the Wapack Trail on New Ipswich Mountain

the Web page. Our merchandise production and distribution, through our Web page, provides information for hikers with the guide and map, while also raising funds for operational expenses. One consideration with changing technology is, what is the future of paper guides and maps? I'm sure many Wapack Trail hikers are now using AllTrails or similar web based, free, information as their sole resource. I realize that the

Wapack has always been used by some casual hikers without maps or guides. The sales of thousands of maps and guides indicates there have been some serious hikers willing to pay for such information over the recent decades. So, do we need to change with technology? The Board of Directors is starting to have discussions about this. We need a variety of information. As a cross-border trail, I will be looking around at what other trail maintaining organizations are doing. The Appalachian Mountain Club, based in Boston, I would expect to be a leader in outreach and user of new technology. Some of the other small trail maintainers in the area still produce and mail guides as we do. Your thoughts and comments would be welcome at:

president@wapack.org.

- **Bruce Myrick, President**

Our Trail Adopters are out on the Trails!

The Friends of the Wapack Section Captains (Trail Adopters) are out checking their trail sections for Winter damage and planning their trail maintenance for the year. I've already received several trail condition and work reports. The work done by our Section Captains is incredibly important. There would be no trails without their work and dedication. If you are interested in knowing more about trail adoption, come to a workday to see what is involved, check the trail maintenance page on our website Wapack.org, or send me an email at rick@wapack.org.

- **Rick Blanchette, Trails Committee Chair**

2026 Friends of the Wapack Events

It is possible that events may change or that we will have additional workdays if something develops. Any announcements will be posted to the Friends website: Wapack.org. You may sign up for email notices for Friends of the Wapack news, workdays and other events on our website. For further details on trail work days, contact Mike Przybyla: mikep218@comcast.net

Saturday, May 2. Workday on the Kidder Mountain Trail, New Ipswich, NH

The first workday of 2026 will be on Saturday May 2nd . We will be doing general trail maintenance on the Kidder Mountain Trail. We will be concentrating on refurbishing water bars and vegetation trimming. Meet at the Newest Mall, 800 Turnpike Road, (Routes 123/124), New Ipswich, NH at 8:30 AM and we will carpool over to the trailhead. Bring lunch and water and wear appropriate clothing and boots, it could be muddy in places hiking in.

Saturday, May 30, Rain date May 31. North Pack Hike, Greenfield, NH

10:00 am -12pm

Gail Coffey will lead a hike on the Wapack Trail to the summit of North Pack. A moderate 3.1 mile round-trip hike with elevation gain of 954 ft. There is one short, but steep rocky section so be prepared with hiking poles and sturdy boots. Bring plenty of water and dress in layers. Cookies will be offered at the summit.

The summit offers great views of Mt Monadnock. Hike is 2-2.5 hours.

We will meet at 10:00 AM in the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge parking area on Mountain Road in Greenfield NH.

No dogs please. Rain date is Sunday, May 31.

Contact Gail for questions and to register at: gcoffeywriter@gmail.com. **Registration is required for planning purposes. The number of participants will be limited to 12. Thank you!**

Saturday, September 26. Wapack Trail Work Day on Temple Mountain's Holt Peak, Peterborough, NH

We will be doing a reroute of the Wapack Trail on the south side of Holt Peak in order to minimize potential erosion. This is a substantial hike in from the trailhead so be prepared.

We will meet at the Temple Mountain State Reservation parking lot on Route 101 in Temple, NH at 8:30 AM. Bring lunch, water, gloves, and wear appropriate work clothes.

Saturday, October 24. Wapack Trail Workday on New Ipswich Mountain, New Ipswich, NH

Our final scheduled workday will be on Saturday October 24 th and we will be doing general trimming and maintenance along the section of the trail along Barrett and Pratt Mountains. We will meet at 8:30 at the Windblown Camping parking lot. Note that this workday may change if other issues arise on the trail. Bring lunch and water.

Saturday, October 17. Friends of the Wapack Annual Meeting

Save the date! Our annual meeting is being planned. Check future emails and newsletters or check our website for updates.



An Interview with Lee Baker, founding member of FOW

Interview with Lee Baker at Peterborough NH Library on February 2, 2026, for the Friends of the Wapack by George Kocur, Friends of the Wapack Historian. It has been lightly edited for clarity. Part 2 in the next issue.

LB: My name is Lee Baker. I was born in Boston. My parents were living in Hingham MA and at an early age we moved to Temple NH to the Main Street in Temple, right next to the little store. My parents thought it was gonna be a quiet place to live, but after moving there, they realized that it was right on the side of route 45 and was quite noisy different times of the day, and decided, no, this isn't what we were thinking about, so we lived there for a couple of years and then, early on, moved to route 123 in Peterborough going towards Sharon.

That was the early beginnings of Lee. I grew up spending a lot of time in the woods. I just loved being out there in the woods. I don't specifically remember my parents being interested in the woods at all, but it was something quiet and a beautiful place to be. Some of my earliest activities were skiing.

Many of us learned to ski at a small hill just across the river here many years ago. Something called Whit's Ski Tows. It was quite a great place to be. Now when I drive down that street, Summer Street, it's a big apartment complex. That's the end of that. But also I spent a lot of time skiing at Temple Mountain Ski Area, which is now defunct, but was a wonderful experience. I loved skiing there, and knowing the Beebes and many of the other local families that lived and worked there. That was sort of the beginning of my realizing that there's a trail that goes through here, and so was very instrumental in the formation of the Friends of the Wapack. I'd like to make it crystal clear that if anyone were to go back in the Wapack archives, there should be a letter

from March, 1980 from Meade Cadot, who was the director of the Harris Center for Conservation Education. Meade wrote the letter to myself and Dave Weir saying that the Worcester Chapter of the AMC was no longer going to be taking care of maintaining the Wapack Trail, and was there any interest in doing something of that sort.

That was really the beginning. I know that there were other people, including Bruce Myrick, involved in the beginning of the Wapack, but that was the very, very beginning with Lee and Dave Weir getting together in his castle home in Greenfield. So that's many, many years ago, so that was 1980, and it was quite a thing of trying to organize and trying to find people that would be interested in doing this. I remember rolls of vinyl that I would spread out on a big table like this and look at tax cards and try to figure out which is where the trail was, and what was the shape of particular lots. That's where things were before, you know, mapping really took place, and we were able to figure out where the trail was and who were the owners. This was kind of a big deal. I'm sure nothing like that exists anymore but it was the start back then.

FOW: So this is about 1980. Along with Bruce and Dave, were Mary Jane Grasty and Dan Halsall and others around? Gary Belliveau, Jim Chartrand, his fiancée Denise? Roger Myrick, Jon Thunberg?

LB: Yes, they were. I don't know if those people are still alive actually; it was quite a few years ago. The Chartrands lived in Rindge but I haven't seen them in a long time.

FOW: Bruce became the trails chair and the maintenance person and then you were outings chair, and I know you were on lots of trail crews because I've been on them with you.

LB: It came up in the most recent Friends of the Wapack meeting back in January of this year that Rick [Blanchette] still



Lee Baker

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has a file of some of my cartoons that I had made, so I think there were quite a few cartoons that I did. Just sort of doodles of different happenings on the trail: animals talking to each other, and hikers trying to find the trail in a snow storm, and, you know, that's added a little bit of hilarity to it.

FOW: What made you want to do those cartoons? I have been scanning some of them because I have them in Rick's files

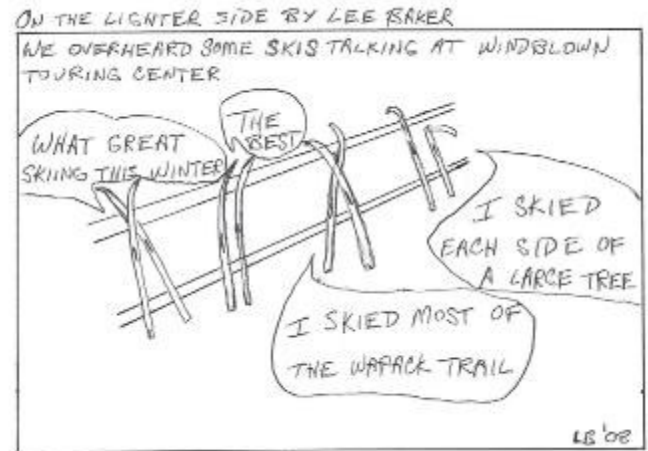
LB: Oh, just that I'm just kind of poking fun at reality, and how, you know, when taking a while to get to the point where we were at the trail with a lot of work that needed to be done, that sort of thing.

FOW: Did you draw when you were a kid?

LB: I don't remember that, actually.

FOW: Tell us about the Beebes a little bit.

LB: They were just amazing. I don't remember if they were Swiss or German, probably German, couple that started the ski area. I think it was Mike Beebe's parents, Charlie and Lucy Beebe, that actually started the ski area. It was more of a week-end hostelry type business, where they would have little cabins that people would stay in. I think that back in the 1930s, you know, that sort of thing was happening. They were on some of the early, early walks and hikes that I would have been on back when I was maybe in my teenage years. They were just a great couple, and then later on their son Mike Beebe took over the ski area and ran it. I have some great memories of in October of every year Mike used to lead a hike from Sharon over to the ski area, you know about 5 miles. I even remember a young woman who was disabled on crutches who walked those 5 miles with us. That was quite an achievement, and amazing the people have the energy to do that sort of thing.



LB: There were a lot of little stories that I remember. Somewhere in the archives it probably talks about Jane and Ollie Mutch. Ollie was this great individual working on the trail, and his wife Jane far, far surpassed any of the workers, and was great at wielding a chainsaw and just going right to it. I do remember at Whitcomb Peak there was a hang glider take off, a big platform up on the side of the mountain that they could catch the wind and take off. The Friends decided that it was really more of a nuisance attraction out there because it had fallen in, so Jane and a group of others of us went up there to take this thing apart. She wielded her chainsaw to do that. It was quite an event.

LB: One of the darker incidents that I experienced was doing some trail clearing up on Holt Peak with someone else. We got on the trail up to the top of Holt peak and realized that there were some unfortunate remains of a plane crash that happened up there, so we one way or another contacted the State Police and they and they instructed us to collect whatever we found. We packaged everything up and delivered it to a State Police officer down here in Peterborough. On the way out of that trip finding those items, I did come across a group of people that were wondering where the plane crash was. It ended up being some of this man's relatives. I had never experienced such a heartrending experience as to lead these people out to the site and hear the screaming and crying of the relatives.

LB: So there are many lighter moments. Sandy Eneguess, who was the world champion skier and Olympic competitor, would be involved in everything running the ski area. He would have a great time asking me if I'd like to go for a ride in the big snow cats in the middle of the night. So going up and down these really steep, steep slopes, and he'd be looking over at me laughing, and it's like going straight down. He was a really great individual. There are just so many little stories. He had two young daughters that he was teaching to ski, and we always said these little kids are, you know, tiny little kids just barely able to walk, and they were already skiing. They didn't have any problem skiing down the steep, steep slope because they didn't have to go back and forth around the bumps. They would just go between the bumps, and it was just an amazing thing to watch. I watched it a number of times. Of course, they didn't have any fear. They didn't have anything to worry

Lee Baker Interview (Continued from page 4)

about because their head is here and the ground is there, and they didn't have very far to fall. This is great!
A lot of great stories like that.

FOW: Did you ski cross country as well as downhill?

LB: Yes, some on the trail. I guess as I grew older I really liked flatter things. Going out on frozen lakes and that sort of thing would be much better. It was amazing doing trail clearing. One of the people that was obviously really interested in the trail many years ago was Mr. Cabot from Sharon and Boston, and he apparently--this would have been many, many years ago--used to ride a horse on sections of the trail. I just found that was amazing that there were parts of the trail that you could do that when you think about all the ledges and rocks. But he found a way to go through there on a horse, not where the trail goes today.

FOW: Did you interact with Marion Davis?

LB: Oh, not too much. I obviously knew where she lived, and at the end of her life she lived in a trailer across the street from Windblown. But I do remember different times, you know, running into her at different meetings of the Wapack, and at the school in New Ipswich. There was a dedication when her name was put on the Marion Davis trail and they had a dedication at the Temple Mountain Ski Area.

FOW: Let's do a lighter thing. What about at Ollie and Jane's wedding where you caught the ring?

LB: We had hiked up to the ledges where they were going to be married that looked out, I think, towards Boston on Pratt Mountain. They were standing at the top of this ledge and I think there was a minister down the slope a little bit. He eventually asked for the ring, and Ollie brought the ring out. I was down below there and I just heard this "tink", and I managed to grab the ring and passed it back up the ledge to Ollie. It's like, jeez, I can't believe that this happened.

FOW: You saved the day. That ring might have been hard to find if you hadn't caught it. You've led a lot of hikes. Were you the first one to lead end to end hikes or did somebody else do those first?

LB: Well, I think that the end to end hike was something historically that different people had done. I did lead that hike for several years --not ten years but maybe 3 or 4 years-- and it was, to me, kind of difficult. It wasn't hard hiking, but it was the length of the day, and you had to do it in September. We could have even done that earlier so the days were really long, but I think we did that usually in September. By the end of the day people were really lagging. I always have said that my humor gets to be pretty bad when I start doing lots of puns and that sort of thing. People are not just begging me to sit on rocks, but are saying, "Can we stop? Can we stop?" I'd say, "No, we have to keep on going". At the end of my time leading those hikes it got to be, you know, like 6:00 at night. It's starting to get dark and you have to be careful that you're not lost out in the woods on a dark night. I got everybody down to the end of the trail, but it was a lot of cajoling on my part.

FOW: Do you start at 6:00 in the morning? Did you always go from north to south?

LB: We always went from north to south to get the harder parts done in the early morning.

FOW: You led a lot of foliage hikes as well.

LB: There were a lot of hikes maybe up the Wapack on North Pack and then down Caroline's Trail or some of those other trails there. I think at this time I was also-- it would have been the 1970s-- beginning to be involved in leading hikes for the Harris Center for Conservation Education over in Hancock. I led hikes for them for about 50 years. I recently sort of hung up my spurs on that, but it was always a good combination of the Harris Center and the Wapack, leading hikes together for them.
(To be continued in the next newsletter issue.)





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Founded in 1980, the Friends of the Wapack are an all volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to the maintenance and permanent projection of the Wapack Trail and certain side trails. The Friends of the Wapack, Inc. is recognized as a charitable corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the US IRS code.

The Wapack Trail is a 21 mile hiking trail that traverses the Wapack Range from Mt. Watatic in Ashburnham MA to North Pack in Greenfield NH. Completed in 1923, it is the oldest interstate hiking trail in the Northeast.

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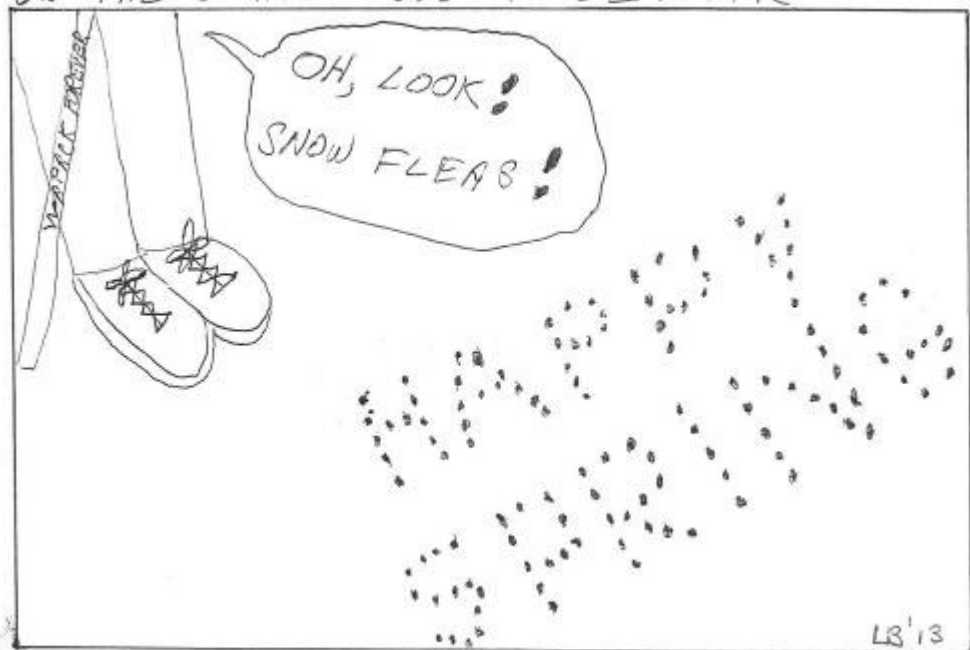
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