



Friends of Mount Arab 2006 Newsletter

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FOMA has joined AFTA

Back in early 2005 FOMA received a letter from AARCH, the umbrella organization under which we had received our non-profit status, stating that AARCH was terminating their relationship with FOMA.

We looked at alternatives that would give us tax-free status including applying to IRS directly, a complex and expensive procedure. During this unsettled period Mike Wilson, who has been selecting our Summit Stewards from within his Environmental Studies program at SUNY Potsdam, proposed formation of an 'Adirondack Fire Tower Association' (AFTA) which all fire tower groups could join for their mutual benefit. Organized under SUNY, AFTA would be non-profit and could extend this status to member groups meeting AFTA requirements. FOMA has elected to join AFTA and thereby remains non-profit.

FUNDING SOURCES

Contributions from our supporters, those of you receiving this newsletter, a list that grows each year, remains the bedrock of our support. However, we have also received tremendous support over the past several years from the St. Lawrence County Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) under the direction of Joanne Sevick. This support has been responsible for FOMA's ability to hire all of our past Summit Stewards, and we hope this support will continue on into the future. Those of you who individually contribute to FOMA, and who continue to climb Mount Arab (and ADD YOUR NAMES to the trailhead register so you may be counted) provide justification for our continued support by the YCC.

Additional support may be provided by our new affiliation with AFTA which hopes to snare potential grants that will be shared among its fire tower members. Once again, FOMA's share may well be contingent upon the level of support from all you folks who have been donating to the FOMA effort.

TOWER RENOVATION

This past fall has seen the final replacement of all wooden structures on the tower. This includes the tower floor, replaced several years ago, all the steps, and landings, the final two which were replaced this past September. The safety screen along stairways and landings has been partially repaired with only a couple of sections slated for completion in the spring.

TOWER VIEWS PROJECT

Our most recent Summit Steward, Bob Kiley, has started a project to photographically recreate the panoramic views seen from each of the four sides of the tower cab. These views from the tower windows, displayed in the tower cab, would include legends that identify distant peaks and other points of interest. The pictures would be printed using materials that resist wear and tear, but which can be replicated and replaced at low cost when necessary. Brad Donahue, one of our more recent directors, works at the Wild Center where they encounter similar problems with permanent outside displays and intends to look into means that fit our situation and budget.

AN INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN

by Donna Waltz

Arab Mountain is truly international! Last summer the register at the mountain base recorded visitors from the following nations: Canada, Iran, Germany, Netherlands, and Thailand. There were visitors from all over the state of New York, and over 105 cities and towns were recorded in the register. In addition, people came from the following states to see the wonderful views: Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and (I'm out of breath) Wisconsin.

SUMMIT INTERPRETER by Donna Waltz

The summit interpreter on Mount Arab has a number of responsibilities. First and foremost, he or she is there to interpret cultural and natural history, provide information about landmarks, and to answer questions for mountain visitors. In addition, the interpreter monitors the trail, assists in maintaining the trail registry, helps to maintain the summit facilities, keeps a daily journal recording observations pertinent to stewardship, attends 'Friends' meetings and aids in fund-raising. The goal for mountain coverage is from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

For the last few years, FOMA has participated in a partnership with SUNY Potsdam, whereby upper-division undergraduate or graduate students (usually Potsdam Environmental Studies majors) may apply for the position. The summit interpreters are supervised by Dr. Michael Wilson of the Department of English and Communications. A project associated with the mountain or fire tower is required of interpreters for which they receive college credit.

In 2005, the position was shared by two Potsdam students – Rebecca Mullins and Tanya Dugal. Rebecca served for the first half of the summer, and Tanya for the second half. In addition, Shawn Doolen filled the position of assistant steward. Rebecca began an 'Interpretive Guide' which can be utilized by future summit interpreters. Tanya did painting and presented a detailed record of visitor statistics.

In 2006 the position was again shared by two students – Garret Weaver and Bob Kiley. Both are upper-division students in the Department of Environmental Studies. Garret was on duty from June 7th to July 12th, and Bob from July 12th to August 30th.



Bob Kiley, Summit Interpreter

After two years studying the Adirondacks, I could not have been more pumped to go live on one of its most spectacular summits for almost two months. I got all my equipment ready and bought a new pair of boots for the summer. This was going to be a huge shift from college life - people around you 24/7, electricity, cable, internet, flush toilets, running water, showers - to living with none of these things that I have grown accustomed to. I fancy myself to be a woodsmen, outdoorsmen, backpacker, and fishermen. But I had no idea how much 7 weeks on top of Mt. Arab would change me.

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View of Mount Arab from the south, overlooking the swamp end of Bridgebrook pond.

The next weeks flew by. Waking up at dawn, I would sit outside, bird watch, bushwhack around the mountain looking for wildlife, or do some trail maintenance. I met a lot of interesting people that I will never forget. More than 1500 people hiked up the mountain in my seven-week stay. I always greeted the hikers as they came up with "Hey, how was the hike?" And, I had some great conversations.

My stay on Mt. Arab was an experience I will never forget. I, the student, became the teacher for hundreds who had no knowledge of the woods.



Tower Repairs

YCC SUPPORT

Donna Waltz

While funding for our mountain project comes from a variety of sources, the St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau, Youth Conservation Corps, under the leadership of Joanne Sevick, has been invaluable. Ms. Sevick has written grants for FOMA and secured a Senator Raymond Meyer Legislative Grant which funded our summit interpreter. In addition, the YCC conducted a raffle on our behalf. This year we were unable to fund an assistant interpreter, but hopefully we can do so in 2007.



HISTORY of FOMA

On Earth Day 1997 a small group of citizens and DEC officials gathered at the summit of Mount Arab. With the common desire to save and to share this historical facility and its magnificent views with future generations, they resolved to restore and maintain the sadly decaying fire tower and ranger cabin located there.

Beginning with the incorporation of 'Friends of Mount Arab' (FOMA), a non-profit organization in partnership with DEC, and now affiliated with the Adirondack Fire Tower Association, this small group has progressed steadily toward their goal. Restoration of the tower is well underway, and the Ranger cabin is nearly complete. FOMA has created an exhibit of text and photos summarizing fire ranger history and highlighting the restoration effort. Additionally, there has been extensive trail work assisted greatly by AmeriCorps work crews.

Yes! I want to become a friend of Mount Arab, to help save and maintain the tower and ranger cabin, improve the trail, and interpret the natural and cultural history of Mount Arab.

- Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution for: _____ \$10 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ Other.
- I would like to volunteer my time, services or needed material.
- I would like to order _____ patches at \$5 each plus \$1 postage per order.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to: **FRIENDS OF MOUNT ARAB**

Mail to: **Friends of Mount Arab, PO Box 185, Piercefield, NY 12973**

Oh yes, you can. by Ingeborg Sapp

For the very first time in her life my friend Eileen visited the Adirondacks. She arrived wearing her high heels, tight fitting skirt and stylish business coat and her big warm smile. I wanted to show her my very favorite haunts and give her a wilderness experience. Show her that there is more to life than paved roads and skyscrapers.

Her attire needed instant change. I had to start with the shoes. "Would you have something like heavy sneakers or hiking boots?" "Oh yes," she said, "I bought them - they are still in the box." "Blue jeans or some other comfortable slacks; rugged, to sit on some rocks?" She nodded and pointed to the suitcase in the car. I relaxed - the necessities were there. Arriving at the camp she changed into her 'new' clothes and breathed deeply. "Wow, your air smells good!" "That's what clean air smells like, Eileen." She looked around. "Mountains and trees all over - barely room to look between," she stated.

"It's wild, it's beautiful. I want to take you up on that mountain so you can really see WHERE you are." I pointed at Mount Arab, visible from the dock at our camp. It was sharply outlined against the sky. Even the tower was visible "You are kidding me," she said. "I'll have to go to the gym for a month before I can try this." "Tomorrow we'll do it." She gasped.

We packed our lunch, took plenty of fluid. It was a great day. There was another car on the parking lot and a third one pulled in spilling some eager youngsters ready to run to the top. It was not their first time. We signed in at the trailhead to document our presence forever. I wanted Eileen to set the pace so she would not feel hurried. It is only a mile and

we had no pressure of time. I wanted her to soak it up and make it a permanent memory. Light and shadow created patterns on the trail. The huge Boulders, witnesses to the ice age, had been pushed along to rest on OUR Mountain. Maples, evergreens and raspberry bushes mixed in random patterns. Ferns gently touched our legs. Poly Podys, tiny ferns, grew on rock shelves. They need the minerals provided by the rocks. Eileen, wide eyed, discovered a new world. She also heard new sounds. Birds accompanied our walk. Ravens called with their raucous voices. There were times with no sounds and we listened to the silence. Silence - unknown to city dwellers. A toad crossed our path and we took time to look into its golden eyes. Squirrels dashed from branch to branch. We went higher and higher. There is one spot where we pulled each other up. The summit was close. We could see it on the tree line. The tower welcomed us, but I was unable to get her up. We walked to the rock shelf and there was this incredible view - mountain ranges fading in the distance, bodies of water - the world was at our feet. Eileen was quiet - overwhelmed by her first summit and what it had to offer. It did not take her long though. She whipped out her cell phone and called all her three kids. "Guess where I am?" An enthusiastic report followed. I heard one of her daughters ask, "And you did all of this in your heels?" And I heard her giggle.

Eileen had her mountain memory - have your own. If Eileen can do it so can you.



Friends of Mount Arab
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