

BAY-Hiking 9/4

HEADLINE: Mount Mack:
A journey ends

875 words

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This article is bittersweet to write, because it is the last in the "View from the Belknaps" series. My final mountain I chose to climb was Mount Mack. I took Don Watson, who has been my guide through this whole endeavor, and he invited along some of his friends to join me. It was a great day for my final hike and Don chose the starting point of my adventure on Mount Klem as the starting point for this hike.

I was curious as to where I had gone wrong on my previous hike in this area and as we walked along, we chatted about possibilities. Finally we came to where I had wandered off the trail. As it turned out, I had gone off onto a snowmobile trail and Don was not surprised I had gotten turned around after making the turn. I learned that the trail is marked by a red blaze that has faded over time. The trail does fade out, but is easy to find in the winter.

We walked along the logging trail after we had started at the end of Bickford Road. The logging trail separates several times to lead to different trails. We kept taking the left-hand trail and eventually came to Round Pond. It was an absolutely gorgeous day and the four kids and two dogs that were with us enjoyed the water and the views. We went past the trail I had taken

up Klem. Continuing, we eventually came to the spot where the Boy Scouts have campouts, with evidence that someone had been there recently. We continued on and up towards the summit of Mack and took advantage of the great outlooks and views on the way up. Once we reached the top everyone broke out the food and relaxed in the shade and I finally received my patch for hiking all 12 mountains in the Belknap Range.

It was a very awesome moment for me. It took me four months to finish all 12 mountains and, looking back at my other articles, I am estimating I have hiked about 40 miles altogether. That might be a little conservative, but still pretty impressive, at least for me! I learned so much during my journey and my only regret is that I couldn't write it all into my articles. I could easily have written a novella about my experience. There were so many people who shared their knowledge with me and volunteered their time to go hiking with me to complete my goal and I want to take the opportunity to thank them now.

Don and Rebecca Watson, Dr. Judith Silverberg, Hal and Peg Graham, Dave Roberts, Dan Tinkham and his son Jake, Amy Tripp, Paul Pouliot, my co-worker Erik Zygmunt, and not to forget Don's friends who came with me on several hikes.

They were all incredibly generous with their time and their knowledge and I thank them heartily. I learned some surprising things while I was hiking around the mountains and most of them weren't

about whatever facts my hiking partner could impart. I learned that when you are out in the woods, you learn so much about people because outside things don't distract you and you can really talk to each other. I also learned that despite the tranquility and fun of a hike, your situation can turn in a second if you aren't paying attention. A healthy respect for nature is imperative if you are going to be out hiking in the woods.

I also learned that hiking is something that anyone can do as long as you go at your own pace. I have hiked with kids as young as nine and people in their sixties, and I have seen a wide variety of ages passing me on the trails, all different levels of physical fitness. I am not the most fit person in the world and through slow pacing, I made it through all 12 mountains. To repeat a cliché, if I can do it, so can you. Remember that it is not a race, and the goal is to simply get out there and enjoy the mountains right out your back door. So, at the top of my final mountain I felt like I had really done what I had set out to do and had accomplished something really great.

Don handed me my patch and once we were rested up, we headed back down and it was really fitting I think that we had a really nice day for my final hike. Most of my hikes had been through our abnormally rainy summer, and so a nice day was a definite bonus. I was happy that we had a peaceful, uneventful, enjoyable hike where I could just relax and enjoy the woods and not worry about picking someone's brain for information for my article.

There are lots of great hikes out there that I haven't tried yet and I definitely plan to try some this fall, the weather will be cool and the foliage will make the views all that much more spectacular. I hope to see you all out on the trails, and thanks for coming along with me on this journey.

CUTLINE (Hiking1)
DANIELLE DELISLE gets her patch at the top of Mount Mack from Don Watson. (courtesy photo)

CUTLINE (Hiking2) THE VIEW from one of the lookouts on Mount Mack. (Danielle DeLisle – Gilford Steamer)

CUTLINE (Hiking3) IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL day for a hike and the water beckoned. (Danielle DeLisle – Gilford Steamer)