

In Remembrance of Margaret & Harold Crate

A collection of memories from their friends in the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club



[Editor's Note: Margaret, and her husband Harold Crate, were extremely influential members of the early days of the TATC, although not original "founding members". I have kept intact the stories as submitted to me by their authors, retaining their voice and style, with only minor editing - Mal Higgins]

Here is an excerpt from the obituary for Margaret appearing in the Daily Press on April 27, 2020.
<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dailypress/obituary.aspx?pid=196081468>

"Their hobbies were numerous, and their interests varied; late in life they spent many years traveling extensively throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. A love of outdoor activity led to her and Harold's active participation in the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club camping, hiking, canoeing, climbing, and making friends. They were instrumental in the construction of the Putman Cabin . . . in use by [TATC] club members today."

[The following Remembrance first appeared as an anonymously authored newsletter article in the December 1990-January 1991 TATC newsletter. It is believed that the author is Jeanne Everitt, the newsletter editor at the time. Here is the link to the original newsletter, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jMozvM1gtF5rjxX1sr3jg-5eKimkdSbA/view> found online at the TATC website: <https://tidewateratc.com/> . - Mal Higgins]

YOU KNOW WHO I MEAN!

By Anonymous; perhaps Jeanne Everitt

When you talk about this couple, it is not easy to separate one from the other. Now, that is not to indicate they are clones. Rather, it attests to their support of each other in their mutual and separate interests.

Neither is it easy to get to a beginning point with this duo for they joined the TATC and immediately became an active part of the core of a major project. They continue to devote a large portion of their energies to our activities yet have many interests outside the Club as well.

When they "found" the TATC, they were very quick to state, "We aren't joiners!" and along with that said they probably wouldn't attend meetings. However, they wanted to hike with others.

Nevertheless, for some reason, they did attend a meeting shortly after that. And, Margaret said they "haven't missed a meeting since".

Their first, and a continuing, involvement with the Club was with the construction of the cabin. Harold, who had gained basic construction know-how by observing his father, arrived on the scene in time to draw up the floor plan for this 1-1/2 story structure and to help choose the hillside site.

Margaret recorded on film the hard work and the play, the sunshine and the snow, the people and the materials - all the necessary ingredients for a solid building. Presently, she has three scrapbooks which follow the birth and maturation of this project to include current maintenance trips.

Both continue to support cabin maintenance. They also help with the annual open house which adds a delicious feast to this beautiful mountain retreat.

Photography is another interest which Margaret and Harold share -Margaret taking pictures; Harold developing them. So, it is not surprising that Margaret has recorded and continues to maintain the history of the Club through photographs of day hikes, canoe trips, picnics and parties.

In addition to Margaret's role as historian, Harold has been a counsellor. They have served as social directors and also have led rappelling trips. Margaret was "older" when she first rappelled off a picnic table in their back yard and said she never would have dreamed of rappelling when she was young and had more sense.

It is difficult to imagine the TATC without Margaret and Harold Crate. Yet they traveled to Boone, NC, to find us. There, at an Appalachian Trail Conference, they met some of our members.

It was their enjoyment of the outdoors and subsequent search for a hiking group which took them to the Conference, and it was out of the pleasant memories of a 6-week family vacation that that enjoyment grew.

Anyone who has fun tenting with three teen-age sons while crossing the US has got to have lots of enduring characteristics! Seriously, Margaret assured me tenting came naturally to them, and they followed that trip with shorter outings to the Shenandoah National Park and to PATC cabins.

Margaret is a native to this area. Harold came to the peninsula in '42 from the University of Illinois and worked until retirement as an engineer at NASA. The teen-agers are adults now. David lives on the peninsula and Jeff in Christiansburg. Steven and his wife live in Blacksburg and are members of the Club.

caverns, towns, etc.

[Editor's Note: For decades, Marilyn Horvath led numerous hikes on the Appalachian Trail in Virginia, to the TATC cabin, and various local hikes. The past practice at TATC general meetings was for hike leaders to provide an oral report about the hike. Each time, despite whatever nasty weather or other challenges faced Marilyn and her hikers, Marilyn would end the report with "We had a really great time". - Mal Higgins]

MARILYN HORVATH:

I remember Margaret Crate as an early natural leader of our trail club, who inspired all the members toward their contributions; and Otey Shelton for his absolute devotion to the Club and his leadership by example. Together, you could say they made the club.

MAL HIGGINS:

**Remembrances of Margaret and Harold Crate
by Mal Higgins**

As others have commented, Margaret Crate and her husband, Harold, were inseparable in life and in their devotion to Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club. I think I first met Margaret and Harold when TATC kicked off its construction of the Douglas Putman cabin in January 1979.

My memories of Margaret and Harold have become a composite of so many times being around them on the weekend construction trips that occurred monthly thereafter. Harold, who was retired, had a civil engineering background with NASA and developed the cabin plans at home in Newport News. I seem to remember that he brought his plans mostly in his head to the site, and instructed us unskilled laborers in the step by step process of leveling the site, digging foundation footings, the framing that was done to provide a backstop to the mortaring of the rocks that we picked up from the ground, and erecting the timbers for the roof.

The tasks of building the cabin proceeded in an orderly fashion, with TATC members driving from Tidewater on Friday nights and camping out at the established camp sites along a newly created trail about 150 yards below the cabin and on what slightly flat ground existed. Margaret and Harold claimed a tent site on a nice little flat spot, and had a nice sized, maybe six-man tent there. To this day when I collect water at the spring to carry back to the cabin, I will notice their nearby tent site. It's overgrown now, but it's the Crate's site. We others found tiny level spots on the trail edge and erected our tents there. All of us were close to the cinderblock barbecue erected for Jacque Jenkins, who assumed overall cook duties to our everlasting gratitude

Margaret did everything in building the cabin. I can see her in my mind helping lift and haul the rocks we picked up in our "Polish wheelbarrows" up to the cabin. I can see her mortaring in the rocks as the walls slowly grew under the supervision of Otey Shelton. I can see her mixing the mortar in the big tub we used. On other weekends she might be chinking and smoothing in the mortar between the rocks; painting the walls white; helping lay the first floor (a series of cut tree "rounds" laid on the earth and mortared in); injecting caulk in hard to reach places of the walls up high to keep the critters out.

Margaret was a photographer and thanks to her we have a good pictorial record of the construction of the cabin during its main construction years, 1979—1982. Many of her photos (all on film) have been scanned and loaded on the TATC website on the cabin tab. For many years Margaret was the club

historian and through her collection of photos and preservation of the newsletters, she established the informal duties of the club historian.

As Harold's health declined, we saw less of Margaret and Harold. Harold died Jan. 15, 2004. Margaret eventually moved from Newport News to be near her adult children in Christiansburg, VA. Her death this year in 2020 marks the passing of a wonderful woman who together with Harold left a lasting legacy with TATC.

MARY JO KENNEDY:

"Such a great Lady, so much to be learned from her wonderful life and contributions to all she came in contact with. She was so encouraging to me when I first joined the club. I was older and had doubts, but she was such a great inspiration not to mention a wealth of information concerning being out of doors and in the mountains. Even more, on best choices to becoming a Human being."

Harold Crate

[Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from the obituary of Harold Crate, published in the Daily Press from January 16th to 17th, 2004.

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dailypress/obituary.aspx?n=harold-crate&pid=1810240> - Mal Higgins]

Harold Crate, 87, passed away on Thursday, Jan. 15, 2004. He was born in Mokena, Ill., to Irving and Catherine Crate on Oct. 21, 1916. Mr. Crate received his Master's degree from the University of Illinois, and began work at NASA in 1942. He retired from NASA as Head of the Mechanical Design Branch at Langley Research Facilities Division, Engineering Division, after 32 years, where he was instrumental in establishing tracking stations for the Mercury space project. After retirement, he was active in the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club, and he traveled extensively with his beloved wife, Margaret. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Margaret Corbell Crate; three sons, David Crate of Newport News, Steven Paul Crate and his wife, Linda Hartman Crate, of Christiansburg, Va., and Jeffrey Todd Crate and his wife, Ann Winesett Crate, of Blacksburg, Va.

Margaret Crate at the TATC Cabin

