

TUESDAY 14 AUGUST 1973
CHALFONT, PA. 18914

PITTSBURGH COUNCIL
AM. YOUTH HOSTELS
6300 FIFTH AVE.
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15232

ATTENTION: MR. CLIFF HAM, BAKER TRAIL CHAIRMAN

RE: BAKER TRAIL TRIP

DEAR SIR;

AS THE BOYS PUT IT, WE "WIPE OUT" ON THE SECOND DAY, WITH ONE BOY HAVING SERIOUS DIFFICULTY, DUE TO AN INFLAMED ACHILLES TENDON, AND ANOTHER HAVING MINOR FOOT PROBLEMS. THIS DID NOT WIPE OUT THE TRIP, HOWEVER, JUST THE CHANCE TO HIKE "THE WHOLE THING".

WE LEFT CHALFONT IN EXTREMELY HEAVY RAIN (6 INCHES FROM MIDNIGHT TILL 4:30 AM - THREE INCHES IN LESS THAN 50 MINUTES). MANY STATE ROADS WERE CLOSED AND WE WENT PAST TWO CARS THAT HAD BEEN SWEEP SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET OFF WALNUT STREET IN COLMAR, PA. THE TRIP OUT WAS ROUTINE, TRAVELING, EATING LUNCH, AND CONTINUING TO THE NORTH END OF THE TRAIL. WE BRIEFLY EXPLORED ^(ON FOOT) SO THAT WE WOULD DEFFINETLY RECOGNIZE IT WHEN WE WOULD RETURN LATER ON FOOT. WE THEN WENT TO WARD'S RANCH, BUT FOUND NO ONE THERE, AND A LOCKED GATE ACROSS THE DRIVE. WE DECIDED THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO GO FARTHER SOUTH TOWARD VOWINCKEL. WE MET ANTHONY ANDELMO, WHO LEFT US PARK ON HIS PROPERTY AT THE SOUTH EDGE OF OF THE GAME LAND, ABOUT A MILE FATHER DOWN THE ROAD. WE LEFT THE VOLKSWAGON, AND WENT TO CROOKED CREEK STATE PARK, WHERE WE SPENT THURSDAY NIGHT. FRIDAY WE WENT WEST TO MORaine STATE PARK AND A VISIT TO THE NATIONAL BOY SCOUT JAMBOREE EAST, WHERE WE SPENT THE DAY. FRIDAY EVENING WE CAME BACK TO FREEPORT, AND OFFICER GEORGE THOMPSON SHOWED US WHERE WE COULD LEAVE THE DODGE VAN, AND PROMISED THAT THE FREEPORT POLICE WOULD KEEP CHECK ON IT. WE THEN WENT TO SCOTT'S MARKET (SHOWN IN GUIDE), BUT HE RECOMMENDED US TO CAMERLOS MARKIST, AT FIFTH AND CHERRY WAY ^(PARALLEL ALLEY NEXT TO HIGH STREET) ABOUT $\frac{1}{3}$ MILE FARTHER NORTH.
(NEXT PAGE PLEASE)

I WOULD RECOMMEND THIS BE ADDED TO THE GUIDE BOOK AS IT IS A MUCH LARGER SUPPLY CENTER. A BOY AT THE CHECK OUT COUNTER ALSO GAVE US DIRECTIONS AND PERMISSION TO USE A CAMPSITE THEY ARE CLEARING ON TOP OF THE HILL NEAR THE START OF THE TRAIL, WHERE WE SLEPT FRIDAY NITE, LOOKING DOWN ACROSS THE RIVER AT FREEPORT. IN THE MORNING WE WERE UP AT 6:30 AM AND PLANNED TO HIKE TO SCHENLEY SHELTER FOR BREAKFAST, BUT HUNGER DICTATED AN EARLIER STOP, SO WE ATE LUNCH AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL NEAR SOME SPRINGS. WHILE EATING, ANOTHER HIKER CAME THRU WITH A DAY PACK, BOUND FOR CROOKED CREEK, BUT NOT CAMPING ON TRAIL. HE ALSO TOLD ME ABOUT THE RELOCATION NEAR THE IDAHO SHELTER (MAPS 4+5) ON THE TREE FARM, WHICH HE HAD DISCOVERED THE HARD WAY ON A HIKE HE HAD TAKEN EARLIER. I NEVER DID GET HIS NAME. WE CLEANED UP AND CONTINUED ON, VISITING THE SHELTER AT SCHENLEY LONG ENOUGH TO TAKE A FEW PICTURES, AND THE SPRING LOOKED RATHER ~~UNINVITING~~, BUT WE HAD FILLED UP AT THE SPRING ON THE TRAIL, ~~OPPOSITE~~ ^{OPPOSITE THE} WEST END OF DONLEY ISLAND, SO WE DID NOT NEED WATER. (THIS SPRING IS NOT SHOWN ON CHART, BUT WAS CLEAR AND COLD AND RUNNING, OR SEEPING, AT SEVERAL PLACES, INTO DITCH ALONG ROAD NEAR LOW SPOT AND RIGHT (SOUTH EAST) TURN IN TRAIL) PERHAPS THIS SHOULD BE SHOWN ON GUIDE ^(MAP #1) AS IT SEEMS MUCH BETTER THAN THE SPRING AT THE SHELTER, AND IS ONLY ABOUT 1/2 MILE DOWN HILL FROM THE SHELTER. ABOUT 3/10 OF A MILE PAST THE SHELTER, WE DISCOVERED YOU TAKE THE LEFT FORK, RATHER THAN THE BETTER GRAVEL ROAD TO THE RIGHT. THIS COULD HAVE BEEN MARKED BETTER, BUT OUR THANKS TO SOME HIKER WHO HAD PUT A 3x5 CARD WITH BAKER TRAIL AND ARROW TO LEFT ON THE UTILITY POLE WITH A THUMB TACK. THIS IS AT A GARAGE + HOUSE ABOUT 1/10 MILE BEFORE THE TRAIL TURNS 90° TO THE LEFT.

LUNCH WAS EATEN AT REST STOPS, AND EVEN WHILE WE TRAVELED. THE MANY BLACK BERRIES ALONG THE WAY WERE AN UNEXPECTED TREAT FOR DESERT.

(NEXT PAGE PLEASE)

THE BOYS THOUGHT YOU MUST BE KIDDING WHEN WE CAME TO THE POINT WHERE THE ROAD TAKES A Y AND THE TRAIL GOES STRAIGHT AHEAD, OR AS THE BOYS SAW IT, STRAIGHT UP. THEY FOUND THIS A CHALLENGE WITH PACKS ON, BUT WE SAW BLAZES AND THE SIGN AND KNEW IT WAS THE ROUTE. WE DID NOT EXPECT PERFECTLY GRADED TRAIL, BUT THIS WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE MORE TIMID, AND PERHAPS COULD BE GRADED AT AN ANGLE LESS SEVERE THAN AT PRESENT, AT SOME FUTURE DATE.

WE CONTINUED ON TO CROOKED CREEK SHELTER, WHICH HAD AN EXCELLENT SPRING (WILD MINT ABUNDANT @ SPRING, ALSO), AND ~~WHILE~~ HALF THE GROUP WENT OUT TO LUCKY'S TO BUY FUTURE FOOD SUPPLIES, THE OTHERS FETCHED WATER AND STARTED SUPPER. WHEN THE OTHERS ARRIVED BACK WE ATE, CLEANED UP, AND WENT TO BED AT DARK.

I HAD NOTICED DAVE FAVORING ONE FOOT, BUT HE THOUGHT A NIGHTS REST WOULD TAKE CARE OF THIS, SO I WENT TO SLEEP ALSO.

UP WITH THE SUN, BREAKFAST SOON DONE, WATER CANTEENS FILLED AND "AWAY WE GO". I NOTICE DAVE LIMPING AND KIRK ALSO FAVORING ONE FOOT. WE CONTINUE ACROSS ROUTE 66 AND CALL A HALT AT A TRAILER BELONGING TO MRS. BETTY KING (143 N. GRANT AVE. KITTANNING, PA. 16201) WHO WAS NOT ~~THERE~~ AT THE TIME. I CHECKED BOTH BOYS FEET, AND DECIDED AS A GROUP, WE WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH AS A PARTY OF 5, TO DOUBLE CARRY TWO PACKS AND/OR A BOY, SO WE HAD TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE TWO INJURED WOULD REMAIN THERE WITH JODY, AND RICH AND I WOULD RETURN TO FREEPORT AND BRING UP THE DODGE. WE BACK HIKE ROUTE 66, AND SOME SIDE ROADS, AND THEN DOWN THE PENN CENTRAL RIGHT OF WAY FROM KELLEY STATION, TO FREEPORT. WE FOUND THE POLICE OFFICERS ON PATROL AND LEFT THEM KNOW HOW THANKFUL WE WERE TO THEM FOR WATCHING THE CAR FOR US, AND THAT WE WERE PICKING IT UP EARLY. WE RETURNED, ONLY TO FIND THAT THE KINGS HAD COME TO THE TRAILER, AND HAD GUESTS WITH THEM. THEY HAD TREATED THE BOYS ROYALY, OFFERING FOOD + BEVERAGE, WHICH THE BOYS REFUSED, HAVING THIS IN THEIR PACKS.

THEY DID NOT REFUSE, THE OFFICER OF A BATTERY OPERATED PORTABLE RADIO HOWEVER, AND THE BOYS WERE LISTENING TO THE BALL GAME WHEN I RETURNED. WE THANKED OUR WONDERFUL HOSTS AND LOADED PACKS AND BOYS AND WENT

~~TO THE~~
DINNER AT ELDERTON FOR SUPPER, VISITED THE KEYSTONE POWER STATION AND WITH LIGHT PACKS, STOPPED OVERNIGHT AT THE IDAHO SHELTER. MORNING FOUND KIRK MUCH IMPROVED, BUT DAVE STILL NOT UP TO EXTENDED HIKING WITH A PACK, SO WE WENT BACK TO THE ALLEGHENY RIVER BELOW FREEPORT, WHERE WE HAD OUR AFTER BREAKFAST SWIM AND THEN WALKED AND RODE THE WESTERN HALF OF THE "OLD TRADERS PATH" WHICH I WANTED TO GET PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANYHOW. WE PICKED UP SUPPLIES IN VANDERGRIFT AND CROSSED THE "KISKI" AND PICKED UP THE TRAIL AGAIN AT LEE'S LAKE, BOWLING ALLEY & DRIVE IN, HIKING IN TO THE SHELTER (WARRIEN'S RESTING PLACE) WHERE WE SPENT THE NITE.

THE VIEW IS BEAUTIFUL AS YOU GO INTO CAMP. IN THE MORNING WE SEPARATED WITH THE BOYS HIKING ON EAST ON THE TRADERS PATH, AN I HIKING BACK TO LEE'S BOWLING ALLEY FOR THE CAR. I WENT DOWN TO NORTH VANDERGRIFT, WHERE I PURCHASED GASOLINE. THEN I PARKED THE VAN AT (66 A) ROAD AND STARTED HIKING BACK TO MEET THE BOYS. - I HIKED QUITE A WAYS AND BLEW TWO WHISTLE BLASTS, AND WAITED FOR THE ONE TOOT IN REPLY, BUT I DID NOT GET A REPLY FOR SEVERAL TIMES. I EVENTUALLY REACHED A CLEARING ON A HILL TOP WHERE ELECTRICAL HIGH TENSION LINES, A GAS PIPE LINE, AND SEVERAL OTHER PATHS LED OFF IN ABOUT 6 DIRECTIONS, AND I COULD NOT SEE A BLAZE ON ANY OF THEM, SO I GROUNDED MY PALK AND STARTED GOING OUT ONE, THEN ANOTHER IN HOPES OF PICKING UP THE TRAIL. ONCE WHEN I RETURNED I BLEW THE WHISTLE, AND GOT A REPLY - BEHIND ME. IT TURNS OUT THE BOYS ALSO
(NEXT PAGE)

HAD LOST THE TRAIL, AND IN HIKING EAST HAD REACHED 66 A ABOUT A MILE SOUTH OF THE TRAIL, BUT RIGHT AT THE GAS STATION WHERE I HAD PURCHASED GASOLINE. HE DIRECTED THEM NORTH, WHERE THEY FOUND THE CAR AND SET OUT AFTER ME ON THE TRAIL, AFTER LEAVING THEIR PACKS IN THE VAN. HENCE THE WHISTLE BEHIND ME. I TOOK MANY PICTURES, BUT WE HAD TROUBLE FOLLOWING THE EASTERN HALF OF THE TRAIL, LOOSING IT, FINDING IT AGAIN ONLY TO LOOSE IT ONCE MORE. EVEN THE OLD TIMERS, AND SHELOCTA'S POSTMASTER, THAT WE ASKED, HAD ONLY HEARD OF IT, BUT HAD NO IDEA WHERE IT WAS, OR WHERE IT WENT. WE THEREFORE COVERED THE EASTERN HALF IN AN ON (THE TRAIL) AGAIN, OFF (THE TRAIL) AGAIN MANNER.

WE WENT NORTH THAT EVENING, AND AFTER ARRIVING AT COOK'S FOREST OFFICE AFTER IT HAD CLOSED (4:00 PM), WE WENT DOWN TOWARD FISHER, NOT REALIZING THAT RIDGE CAMP WOULD HAVE LEFT US IN, HAVING A SEPERATE OFFICE AT THE CAMPSITE. THE PARK DIRECTIONS JUST STATED "NO CAMPING WITH OUT A PERMIT" AND THE OFFICE WAS CLOSED, SO WE COULD NOT GET A PERMIT. WE ATE AND BY THEN IT WAS DARK, SO WE MADE LITTLE EFFORT TO FIND THE TRAIL, AND DECIDED TO BED DOWN NEAR WHERE WE WERE, AND HIKE ON TO FISHER SHELTER FOR BREAKFAST IN THE MORNING, WHEN WE COULD SEE. THE RESULT WAS THAT SOME SLEPT IN THE VAN, AND SOME OUTSIDE ON THE GROUND, UNDER THE STARS, BY THE CEMETARY AT FISHER. WE WERE AWAKE AT DAY LIGHT AND WENT ON TO FISHER SHELTER FOR BREAKFAST. THE HAZIE WAS (NEXT PALE BLUE)

STILL HEAVY, SO DISTANT PICTURES WERE POOR. WE PICKED UP SOME LITTER, BUT DID NOT CLEAN THE SITE AS ~~WELL~~ WELL AS WE DID AT IDAHO OR CROOKED CREEK. WE HAD $\frac{1}{2}$ A GOOD SIZED PLASTIC BAG FULL, WHICH WAS ALL WE WANTED TO CARRY, AND TIME KEPT ON MOVING. WE HIKE BACK TO THE CAR, THEN DROVE BACK TO ~~COOK'S FOREST STATE PARK OFFICE~~ COOK'S FOREST STATE PARK OFFICE. THEY GAVE US SOME LITERATURE AND DIRECTED US ACROSS THE BRIDGE, TO A STORE, TO BUY (20¢) A MAP OF THE TRAILS, AND TO THE OFFICE AT RIDGE CAMP TO REGISTER TO STAY OVERNIGHT FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS. WE CHOSE SITE #82, AND SET UP CAMP (COST \$4.00 FOR 2 DAYS). WE THEN HIKE OUT TO THE FIRE TOWER AND SENECA OVERLOOK, WHERE THE BOYS DELIGHTED IN EXPLORING THE UNDERGROUND ROCK CAVES, I PHOTOGRAPHED A WEASEL, BUT NOT HAVING GOOD LIGHT OR TELEPHOTO LENS WITH ME, THE WEASEL IS PRETTY SMALL IN THE PICTURES. I ALSO SAW A FOX SQUIRREL ON THE RIVER TRAIL ON WHICH I ~~WAS RETURNING~~ ^{WAS RETURNING} TO CAMP AFTER HAVING HIKE DOWN THE OTHER PART OF THE RIVER (WHICH IS ALSO THE BAKER) TRAIL, ON MY WAY DOWN, HIKE BEYOND THE STATE PARK AND ACROSS THE CLARION RIVER AND ON SOUTH ON THE BAKER TRAIL UNTIL MY TIME RAN OUT AND I HAD TO RETURN. I PHOTOGRAPHED MANY THINGS, BUT THOSE WHITE TAIL DEER SURE MADE ME SHOOT PICTURES.

(NEXT PAGE PLEASE)

WE HAD SUPPER, AND OUR EVENING ENTERTAINMENT WAS PROVIDED BY THE PARK, IN THE FORM OF NATURE FILMS "FIVE COLORFUL BIRDS" - ONE ON BEARS - AND THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE A CARTOON VERSION OF 'PETER AND THE WOLF' BUT THE SOUND PORTION OF THE MOVIE PROJECTOR BROKE AND THIS LAST ONE HAD TO BE POSTPONED. SOME OF US HAD DONE LAUNDRY, AND ALL WERE TIRED AND ASLEEP BY 10:00 PM.

IN THE MORNING WE ATE AND CLEANED UP, PUT ALL VALUABLES IN THE LOCKER IN THE VAN, LOCKED THE DOORS AND SAID GOOD-BYE TO THE CAR AGAIN. WE HIKE DOWN THE ROAD AND PICKED UP THE BAKER TRAIL, WHICH WE FOLLOWED WITH STOPS AT CATHEDRAL WOODS, AND THE MUSEUM AND INFORMATION CENTER. I HAD MET A MAN (I THINK HIS NAME WAS SAMUEL GEARS?) FROM PITTSBURGH THE DAY BEFORE. ~~HE SAID~~ HE SAID "THE TRAIL WAS NOTHING BUT WEEDS OF SHOULDER HEIGHT" AFTER YOU LEAVE COOK FOREST STATE PARK AND ADVISED US AGAINST HIKING THIS SECTION. I AM GLAD WE DID NOT TAKE HIS ADVICE, ALTHOUGH WE FOUND HIGH GROWTH, WE FOUND THE TRAIL INTERESTING, SAW WILDLIFE AND ENJOYED IT. THE LAST LITTLE BIT IN THE PARK HAD BLAZES AND WE WERE THANKFUL, BECAUSE AFTER CROSSING THE BLACK TOP ROAD THE TRAIL WAS DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW UNTIL WE SAW YELLOW PLASTIC TAPES AND THEN BLAZES. FROM THERE ON THE HIKE WAS EASY TO FOLLOW. HOT, GOING UP THE ROAD IN "KITTANNING STATE FOREST" AND NOT TOO MANY PLACES TO GET WATER UNTIL WE GOT TO THE GAME LANDS.

(NEXT PAGE PLEASE)

WE MOVED AT A GOOD PACE, HAVING ONLY 1 DAYS FOOD, ETC. IN OUR PACKS. WE LOOKED AT THE WATER AT A COUPLE OF LITTLE STREAMS IN KITTANNING FOREST BUT THE WATER WAS POLLUTED, AND WE DIDN'T FILL UP UNTIL WE PASSED A POND IN THE GAME LANDS, COON CREEK, IN THE NATIONAL FOREST HAD GOOD COOL WATER, AND WE SPLASHED EACH OTHER TO COOL OFF. WE HIKE ON TO THE END OF THE TRAIL, AND TURNED SOUTH ON THE ROAD TO VOWINCKEL. A BOY FISHING, ASKED IF I WOULD LIKE HIM TO CATCH ONE FOR ME, AND SHOWED SOME LARGE CRAYFISH HE HAD CAUGHT. I THANKED HIM BUT DECLINED HIS OFFER. DAVE MUST HAVE BEEN GETTING ANXIOUS NOW THAT HIS ANCKLE WAS BETTER. HE WALKED INTO KIRK'S FOOT TWICE TAKING HIS LOW SHOE OFF HIS HEEL, OR AS HE PUT IT "GIVING HIM A FLAT TIRE".

WE SOON HAD HIKE BACK TO ANTHONY ANDELMO'S WHERE WE THANKED THEM FOR WATCHING THE CAR. THEY DID NOT WANT TO TAKE ANYTHING, BUT WHEN I FOUND THAT HE WAS OUT OF WORK, I INSISTED THEY TAKE \$5.00. WE LOADED THE PACKS AND 5 OF US IN, UNTIL A SARDINE CAN, LOOKED SPACIOUS. THEN BACK, WITH THE VOLKSWAGEN, TO COOK'S FOREST, WHERE WE TOOK IN OUR LAUNDRY, ATE SUPPER, CLEANED UP AND AGAIN ENJOYED THE NATURE FILMS.

FRIDAY MORNING WE HEARD THE BEAR (3:30 AM), AND I GOT TO SEE ONE BUT TO FAIR AWAY FOR EVEN A GOOD FLASH PICTURE. BACK FOR ANOTHER 40 WINKS, THEN UP FOR BREAKFAST. WHILE THE BOYS STRUCK CAMP AND FINNISHED PACKING, I JOINED THE VOLKSWAGEN (NEXT PAGE PLEASE)

TO THE DODGE VAN. A LAST CHECK OF THE
CAMP SITE, AND WE WERE ON OUR WAY.

THE TRIP HOME WAS INTERRUPTED FOR
LUNCH, AND DID IT RAIN. AFTER LUNCH
WE WENT BACK ON ROUTE 80 AND MANY CARS
WERE PULLING OFF ON EITHER SIDE OF THE
ROAD, AND FORMED TRAFFIC JAMS UNDER THE
BRIDGES, IT WAS RAINING SO HARD. JUST
AS WE CAME TO AN ELECTRICAL HIGH TENSION
LINE CROSSING, A BOLT OF LIGHTNING STRUCK
THE TOWER ~~ABOUT~~ 200 FEET TO OUR RIGHT,
AFTER THE BOLT, THE IONIZED AIR CONTINUED TO
ARC BRIEFLY, AND WHEN IT STOPPED, IT JUST
SEEMED TO EXPLODE LIKE FIREWORKS ON THE
4 OF JULY. WE SOON WERE ALL BACK HOME,
FROM OUR LITTLE HIKE, AND EVEN THOUGH WE
FAILED TO HIKE THE WHOLE THING, WE WILL
BE RELIVING THE EVENTS OF THIS HIKE AS LONG AS
WE LIVE. THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED
MAKE IT POSSIBLE AND ESPECIALLY TO THE
PITTSBURGH COUNCIL A.Y.H. AND MR. CLIFF HAM
AND HIS COMMITTEE.

SINCERELY,

Robert E. Beck

ROBERT E. BECK
423 W. BUTLER AVE.
CHALFONT, PA. 18914
TEL. 215-822-2121