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## A Peak Ahead: Pioneers of Unusual Sorts

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# Pioneers of Unusual Sorts

OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL LOOK AT MOUNTAIN PIONEERS ON AND OFF the ridges. These people have changed how most of us perceive and experience mountains, but their legacies have remained lost or one-dimensional.

In January 2018, a 94-year-old American journalist named Elizabeth Hawley died in Kathmandu, Nepal. Since 1960, she had chronicled Himalayan mountain climbers and had maintained the *Himalayan Database*. She was “regarded as the undisputed authority on mountaineering in Nepal,” according to the American Alpine Club, to which Hawley donated her papers. Climber Mara Larson worked for Hawley in Hawley’s later years and will share memories of the dedicated, low-key reporter. Working alongside Larson, I will present a portrait of Hawley designed to expand her legacy beyond the climbing community.

Back in 1951, when packs were made of canvas and people thought only soldiers trudged long distances, three men walked the entire Appalachian Trail (then 2,050 miles long) in single trips. A fourth covered 1,700 miles of the trail the same season. At the time, these were zany feats. In our next issue, historian Mills Kelly pieces together the story of the AT’s little-known “class of 1951.” The public didn’t know what the AT was; trail crews had declared it complete only fourteen years earlier. Although the four in the class of 1951 weren’t the first to thru-hike, they pioneered the phenomenon of trail thru-hiking. The experience combines long distances, solitude, and grueling physical effort with a strong social network.

In other stories we’re working on: In California, Dianne Fallon hikes the John Muir Trail at age 57 and notices hikers and outfitters worry about her—maybe too much. In New Hampshire, Susan Schibanoff traces the connections between the newspaper explosion of the mid-1800s and the development of the Crawford Path in the White Mountains. Also in the White Mountains, a man relives the death of his friend on Mount Madison. We follow a biologist’s work with older common loons in Maine, and Bill Geller returns with history in Maine’s backcountry.

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