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Somebody Should Build a Bridge Over This River: A Young Trail Crew's Feat, 1953

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Somebody Should Build a Bridge Over This River

A young trail crew's feat, 1953

Douglas W. Rankin



I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU THE CULMINATING ADVENTURE of my youth: the building of a 36-foot, 4-inch cable suspension bridge over the West Branch of the Peabody River, which drains the Great Gulf, a massive glacial cirque on the north side of Mount Washington, deep in New Hampshire's White Mountains. It was 1953, I was 21 years old, and in the final of five seasons on the Appalachian Mountain Club trail crew. None of us had prior experience in bridge construction. In those unreconstructed days, the crew consisted of about ten high school or college-age males. From our base in Whitefield, we worked ten six-day weeks, most of them in the White Mountains. The Appalachian Mountain Club had made patrolling and "standardizing" trails a priority since the early 1920s.¹ We also were responsible for the upkeep of shelters, toilets, can pits (this was pre-"carry in, carry out" policy), ladders, and bridges—which from time to time involved a major construction project. It is the last that led to this tale.

The adventure began on June 27, 1951, near the beginning of my third year on the crew. First-year man Bill Peterson and I patrolled down the Osgood Trail after a night at Madison Spring Hut. We were returning to meet the rest of our work crew at our camp on the Bluff. We dropped our gear at the camp, and I set off alone to patrol the Madison Gulf cutoff and Madison Gulf Trail down to the West Branch. There, I discovered that the southern half of the Great Gulf Bridge was gone—washed out. I was dumbfounded. While returning to the Bluff, I ran into the rest of the work crew, told them of the disaster, and we all went down to gawk. Clearly, the repair would be a major undertaking. We knew that we could not do it that summer.

As we stood there looking at and talking about the washout, it began to sink in that, should I return the following summer as trail master, rebuilding the bridge might be my responsibility. I definitely had conflicted feelings about the challenge versus the uncertainty of success.

Our 1951 crew was small—only eight full-time members. We already had our hands full cleaning up after the November 1950 Great Appalachian Storm, a large extratropical cyclone that probably had wiped out the Great Gulf Bridge. We did not come close to finishing the cleanup that year but

¹ For further reflections on trail work and the trail crews of the 1950s, see Doug Mayer and Rebecca Oreskes, "Mountain Voices: Ben English, Jr.," *Appalachia*, vol. 62, no. 1: 46–62.

Week four: Douglas W. Rankin adjusts vertical tie bars on the cable suspension bridge he and a handful of young workers were building near Mount Washington. COURTESY OF

DOUGLAS W. RANKIN

did so in 1952 directed by Howard M. Goff, councillor of trails. Summer 1952 brought more bad news. A rock slide on the headwall of Huntington Ravine had wiped out part of the trail. The front supporting log for the ridgepole of the large Great Gulf shelter (at an elevation of 3,250 feet and built in 1927) had broken. The front of the roof and poop deck had collapsed. We put off any thoughts of bridge construction until the summer of 1953.

In fall 1952, new Councillor of Trails Allen B. Folger set the rebuilding of the Great Gulf Bridge as a priority for 1953. I faced a dilemma. I had just completed four wonderful years on the trail crew but knew that, for my career, I should seek geological work the next summer. The challenge of the Great Gulf Bridge won.

The question of how to go about building trail bridges had concerned the AMC for a long time. In 1932, Councillor of Trails Harland Sisk wrote in an article on trail bridges in *Appalachia* (vol. 19, no. 2, 279–287), “It was agreed that our regular trail crew, made up of college students, was not sufficiently skilled to undertake any serious bridge-building projects. Local men, experienced in various kinds of outdoor carpentry, seemed best suited.” I was not aware of this statement until the summer of 2010. As far as I knew in 1952, the trail crew had not constructed a major bridge since before the Great Hurricane of 1938.

Seeking Help

The old log bridge, which I have guessed was built in the 1930s, had consisted of two spans with a total length of about 90 feet. The easiest approach to rebuilding it would be to hire someone with construction and woods experience to do the job with the trail crew’s support. Over the winter, I approached the then Brown Paper Company of Berlin, New Hampshire, for help in finding such a person. Nothing worked out, but I did get a nice tour of the mill in Cascade. I next sought the advice of Joe Dodge, the huts manager at Pinkham Notch. One person he suggested was not available; Joe recommended that we look for another site either upstream or downstream. He pushed the idea of a cable suspension bridge rather than a log bridge. On June 20, 1953, Al Folger and I visited the bridge to consider just that. We eventually settled on a site about 400 feet downstream from the old bridge that would require a much shorter span and thus make a suspension bridge feasible.

Our major concern was a large boulder in the middle of the river that might direct debris into the bridge during high water or the spring ice-out.



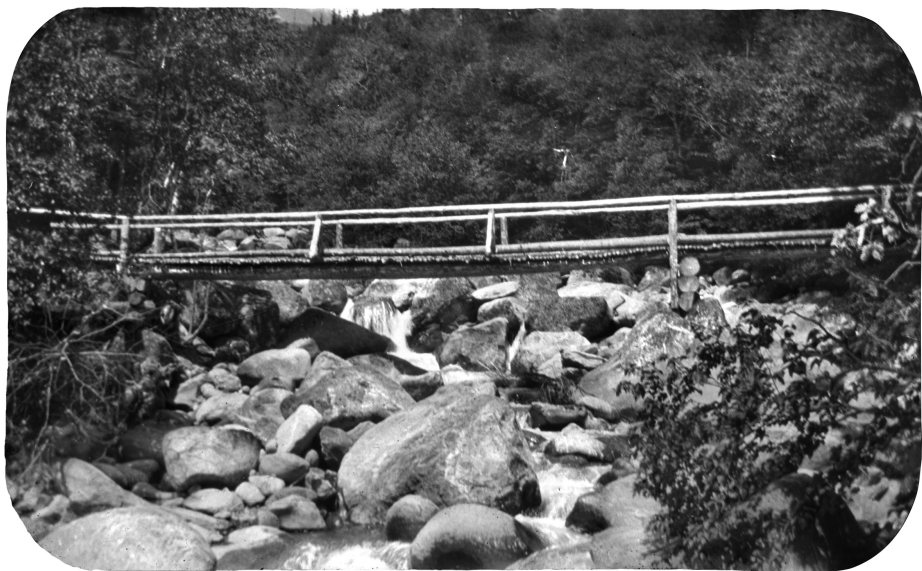
The 1953 trail crew at Hutton Lodge, Whitefield, New Hampshire, August 22. Left to right, rear: Watts, Sessions, Scott, Bender, Nichols, Beauchamp. Front: Orosz, Jenkins, Rankin, Hayes. COURTESY OF DOUGLAS W. RANKIN

The new site also would require a new network of trails. We were now into the 1953 season. It was increasingly clear that if a bridge were to be built, we had to get on with it, and there didn't seem to be any alternative but to do it ourselves, with the crew we had. We were fortunate that Robert B. Watts of Nutley, New Jersey, would return for his second year. He was levelheaded, practical, confident, and at home with tools. He became my bridge partner and without him, I'm not sure we could have done it.

Besides Bob, age 18, the 1953 trail crew (and their ages if known) included Joe Orosz of Watertown, Massachusetts, third-year man, age 20; David Hayes of Melrose, Massachusetts, second-year man, age 17; Dobie Jenkins of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, second-year man, age 16; Charlie Beauchamp of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, first-year man, age 17; Phil Bender of West Newbury, Massachusetts, first-year man; Joel Nichols of West Newbury, Massachusetts, first-year man; Bob Scott of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, first-year man, age 16; and Don Sessions of Brookline, Massachusetts, first-year man, age 19.

The weekly bridge work party varied in size from five to two; everyone worked for at least a week except for Joe and Dobie, who were needed to lead other work parties on our normal trail work. We also benefited from a week's work each by two former trail crew members—Old Trail Crewmen—and even some work on the bridge from Joe's donk skinnners.²

² Between 1930 and 1965, donkeys transported supplies in the White Mountains. The donkey drivers were called donk skinnners.



An earlier Great Gulf Bridge, photographed as it looked in the 1920s. HAROLD ORNE/
AMC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

There remained the problem of the bridge design. What does a 21-year-old, even one skilled with using an ax and crosscut saw (no chain saws then), know about building cable suspension bridges? Finally, on July 2, I asked my engineer father, Carl S. Rankin, if he thought he could design the bridge. My parents were up north from Newark, Delaware, vacationing at Lake Fairlee, Vermont. (This was the home base from which my family introduced me to the White Mountains when I was 5.) Dad agreed to drive over on July 4 with my older brother, Bruce, to meet me and Al Folger and look at the site. Dad agreed that the site was reasonable and volunteered his services to produce a plan.

During dinner at Pinkham Notch that evening, I saw Mary Backus, who was working for her second summer on the Pinkham crew, for the first time of the summer. Her father, Dana Backus, had been on the AMC trail crew in 1923, 1924, and 1926. Because of the proximity of the bridge site to Pinkham, I saw Mary numerous times during the summer. We were married on September 4, 1956, but that is another story. Both of our daughters worked in the huts.

Dad made a second trip to the river crossing on July 8. He strung lines across the river and made some more measurements, establishing our final

span of 36 feet, 4 inches. Robert Sturgeon, an older blacksmith in Berlin, agreed to make the ironware for the bridge including bull drills. Dad's very professional draft of the bridge and his bill of material are dated July 15, 1953; these became our bible for the rest of the summer. I still have the tattered, faded drawing.

The bridge would be a cable suspension bridge between two gigantic boulders on opposite sides of the West Branch. Four steel rods, each sunk 12 inches into the boulders, would support the cables, which would be anchored to bolts sunk into the back sides of these or other boulders. The footway was 2 feet, 6 inches wide. The north boulder was embedded in the abrupt riverbank. The south boulder sat at the edge of the bouldery riverbed and was separated from the abrupt south bank by a small floodplain. Because the top of the south boulder was lower than that of the north boulder, we would have to build a 4-foot stone-and-mortar pier on top of the south boulder. To span the south flood plain we planned to construct a two-span log bridge, about 30 feet long, held up in the middle by a pier of log cribbing filled with rocks.

Hiking In

We began construction on Saturday, July 18, at the beginning of our work season's fifth week. We would pack out, leaving behind a finished, shiny, new bridge on Tuesday, September 1. On our starting day, we had a site, a drafted design, a bill of material, a work crew, and an unexpected bonus. Through a friend of Joe Orosz's father in Watertown, we were offered 300 feet of used 5/8-inch elevator cable from Otis Elevator Company, free except for the postage. Things moved fairly quickly despite our steep learning curve. During the first couple of days, we bought lumber, hardware, and tools at Fournier's Hardware store in Whitefield, picked up sand in Dalton, and ordered the ironware from Robert Sturgeon in Berlin. We marked and sawed the lumber to proper lengths, sanded the railing pieces, and then transported the whole lot to a gravel pit at the 2-mile mark on the Mount Washington Carriage Road.³

We reached the bridge site via the Madison Gulf Trail from the 2-mile mark down to the West Branch. This 2-mile, mostly gently downhill,

³ Officially, the road to the Mount Washington summit was renamed the Mount Washington Auto Road in 1911, but people called it the Carriage Road for many years.

root-infested stretch that included two small sharp stream valleys became ingrained in our memories over the summer. On Monday, July 20, the first day we packed material in to the bridge site, Charlie Beauchamp discovered a yellow jacket nest among the roots of the north bank of the first stream crossing. Several of them nailed Charlie, who had stepped on the nest and was then temporarily trapped there when the long pry bar on his packboard caught on an overhanging branch. This nest would bug us throughout the project.

We set up our five-person Baker tent on an uneven, slightly tilted piece of ground immediately adjacent to and upriver from the large boulder that would be the north pier of the bridge. This was to be a long-term camp, so we dug holes for a can pit and found an elevated rock ledge with a superior view (but invisible from the work site and trails) for the crapper. We built our cooking fireplace on the coarse river gravel below the tent and set up our refrigerator pot adjacent to the fireplace, braced among rocks in the river. In those days, we cooked over an open wood fire and could drink untreated water directly from the river. I don't think that I have ever lived closer to work or in a place where everything was almost within hand's reach.

Dynamiting the Boulder

Our first adventure was to get rid of the large boulder immediately upriver from the site. In 1949, as a first-year man, I had worked with Ted Brown, co-trail master, in using dynamite to dig crapper and can pit holes at Guyot and Great Gulf shelters. With this background, Bob Watts and I walked into the hardware store in Berlin and bought 24 sticks of dynamite, blasting caps, wire, and a 6-volt battery. For the pack-in to the site, Bob carried the dynamite as well as kerosene for our lantern; I carried the blasting caps. We maintained a safety separation of a couple of hundred feet. The pack-in was uneventful except for one episode. Bob's foot caught on a root and he fell, managing to shed his pack before he landed face down on the trail. He still remembers watching in horror as the packboard tumbled down the trail in front of him.

I had been assured that the proper technique would be to use a mud blast: place a couple of dynamite sticks on top of the boulder, cover them with mud, and—wham—the boulder would crack. On the morning of day two, we, of course, posted lookouts on the trail above and below the site. The explosion was impressive, showering everything with mud. The boulder was

unimpressed. We upped the ante at least twice more, increasing the number of sticks each time and using more mud, which kept sliding off the sticks. The explosions were even more impressive. They removed the leaves from many trees. Mud was in everything, including on our tent and gear. We did succeed in knocking off a very small piece of the boulder. After this, we faced reality. We would have to drill a hole in the boulder and put the dynamite sticks in the hole. We were going to have to learn how to drill holes anyway for the upright poles and anchor bolts, so we might as well start learning. Bob drilled the hole in the boulder, and I began drilling a first hole for one of the upright steel poles at the site while others carried on packing material into the site. It took Bob about a day and a half to drill a 20-inch hole. A blast using two sticks of dynamite nicely split the boulder into three pieces.

Drilling was a learning process. We used bull drills, which were steel rods about three feet long and an inch or so in diameter with a larger diameter base that ended in a single blade. We drove the drills with 7- and 8-pound sledgehammers. One man held the drill and turned it a little in the hole between each blow; another swung the sledgehammer. The holder had a nerve-wracking and deafening job. Eight pounds of steel landed inches from his head. I shudder to think that we wore no protective gear and worked mostly bare-chested. The hammerer gradually worked up the skill to take a full overhead swing to hit the drill. It was bodybuilding. He rested periodically to clean the pulverized rock out of the hole using a long-handled spoon that Robert Sturgeon had made for us. Early on and even later, we did miss the drill occasionally. Considering that we had to stand or sit on boulders, it is amazing that no one was seriously hurt. Hammering positions for the anchor bolts were particularly awkward.

To be fair to the crew, I took the more dangerous task of holding the drill for a while. It quickly became apparent that I was a more accurate hitter than the younger crew members, so I went back to wielding the sledge. Altogether, we drilled twelve holes that were 12 inches deep and four holes 6 inches deep for eyebolts to guide the bottom cables across the piers. Drilling all of these holes took nearly until the end of the second week, counting many other tasks and our Friday off in Whitefield. During that first week, for example, we built a donkey corral in the gravel pit on the Carriage Road. We were grateful to Joe Dodge for lending us the donkeys and the donk skinnners, Ed Hastings and Rocky Rice, for three days. Initially, the donks carried in sand and cement, but we soon discovered that the encounters between the



In the gravel pit along the Mount Washington Carriage Road, Doug Rankin and Bob Watts try to figure out how to pack in the two longer end posts, July 25, 1953. COURTESY OF DOUGLAS W. RANKIN

loads and trailside trees lost too much sand and cement. We switched the donks' loads to lumber and miscellaneous supplies.

Packing out alone at the end of the first week, my load was light and the trail easy, but as I hiked along, I began to feel uneasy. Something was wrong. The feeling got stronger and stronger. Finally, I realized that the problem was the seeming absolute silence. For four days, I had lived probably no more than 200 feet from the roaring West Branch. I had the same adjustment to make every week.

Packing in the Long Steel Rods

At the beginning of week two, after measuring and cutting the elevator cable to approximate lengths in Whitefield, Bob Watts and I carried in the two long upright supports for the south pier cables. They were cold-rolled steel bars 1.75 inches in diameter, one 9 feet, 7 inches long and the other 10 feet, 5.5 inches long. The longer one weighed 120 pounds. We elected to carry them both at the same time, one person at each end. After some experimentation, we tied donkey saddle cinches around each end of each bar and slung them at arm's length over opposite shoulders. We carried the weight on our shoulders but could lift the poles with our hands periodically to relieve the stress. It was a slow, awkward trip in. We found that we had to hike in lock step, which

was an interesting drill, given the roots and boulders on the trail. The sideways pressure made my hips so sore that it was about a week before I could sleep comfortably on my side. Then there was the “bee crossing.” The plan was to take the poles across the stream and over the nest one at a time, moving as fast as we could. As leader, I decided to take the rear position. If anyone were to be stung, it was most likely to be the person carrying the back end of the pole. As we carried the first pole across at a slow trot, I tripped, going down to the crossing just as Bob was starting up the far side. We both fell. The front end of the pole jammed into the yellow jacket’s nest, and Bob got stung a bunch of times. So much for trying to be a good leader. Negotiating the crossing took a long time. After the yellow jackets had calmed down, we extracted the bar by both grabbing the far end and pulling, then dropping it and running. After more waiting, we came back for the bar, pulled it farther from the nest, then picked it up, retreated up the trail toward the Carriage Road, and made a detour through the woods downstream to cross. We used the same route to take the second bar across.

Early in the second week of the bridge project, Bob and I took some time off to make an evening trip to Lakes of the Clouds Hut, for the farewell party for Hutmaster Larry Eldredge, my college roommate. He had been drafted into the U.S. Army. It was a fine party with lots of singing and lots of beer. We returned to the bridge in the morning a little worse for wear. However, drill duty called, and by late morning, I felt great. Using the 8-pound hammer, I worked up to 83 consecutive hard strikes without stopping. Drilling is a somewhat methodical chore. Counting blows is one way to pass the time of day. A short after-lunch nap proved disastrous because when I got up I could hardly move a muscle. But again, duty called. I continued work on one of the holes on the south boulder. Because I am fairly short (5-foot-5), I was standing on the used dynamite crate so that I could take full swings at the drill. At some point in the afternoon, I managed to miss the drill completely on a full swing (fortunately on the side away from the holder), knocked the box out from under me, and nearly pulled myself off the rock and backward into the river. Fortunately, I let go of the hammer before that happened. Even more fortunate, no one was in the path of the flying hammer.

The next tasks were to set the uprights and anchor bolts in the holes encased in lead and to build the stone and mortar pier on the south boulder. We needed lots of firewood to melt the lead; we needed cobbles and boulders (which we collected locally) and sand and cement (which we packed in) for the pier. Gathering these supplies went along with finishing the drilling.

Our attempt to melt lead in a heavy bucket over an open fire was a failure. The lead would melt only when we really stoked the fire. If we let the fire die down just a bit, the lead started to solidify and, once started, it would completely solidify, and we would have to start over. After a morning of this, during which we burned most of the wood from the old Great Gulf Bridge, we gave up. I now understand why charcoal was invented. Bob went out to Pinkham and borrowed Joe Dodge's plumber's stove. The stove worked miracles. In short order, we had all of the upright poles and anchor bolts set in place, in lead. Pouring lead around the nearly horizontal anchor bolts presented another challenge, which we solved by building a dam of glazing putty around the hole opening. We started constructing the south pier at the end of the second week after building a sandbox in which to mix the cement using a garden hoe.

The pack-in at the beginning of week three was also memorable. This time the challenge was carrying four 3-by-4-inch, 12-foot beams and two 3-by-4 inch, 13-foot beams to be the base for the floor planking. Bob and I took them in, a pair each, braced apart at the ends with lashed sticks and carried on football shoulder pads borrowed from Gorham High School. I don't remember who made the extra trip to bring in the last pair. After that, Bob and I continued work on the south pier. Others did some serious packing, carrying in 90-pound bags of sand and cement. David Hayes and Bob Scott spent the nights at Pinkham so that they could get an early morning start on packing. On August 2, they made three round-trips before supper. After supper at Pinkham, they fell under the spell of Pinkham crew member Mary Lord, who wanted to see the bridge and persuaded them to make a fourth pack trip, little realizing what lay ahead. After returning, a weary Dave and Bob had just settled down for the night at Pinkham, when Rocky Rice woke them and told that they would have to get up at dawn and report for firefighting duty on the Glen Boulder Trail.

Forest Fire

At about 8 A.M., Monday, August 3, those of us camped at the bridge site were surprised to see Mary Lord again (!). She arrived in time to catch Watts at his morning toilet, something Bob has never forgotten. Mary had hiked in four miles from Pinkham to tell us about the fire on the Glen Boulder Trail and that Joe Dodge wanted us to go help fight it. First, we packed cases



A flash flood rages past the south pier of the partially constructed bridge on August 10, 1953. DOUGLAS W. RANKIN

of “C rations”⁴ up from the Glen Ellis Falls parking lot to the fire crew. The fire was near and above the Glen Boulder. Our assignment was to help cut a fire line across the top of the fire and down the back (south) side. We then manned separate watch posts along the back line. Fortunately, the night was calm, the fire was under control, and we were dismissed about midnight. We were back at Pinkham at about 1:30 A.M. for a solid night’s sleep.

Week four saw the completion of the south pier. We attached turnbuckles to the anchor bolts, more accurately measured and cut the cable, and then strung the cable. As the pier grew toward its full height of 4 feet, we needed some platform from which to work. We rigged swing-like seats suspended by rope from the cable eyeholes at the tops of the upright poles. The system worked quite well. Bob and I worked independently from either pole, setting in place cobbles passed to us by other crew members.

Our work was interrupted on Monday by heavy rain and a flash flood. Pinkham recorded 1.5 inches in five hours. In trail crew parlance, this was

⁴Editor’s Note: C rations were yesterday’s MREs—meals ready to eat—the military packaged field rations.

called a luck day. We slept and read. After an early lunch, more naps. One of us woke up soon after, looked outside, and let out a yelp. The river was lapping against the bottom of our unfinished south pier. It was a raging torrent. We sat around camp some more, realized that it would be a while before we could go back to work in the morning and decided to go out to Pinkham for the night. I may have had a conflict of interest here: Mary Backus was at Pinkham. Because of the high water, we had to go out via the Osgood Bridge and Osgood Trail and, of course, hike two miles up the Carriage Road to retrieve the truck. This option would not be available today because in the 1980s, the lower part of the Osgood Trail to the Glen House was closed and the Osgood Bridge removed. I don't remember who, on our trip out, first said, "Somebody should build a bridge over this river!" Indeed, the high water dramatically showed the need for a bridge for trail access in or out of the upper Great Gulf via the West Branch.



Bob Watts and Doug Rankin on the finished bridge, September 1, with Mount Adams in the background. COURTESY OF DOUGLAS W. RANKIN

Stringing the Cables

We strung the cables toward the end of week four. Two bottom cables helped carry the weight of the long stringers, the flooring, and the handrails and provided stability. Steel vertical tie bars of varying lengths connected the bottom cables to the suspension cables. We strung the bottom cables, by hand, first, carrying or pulling each one across the now-receded river and attaching each end to the appropriate anchor bolt. We had to thread the tie bars onto the cables in the proper order, by length, before anchoring the far ends. First, we tightened the bottom cables with the turnbuckles, then used loose cross planks as a platform from which to thread the suspension cables through the eye hole at the top of the upright poles. Then we threaded the cables through the vertical tie bars. We did use a safety line. The bottom cables and the future bridge were high enough above the underlying boulders so that we could not work from below; hence, the loose cross-plank platform. Finally, we placed and tightened the vertical tie bars. At this point, we put up hand-painted signs at each end of the bridge whenever we left the site: KEEP OFF THE DAMN BRIDGE. Before packing out at the end of week four, we admired our handiwork. Somebody was building a bridge over this river!

Dad's Ever-Present Drawing

The rest of the construction was fairly routine, with no more adventures. In week five, we attached the 3-by-4-inch stringers to the bottom cables with U-staples, nailed the decking to the stringers, attached supports for the railing to the decking with hinges, and painted. My father's drawing was ever-present. Toward the end of the week, we began cutting and peeling logs for the construction of the pier and trestle for the south approach to the bridge. During week six, I worked alone with visiting former crew member Aldie Hammond (1947 to 1949). The rest of the crew was off to do its once-a-summer work on Katahdin in Maine and Mount Cardigan south of us. We finished the railing, applied red lead to the metal, cut, peeled, and twitched logs, built the cribbing for the south approach pier, and started to work on the south trestle. This final week was a short one. I worked with another former crewmate, Bob Willard (1949, 1950, 1952), who had been a first-year man with me in 1949, and David Hayes. We finished the south trestle, built a ramp to the north pier, greased the cables, painted the bridge, completed rerouting the trails, made careful note of which trail signs would be needed, and cleaned

up the site. We were surprised on the morning of September 1, our final day, by the 8 A.M. arrival of Bob Watts and Bruce Carpenter (a visiting Old Trail crewman, 1948–1950). Bob and Bruce had replaced the roof on the now torn-down Garfield Pond Shelter and standardized part of the North Twin Loop.⁵ At the end of the last workday, they decided to hike through the night from the North Twin Loop (23 miles), so that they could help pack out and Bob could say farewell to the bridge. We took some celebratory photographs and packed out, sad to leave a site that had been home for more than six weeks, but with general euphoria.

We had built the damn bridge.

Epilogue

Forty years after the building of the Great Gulf Bridge, Bob Watts and Bob Scott organized a reunion of the crews of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In August 1993, we gathered for two nights of camaraderie at Pinkham Notch. We toured the new (to us) Hutton Lodge, met the current crew, learned about the new focus of hardening trails, and contemplated what life would be like on a mixed-gender trail crew. About fifteen Old Trail Crewmen, and several of our wives (including my wife, Mary), were there. On Saturday, most of us, including six from the 1953 crew, made a pilgrimage to see the bridge. The news that someone had gently told us was true. About a year earlier, the Forest Service had replaced our bridge (cables, tie rods, upright poles, pier, everything) with one of its design. I am told that the 1953 bridge design did not meet the U.S. Forest Service specifications. All that remained of our bridge were a couple of unused anchor bolts still in the boulders.

In one sense, I feel that I have done only one significant thing in my life and that someone had come along and torn it down. On the other hand, to actually build the bridge was an incredible experience. We shouldn't feel too badly. Our 1953 bridge lasted 40 years, albeit with replaced decking, considerably longer than the one we replaced.

⁵ The North Twin Loop is now known as the North Twin Spur.

Editor's Note: The Great Gulf Bridge that replaced the one the 1953 trail crew built was still standing (on the Great Gulf and Madison Gulf trails, where they coincide), as of August 2011; in 2009, U.S. Forest Service field crews replaced half of that bridge's wood components. The bridge now is located in the federal Great Gulf Wilderness, which was designated in 1964. Structures in federal Wilderness areas remain only when the USFS determines that they do not interfere with the character of the Wilderness, so one can't predict a certain future of any Great Gulf Bridge.

DOUGLAS W. RANKIN of Washington, D.C., spent his career as a geologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, most of the time as a field geologist in the Appalachian orogen. In retirement, he volunteers as a scientist emeritus, mapping the Upper Connecticut Valley. He is the senior author of the *Guide to the Geology of Baxter State Park and Katahdin* (Maine Geological Survey Bulletin 43). He still is married to Mary Backus.

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