

In the annals of the Appalachian Trail Conference the triennium 1964-67 will be known as the era of negotiations, or else the beginning of that era. Within the territory in which I am particularly interested there have been repeated interviews with land owners, with state and federal legislators, and with local, county, state and federal officials -- all with the intent of forestalling or warding off threatened or actual encroachments on the Appalachian Trail. Success has attended these efforts --- in part.

There are those of us who have an active part in the construction of new segments of the Appalachian Trail. The feeling is that they are our own creation; in consequence we feel a peculiar attachment to these particular segments. It is with some foreboding, then, that we contemplate the inevitable: if the Trail is to survive, these segments along with the rest of the Trail must become part of a Federal system. No parent is quite at ease when the care of his child is turned over to strangers.

Possibly at some future date the manufacture of automobiles and road construction will reach a saturation point, and the tide of spreading suburbia will reach a peak and recede toward the central cities. Perhaps at that time the wilderness will be reborn, and the Trail returned to those who have cared for it these many years. Its a thought, anyway.

During the triennium we have accepted with regret the retirement of the Rev. A. J. Shumate ^{AND} his boys of Grace Lutheran Church, Rural Retreat, Va. as Trail maintainers. The Rev. Shumate volunteered and gave much assistance during the ~~length~~ construction of the lengthy Southwestern Virginia relocation.

Welcomed to the Conference in the same area were the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers of Greensboro, N. C.

It had been hoped that the completion of a seventeen mile relocation could be reported at this meeting. Relocation will move an extensive section of Trail in Giles County, Va. from valley roads to the crest of Peters Mountain. The section, although difficult of access, contains at Symms Gap one of the most beautiful views east of the Mississippi. Relocation has been beset with more delays, difficulties and frustrations than any other in Conference history. To avoid any road walking whatsoever it had been planned to locate the southernmost mile and a half across a minor elevation known as Hemlock Ridge. Some six weeks ago I received from the company owning this land a form of agreement for Trail access. Contained therein was an indemnity provision which made it impossible for me to sign.

On Wednesday, May 17, I received a second form of agreement from the company. We may now proceed. The indemnity provision had been deleted.