

Finishing the Bigfoot Trail (BFT) – Treklog July 2023

Section I

In the Year 2021, Covid-19 striking fear in the minds of mankind, my son Zach



decided to raise his butt off the couch, assemble an ultra-light backpack and take on the BFT (The Bigfoot Trail: www.bigfoottrail.org) beginning west of Red Bluff, California at the Ides Cove Trailhead. The trail is designed to inspire one's romantic outdoorsmanship, physical endurance, skill of balance, navigation, and observation skills along a mixed collage of forest roads, Pulaski-hacked footpaths, game trails, Indigenous historic routes and wildfire obscured, soot-filled trail depressions. Fear not the route is loaded with awesome wilderness areas and wild wonder.

Touted as a conifer species Mecca (32 species accessible along the 360-mile route). I count five designated wilderness areas, counting not my specialty. At journeys near end, you are treated to the Smith River State

Redwood Forest. This trail serves up eye-candy and foot-rot courses for the diehard thru- hiker appetites and the mindfulness needy. I, becoming 73 years old in 2021, had designated myself as resupply trail angel for Zach for his trek from Ides Trailhead to Seiad at the Klamath River Crossing. That distance is approximately 250 trail miles. Big, extinguished burn(s) in the Red Butte Wilderness at and near the Bigfoot (State of Jefferson) Highway out of Happy Camp and across the BFT into Oregon, discouraged Zach from finishing the trail that hot, dry, wildfire active



summer. I told him I might be prepared to do the last 110 miles of the trail when he decided to finish. We set the date in 2023 to attempt that final leg. With above normal snow conditions this past winter we set a rendezvous date at Seiad of July 15th believing that date might give us easier passage. Our initial plan was to go in late June to avoid excessive heat. Wrong!

The Bridge to the Sea

This year, 2023, the above average snows burned off sooner than we expected and our departure date of July 15, set in stone by Zach's work in Montana, happened to occur during a High-Pressure bubble creating temps in triple digits in a most untimely way. I hoped my conditioning program, hiking Hogback and Stukel Mountains near my residence in Klamath Falls, Oregon might be adequate. Our trail angel for this leg would be Zach's lifelong friend Travis. Travis, having done the BFT previously suggested we start by driving up the Seiad Creek Road to the junction with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), backtrack on the PCT to the junction with the BFT and head westerly toward the finish point in Crescent City, CA. Travis' plan sounded great to me as that initial climb out of Seiad, CA (~5000 feet up in ~ 10 miles) at 100-105 degrees to the BFT paralleling the CA and OR borders and then heading westerly would have been a very challenging initial feat, or should I say defeat for little old me.



We rewound our enthusiasm and with Trail Angel Travis worked out logistics for a resupply on Day 4 giving us lighter packs for the first four days. Inside my 75-year-old body I could not meet the endurance test of the 100+ degree heatwave and did quit the trail at the resupply point. A wise strategy for me. Zach would have some solo time to walk down Clear Creek and up South Fork of the Smith to finish the trail after I dropped out on Day 4.

I had imagined a walk through the redwoods as a crowning father-son event to our vagabond trail history together in the Bob Marshall Wilderness (~500 miles total), the John Muir Trail in 2002 (~220 miles starting at Yosemite Headquarters and climbing Half Dome on the way to Tuolumne Meadows, and in 2014, the Tahoe Rim Trail (170 miles) with his teen and tween-aged daughters Jaela and Kira.



Zach drove to my cottage in Bandon by the Sea, OR from Helena, MT. We left my car in Bandon then drove his pickup to Travis' house in Ashland, OR. We loaded our packs with four days of supplies and drove to Seiad, CA on the Klamath River. We reaffirmed, as temps climbed to triple digits, that a drive up Seiad Creek with a drop on the PCT was warranted (for me at least). "D=irt" (aka Travis) dropped us, wiped his brow, and Zach and me shouldered our packs of 30 or so pounds and started west back to the junction with the BFT. Our 'thru-hiker' brains began to acclimate as my legs and lungs charged into the altitude and blue skies under a bubble of high

pressure. The heat was not reassuring given the open landscapes we expected ahead. I bent into by new Gregory@ back like a teenager filled with anticipation going to his first prom.

Zach had his own issues to contend with. He was going to use this hike to begin losing 80 lbs. thru-hiking tough terrain. He was two weeks into a low-carb, high fat and protein nutrition routine and was feeling exceptionally energetic. He knew his metabolism, now in "Ketosis", was burning his fat like a coal fired power plant. He wanted to see if he could remain strong enough consuming few carbohydrates on this hike and power through this last leg of the BFT. Maybe "Defiance" might have been a good trail name for Zach on this one.



Today, Zach and I believe too many general health practitioners lack significant academic training in nutrition. We are fans of recent nutrition research summarized in "Why We Get Sick" (Benjamin Bikman @2020). Many health providers choose to contract with corporate health institutions. These corporate health entities rely on Big Pharma to afford the R&D and augment shareholder profits to remedy

today's obesity and "cholesterol" problems. Both Zach and I have experienced repeated weight gains following the All-American Diet (aka The Pyramid Scheme). We tend to stash fats and annually gain weight despite rigorous hiking. We are experimenting with eating high fat and (grass fed) protein and skipping the processed foods and soda isles. There is correlation between shopping those grocery store isles and American obesity with continuing research needed on the tendency to develop insulin resistance by following the American tradition of a carbo (sugar) loading food pyramid scheme. The relationship of excessive insulin in the body and misunderstood function of cholesterol levels, both pointing toward the increase of late onset Type II diabetes (now a global industrial world crisis), has us on guard because we wish to remain active hikers. We'll see. I was able to show Zach I had achieved my goal of weighing less than I did in high school following low carb/high fat eating and regular intermittent fasting. Zach's sister, Jessica, was cheering for us all the way and reminding us; "If you are not your own health advocates, no one else will be either".

By the time Zach and me reached the Bigfoot Highway to resupply for the last 7 days of the trek, my ability to keep my head in the game was spent. The reasons for me dropping off-trail at that point are mostly based on my speculation. Blaming my age (75 remember) is like telling a woman she "can't". Some likely probabilities include:

1). I didn't train enough for heat endurance.

2). We hit the full moon cycle. I was having enough trouble sleeping without its silver light shining through my fly-less, blackfly and mosquito free Big Agnes@ two-pound tent. The moon light in crystal clear atmosphere was like a WWII aviation searchlight aimed at my pituitary gland and seemingly 20 feet away from my campsite. The air on the BFT is so clean those moonbeams felt like spearpoints entering my daydreaming nighttime wakefulness.



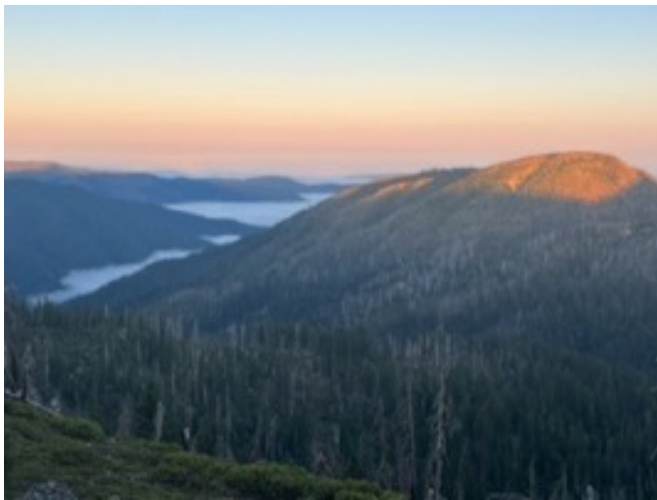
3). Did I mention muscle pain....

4). Zach sleeping soundly near me was a Rachmaninoff concert of snoring and rustling roll overs. 5). I also learned that thru-hikers today are caffeine junkies and of course, I forgot to bring my morning jolt of Mount Hagen@ caffeinated coffee. Caffeine would have given me much needed energy to resist the fatigue I experienced first thing each morning. My day-to-day home life consists of coffee with "da boys" chatting politics at the "Grille" in downtown Klamath Falls. Tough drug (with benefits) I believe, but essential trail food methinks now.

Old guy fatigue is a curious thing. Moments after footfall on day one, I was chugging up a 15-degree slope. My legs and lungs were feeling super-efficient starting out.

Then, without clues, I would feel weak with fatigue, start looking for a rock or a log and rest briefly. My legs felt strong, and my breath was barely a pant. I want to blame poor heat conditioning mostly. When it gets hot in Klamath Falls, and it does, I travel to the Oregon Coast where summer high temps in Bandon reach, like a wood tick on Redbull@, for mid-day highs around 64 degrees all summer. I had not experienced very hot days in my training while climbing Hogback and Stukel Mountains. Stukel was a 6 miler with 2400 feet of elevation gain and Hogback is about 1200+ feet gain in three miles.

A story might help here. Imagine a 75-year-old man who races from his morning roll off a pillowtop mattress to the Keurig@ for morning coffee doses to get 200 mg of caffeine. Then imagine that same old guy forgetting his caffeine (drug of choice) on a world class thru-hike that most PCT'ers have never heard of or wouldn't even consider attempting once they found out cell towers are as scarce as grizzly bears along the BFT west of Seiad in the wild Klamath Mountains. So, enough whining by this senior citizen still learning that a back packing trip without caffeine and suffering from sleepless nights is an invitation to becoming a BFT basket case.



Resupply and the Drop-Out

As planned and on schedule D=rt resupplied us at the intersection of the Bigfoot Highway and the BFT. Feeling somewhat defeated I decided to drop off trail and loaded my pack in the truck for my swan song trip to Crescent City to ride a bus to Bandon. Zach sorted through the food box. He packed another 6-8 days of low carb paleo-carnivore foods to solo hike the BFT to Clear Creek, do a couple of 3000-foot elevation gains and take a romp up the South Fork of the Smith River to the next rendezvous at Hiouchi, CA. Though I planned to hike the last miles from Hiouchi to Crescent City the bridge to cross the Smith River was closed when Zach arrived at Hiouchi. That portion of the trip was postponed for another time.

In Hiouchi, Zach's ingrained habit for junk food or a high carbo café meal after a long hike was almost gone. Yet the lure of a can of Pringles@ got the best of him.



When I met up with him there, he was still gut-struck-sick and repentant. He wished he had stayed the course on his high fat-protein quest and waited for me to take him to a source of food where he could eat as carb-less as possible. Instead of eating café foods he enlisted in a fasting regimen and got back on track. Since finishing the Bigfoot trek, he has tested fasting periods of 30 hours and 60 hours. He told me he has lost of 30 lbs. for his due diligence on his way to his goal of losing 80 lbs. Yes, life and work stresses on the American Pyramid Diet plan can bring, even a thru-hiker like Zach to couch- potato weights of unacceptable numbers. On the trail those

first four days with me, I was amazed at his ability to take on the hills, and maintain his pace in high temperatures and full sun. While doing 9 switchbacks and a 900-foot elevation gain from Steve's Fork River to Red Bluff highpoint his reply to my amusement of his durability was "Dad, I feel amazing energy laying off carbs, burning my own fat, and telling myself that I'm a 180-pound hiker with a 80 lb. backpack. Zach is living proof a mid-40s American can hike a long time without carbs and feel energized throughout the trek. In this case he hiked 100 miles at heat stroke level, full sun temperatures. Please don't expect your doctor to recommend the nutritional approach Zach attempted on this hike.

Zach texted me one of his solo days as he left "The Lieutenants" in his rear-view mirror and while dropping into Clear Creek drainage. He was anticipating some serious log-hopping for a day or two. The PCT is a "cakewalk" Zach often told me when we hiked together on it in the past. And I agreed with him having experienced the BFT. We also agreed the John Muir Trail on the PCT was the exception to that "cakewalk" adjective.

Zach texted again when he reached Baldy Peak. He was considering a night under the stars watching Netflix@. I didn't hear that he did Netflix that night because he likely could not take his eyes off the Milky Way from that bald high point. The air along the trail this trip was clear as I mentioned earlier. Surely though Netflix is not an uncommon practice for the streaming-gen types after filing their 'blog for the day'. I can't imagine the weight of the storage batteries they carry to stay in touch with satellites, radio towers, and cheering Snapchat@ followers. (What is Snapchat anyway?)

Meanwhile, this humbled hiker now sits at the keys decompressing while writing this Treklog 2023. Zach is now back to work in Montana having shed the first 40 lbs. of his 80 lb. goal. Once achieved, he plans to start seriously planning to seek his ultimate trio of hiking Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania. I do lament we were not able to walk in the Cathedral of the Redwoods together as part of my final



long trail adventuring. I do not regret giving Zach my gear to give to his daughters, Jaela, and Kira. They are now 20 something and still hiking with their dad as they did with us in 2014 when we tested their teenager-ness on the Tahoe Rim Trail, a 170-mile hike. Our aim with them then was to ensure their success at cementing their self-awareness and

self-esteem as life-long thru-hikers. My hope is they will challenge their dad to the Bigfoot Trail again one day. Maybe, they will honor me and suggest they all do the BFT when THEIR dad is 75 as offered to me by Sonny Boy Zach this year.

Section II

Bigfoot Trail Conditions from Seiad to Hiouchi, CA - July 2023

I was too busy on this hike compensating for my lack of endurance during four days with Zach to keep notes. I did commit to memory some comments as a seasoned hiker and as a retired conservation biologist. Our observations about our experiences, sightings, and trail conditions will be sent to Michael Kauffmann, founder and leader of the Bigfoot Trail Association. I am a vested fan of all his publications via the Backcountry Press. I was glad Zach carried his iPhone@ on this trek. The photos used herein from the BFT are his and during the hike my pack was one pound lighter. As a result, I renamed every living thing along the trail lacking iPhone apps that probably would have taxonomically named everything at the touch of an algorithm's button. Michael Kauffmann provided map figures for this paper.

The Moon and Trail Debris

The full moon was my headlight, yet I carried a headlamp (I'm not stupid yet). For all 'Moonies' out there, do not miss the show on the BFT. It will not hinder your progress. It might keep you awake at night. Most likely it will silver your soul and since I don't believe 'the soul' weighs anything, it will not burden you and any plan you may have of 'doing the BFT' in record time. Rush if you must, but life will not offer you another experience quite like the BFT. It is unique, it is WILD, and it quickly becomes one of the greatest reality shows on earth.



Downfall

Yes, there is tree downfall to deal with. What trail will not present downfall obstructions after record winter snowfall, atmospheric rivers occurring in northern California this past fall, winter, and spring, and given the humongous wildfires of recent years in the Northwest downfall? I estimated 2-5 downfall blocks or hop-overs per mile from Seiad to Bigfoot Highway Junction. Zach experienced patches of more downed trees



over the trail down Clear Creek and to a lesser degree on South Fork of Smith River. Most downed trees on the trail averaged about 12-inch diameters, with about one per mile being 28-32 inches in diameter. Downed conifers are always walk-arounds because they are multi-limbed. Many of these trail blockers had been down for some time. The few hikers we estimated using the trail in recent time had made

compacted round-about and broken-limb pathways to bypass downed logs and conifer barriers.

In-Trail Vegetation



More significant for this old hiker was *Ceanothus* spp., et al., growth over the trail and duff-stone fill causing trail slope affecting footfall on the trail. One cannot train enough for the side hilling required to thru-hike the long trails. This trail bed sloping was most apparent on the south slopes of open ridge trails.

With a boost in BFT volunteerism to form maintenance chain gangs hoisting Pulaskis and brush saws many miles of trail could be improved in weeklong maintenance episodes. For little old me, passage would be easier, offsetting fatigue somewhat and making trail navigation more obvious, especially on ridgetops and in saddles. I've already put in 50 years of public service so I'm leaving trail maintenance for younger generations; the x-gens, the millennials and whatever the new generation is

called. Maybe the "iPhone Bent-Neck gens" works.

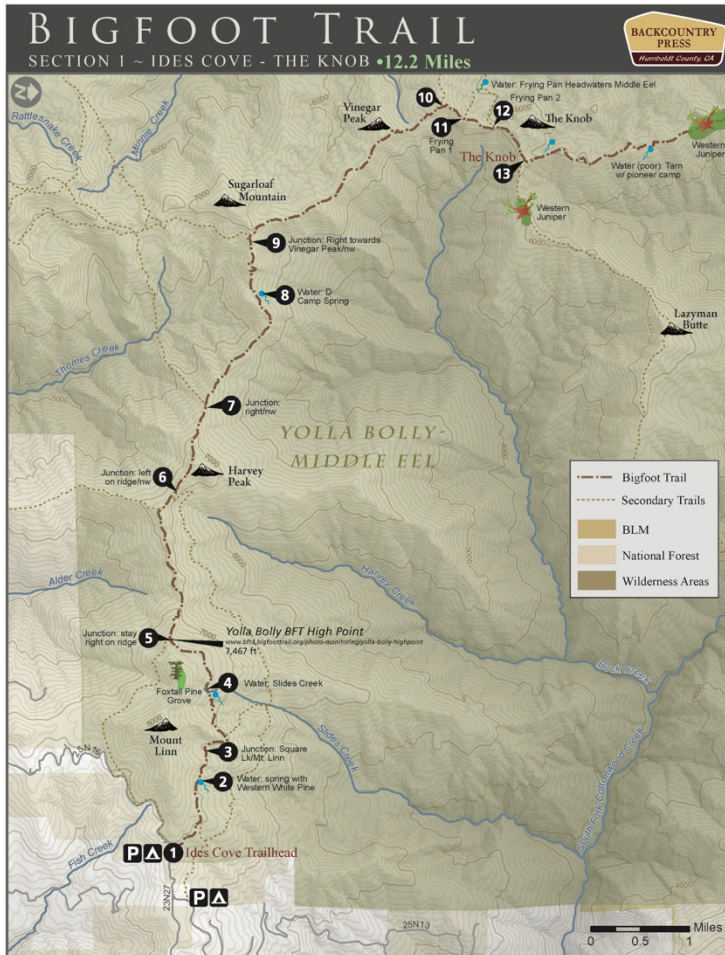
Navigation

Zach and I talked about the value of having some nationally significant trails that are not obvious (the PCT tends to be obvious and parklike. The exception to this sarcasm is High Sierra snow fields). Wild trails like the BFT require some navigation skills occasionally. GPS mapping is not helpful to low tech old timers like me.

As expected, this trail has a lot of sharp-edged stones in the trail of a size I call "ankle rollers". Having trained in volcanic rocked trails in my home county of Klamath, Oregon my ankles were ready for the 'waltz in the cobble' on the BFT. Volcanic rock in trail beds and downslopes are more marble-like and to me, more hazardous than sharp fractured trail bed rocks. Since I tend to look down trail some 50-100 feet when I hike, I created my own ankle-rolls and center-of-gravity weight shifts while floundering briefly a time or two. These teeter-totter episodes were not so welcomed on the open south ridges on our way to the Bigfoot Highway junction. Old guys beware. Due to the limited number of users of the BFT annually (my guess = very few) this trail will not in near time have the duff accumulate as it has on the PCT.

Where there are forested, well-watered riparian areas (e.g., Steve's Fork, Applegate Headwaters) and welcomed shade, the trail is softened with duff. Those 'fluffy trail' miles were dear to me miles and my feet were smiling.

The maps and graphics available for the BFT are adequate for seasoned, long trail hikers.



The generations of hikers like Zach tuned into GPS(X) mapping with years of walking with cellphones, can follow along using satellites most of the time. I still prefer to hike looking ahead, as previously mentioned, to see and record mental maps of obstacles ahead. Zach and me did use our set of hardcopy 1:24,000 quad maps a few times.

I also prefer rubbernecking in new ecosystems. Maybe it comes from fantasy days of my youth riding my bike through imagined nudist colonies...NOT). Still, given my age, this once possible mind wandering hiking no longer is safe when walking steep, open terrain on an 8-16-inch wide occasionally maintained and seldom used

trail. I did not want Zach to have to call in a chopper to airlift me 2000 feet back to the trail had I rolled an ankle, shifted my center of gravity 6 mm and tumbled pack over T-Kettle into a Klamath Mountain ravine (way down there-yikes).

As mentioned under Vegetation, copious amounts of brush have over-grown some trail stretches especially on the south slopes as compared to wooded reaches of the trail. The response of Ceanothus spp., Chinquapin, penstemon, etc., in a fire prone regime on south slopes after wet winters will always remain a challenge to BFT managers. Segments (not reaches) of the trail prone to such overgrowth are a drag on hiking poles to those of us that use them as security sticks for weary muscles and connective tissues. If one is fearful of snakes and, "glory be" lizards, hiking poles are at least a mental sense of security too.

Other Critters

We did see sign or make sightings of at least 5 black bears hiking the BFT. Bird watching with the naked eye was on-going throughout the hike. I'm a Midwest guy trained in forest, prairie, and wetland ornithology and remain a fan of all birds. I try to spot their key identifying characteristics when they hold still a bit more than briefly. I love mimicking their calls (I'm a whistler, so is Zach) if I can sift out a phrase from all the trilling and buzzing nonsense breeding birds like to use to confuse me...zit, zit, zit....



I'm a prairie wetland and temperate zone hardwood forest kind of eco-freak-ologist. Thus, many West Coast type birds confuse me. In wooded drainages and wetter notches birds did their singing early and late, but mostly kept busy harassing insects and ground foraging for seeds. I felt at home hearing a nuthatch in camp somewhat 'Hank'-Hank-ing" for my entertainment (wishful thinking of an egotistical Anthropoid). Hummingbirds were a humming, but I'm unsure of myself naming them in western landscapes. They were plentiful in the bear grass transition zones where it was fun to camp.

A veery was trying to escape his 'rain barrel' while we climbed out of Steve's Fork Ravine. I was happy to recognize its call and give it a non-specific name. There, I also felt confident I heard a pileated woodpecker trying to fell an old pine, or maybe just bring on a mate. With the extraordinary number of blackened, standing conifers along the trail, resident conifer bug eaters ought to feel some habitat security. Yet, I have no idea if there is a conifer wood boring insect left in the be-smudgeoned landscapes I witnessed. I watched an acorn woodpecker one morning flash its white patches a time or two making me wish I was one of his kind to challenge it or get cozy for company.

Lizards; I loved their curious nature, flight responses to escape this upright primate predator, and their Motown swimming motion—a strange kind of simile in an often-waterless landscape. If I can figure out lizards before I cash in my time in the Northwest high deserts and chaparral, I will feel accomplished. Sure, spiny fence

and sagebrush lizards are endemics along the BFT I'm told in the natural histories of the Klamaths. So numerous were they on this trek I was delighted by their curiosity and breast-stroke escapes.

I love the swimming motion of lizards and the speed at which they can scamper off the trail into the brush and rock crevices. There is a sense of being asked to dance in the land of the ancients when they watch your approach guardedly. I wished once or twice I had my copy of Kauffman's et. al, The Klamath Mountains along for keying out critters, but remember a pound is a pound is a pound and not everything at my age needs to be named via classic classifications. Anyway, I like my names better anyway. When I saw young (i.e., small) lizards on the trail my amusement went to their survival among the scrub jays that must consider them popcorn morsels for the BFT movie I watched them perform in. Their 'whiny' jay-style vocalizations suggested young-of-the-year jays following adults through the chaparral.

Insects

Let's list the obvious first: "blood suckers". Yes, blackflies of some sorts and mosquitoes. Mostly they were not a problem until dusk when we set camp. Then our Big Agnus one-man tents (without the fly) were set up faster than speeding bullets. I did give the appropriate amount of "O pos" to ensure there will be future generations of these species for YOUR trek on the BFT. Zach gave better blood than I did. Mine is old and probably bitter. These CO2 detectors, once smeared into the inside netting of my little Big Agnus allowed me to star gaze and give the full moon license to target its high beam silver rays on me.

The Bombus bees were precious finds and I've heard there is a species around the BFT that hasn't been seen in a few decades. I didn't bring that key either. I thought about it and forgot a photo. If I went to the bayous of Louisiana, I wouldn't expect to find the long-lost ivory-billed woodpecker of that area either. Spring, almost summer flora was in full array, so bumble bees and other pollinators were common trail mates. Of course, there must have been sweat bees along the trail too. I was sweaty as could be, still they didn't show themselves needing my saltiness.

A very large fly (Diptera?), black as burnt timber, also zoomed past me occasionally. They are the size of stealth bombers (at least 1.5 inches) and seem unconcerned about being preyed upon. I don't know a flycatcher that could open wide for a chunky the size of these black, flying submarines, anyway. They are curious and come up close, probably sensing mineral sweat, then give you the eye(s), and in hover mode seem to decide like Ricky Gervais; "I just don't care" and fly off.

Ahh, butterflies...many and colorful species and great trail mates. I don't know insects, Zach knows aquatic bugs, but we just let them show us what they do in such a place, and we as colonial white guys, bequeathed them the entire place as their kingdom. They didn't seem to care at all about our generosity. The many kinds and

numbers of butterflies we saw on the BFT are safe for now from my vantage as an accidental tourist.

Butterflies never cease to amuse me with their ability to be so agile on wings the size of kites. Their wings strike me as clumsy at best, yet they are quite mobile (how about those monarchs) and obviously fully under control. Our timing could not have been better for being distracted by the floral outburst and butterfly response we experienced on this trip. I stopped to catch my breath often and tried to recoup



my stamina. Then, off went my trail runners (I like Brooks@) and my compression socks (must I remind you again how old I felt on this trip). Laying back on my pack it took a variety of butterflies about four seconds to find me the flavor-of-the-month, "salted nut roll". They were not

shy about the manmade salt licks Zach and I provided. What nonchalance! Nature really doesn't care (hear that, Ricky?) about sharing the earth with us if we're out packing, but not packin'. Why? Because "purpose" of amply winged butterflies is not nature's intent for species. Survival is gained through reproductive success not through intention. A butterfly's choice to be sodium (Na^{++}) needy and attracted to my secretions does not have to be cleared through some set of standard operating procedures or ancient dogma listing whether a 'salt lick' is a real mineral deposit or some block-headed hiker's dried-on sweaty arms or feet. For my experiences of inter-specific cooperation, I felt a sensation of being a kind of 'manna from heaven' for a beastly that evolved millions of years before my brain-burdened kind crawled out of trees and into bipedal motion.

The Food

I don't know where Bigfoot goes for Fast Food along its so named trail, but it is not McDonalds@. Moreover, there was no Door Dash@ doing deliveries on the last 110 miles of its Bigfoot's path, nor reported along the first 250 miles Zach coursed. Both Zach and me are French and Scandinavian by decent and our metabolic

tendencies are to store, store, store reserves for future fuel. Must be the Neanderthal segment of our ancient ancestry.

Our food packs were individual selections because Zach was experimenting with paleo-carnivore low carb eats and fasting. My grocery bag was a bit more traditional with power bars, freeze dried dinners, and trail mix. Balanced-carb flour tortillas are great replacements for bread carbs. Zach's favorite cuisine item was a low carb wrap with five sticks of small salami sausages wallowing in almond butter. Naaa....

We were doing slow burn fats and protein foods and seldom using our MSR@ stoves. Our body form is a hand-me-down version of a Canadian Voyageur's physique. Our legs are short-ish holding up a rather longer torso adapted for canoe paddling---not so much the tall and lean look of thru-hikers I suspect have been



naturally selected for coursing the long trails. Maybe we should stay true to our heritage and provide portage services between bodies of water in Boundary Waters National Park.

In forgetting to pack my Mountain House@ instant caffeinated coffee, I physically underperformed against Zach's Crystal Light@ caffeine buzzes

he failed to tell me about until I admitted on Day 3; "I NEED caffeine!". A cup of joe or a long nap under a tree Rip Van Winkle style were my favorite fantasies on the BFT. Pre-hike training aside, and assuming I was ready as ever; good sleep and a jolt of caffeine at 0600 would have gotten me to my mid-day breakfast. As Zach continued solo onto Hiouchi, his text remarks were explicit about his delight with sleeping better and having more energy than ever as a trail hugger.

Food is always a dilemma when trying to go lite and learn the flowers per Gary Snyder's teachings. On this trip Zach experimented with fat burning in "ketosis" over the sugar buzz of boring trail bars and freeze-dried cooked meals in camp. I was experimenting with staying less than a burden to Zach should I drop into a heat stroke coma in a Klamath Mountain Wilderness like Red Buttes. Zach found Nirvana with his approach. I found I was 'over the hill', so to speak.

Wildflowers

Always the eye-candy to me of alpine places, the flora Uncle Gary told us to learn was a rewarding part of the BFT for us. Expectations were met for me through my four trail days. My anticipation of the flora in the Siskiyou Wilderness was not to be satisfied by pulling off trail at the Bigfoot Highway resupply point. Without a wildflower key, I was forcing my memory to learn some unfamiliar plants walking the walk. The Klamath Mountains - A Natural History will have to tease my memory when I put in the effort at home to search Kauffmann and Garwood's fine publication (Backcountry Press @ 2022).

Big performers for us were bear grass, *Ceanothus* spp., Indian paintbrush, penstemon, all obvious to the most casual observer. Even coralroot took center stage now and then. Though a very short list, they were dominants tickling our visual acuity. The butterflies, bees and other pollen seeking insects also kept us distracted from the left, right, left, of trail mongering.

Bear grass seemed often germinated in just the right place many times. With setting sun, they glow in the backlighting and seemed intentionally shinning for our attention and giving the appearance of light bulbs glowing on the trail ahead. The plant and animal species that specialize in the extremes of the Klamath Knot are safe (for now) from man's extractive and hostile way of landscaping with chain saws and bulldozers. We are extractive MAN-iacs.

Section III

A Nod to Trail Angel Travis, aka "D=rt"

Zach and D=it have been pounding trails together since grade school.



Sometimes, they were deemed deviants within the system being 'outlier' kind of kids and eventually becoming the adult trail fanatic friends they are. Zach now lives in Helena, Montana, while D=rt lives in Ashland, Oregon. Pals for life, our completion of the last segment of the BFT could not have happened as well, except for D=rt volunteering to hover over us through the ordeal of heat's arrival on the scene at precisely the time we planned our hike together and solo.

When fatigue and other reasons triggered my decision to jump off the BFT and support Zach to finish solo, D=rt met us at the Bigfoot Highway intersect with the BFT. We resupplied Zach and pushed him off into a waning afternoon sun so he could hoof to the next waterhole and camp. Travis agreed to take me to Crescent City. A drive much out of his way back to Ashland. I had done the homework about bus service along the Oregon Coast. I planned to bus from Crescent City to Bandon using my 'Senior' status to get half fare and recover in Bandon until Zach let me know he was in Hiouchi. D=rt was fine with this plan but would have been happy to scoop us both up when Zach finished and ferry us to Ashland for a reunion and storytelling. Had D=rt not been nursing a lower back injury he would have been hiking with us.

The Bus!!! The Bus!!!

Yes, there is bus service extraordinaire along the US Highway 101 coastal corridor in northern California and through Oregon. Surely the coast bus service is a scenic ride for the passenger. Maybe a bit hairier for the driver, but certainly just routine travel for those living along the coast and occasionally needing a lift.

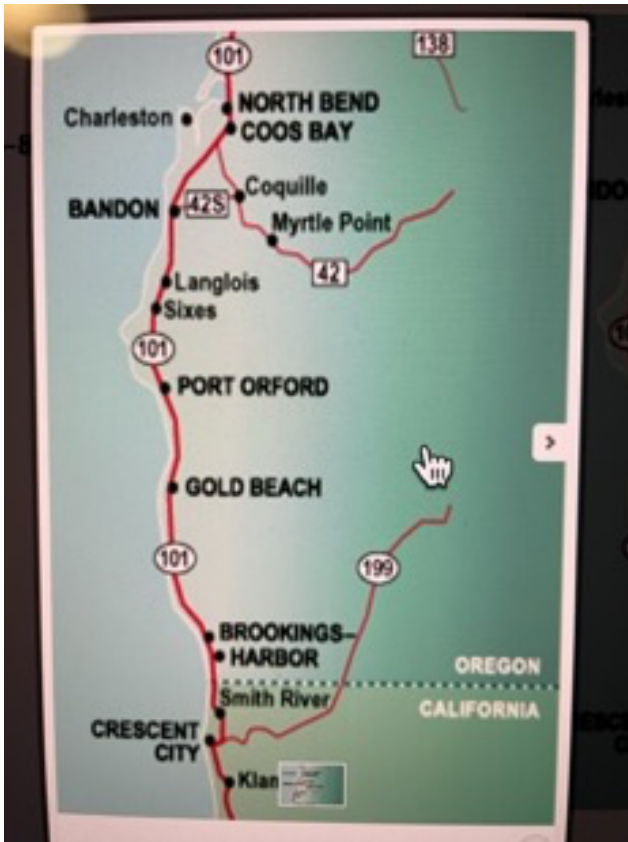
This was my mindset when D=rt dropped me off at Motel 6@ in Crescent City across from the kiosk bus stop. My biggest problem first was to wash off the trail dust and find a dinner that would satisfy without causing me digestive discomfort. I learned trails ago, carbo-loading after any amount of a thru-hike was only conducive to physiological distress including gastric failures not worth opportunistic binging. That night Denny's@ would have to serve me an all-day breakfast special until I could paleo load once arriving in Bandon. There I could better control and prepare the paleo foods I needed before catching up on some sleep to cure what ailed me.

My mental wellness would take more time since I was not one to 'quit' mid-hike. Accepting my age seemed new to me. I had not hiked many long trail miles for half a dozen years. I had never thru-hiked in sustained heat like that experienced on the BFT with Zach.

It was the eve of the 4th of July, and I was lucky to get a room. For those anticipating the noisiest day in America there was a problem. Commercially sponsored fireworks were all but cancelled in Crescent City that Independence Day night. A heavy marine layer came roaring through town after D=rt dropped me off at the motel. Seems the ultra-high-pressure heat was going to be flushed out for a while and the marine layer was going to be the atmospheric push to bring relief. For me, sleep was possible in the motel that night. Locals did their patriotic duty with their firecrackers and trinket bombs. Dogs wailing into the wee hours of July 5th was not going to happen. This human and the Humane Society felt joyful.

At 0600 the next morning, the Redwood Transit bus (Call: (707) 443-0826) was on time to take me to the pickup point seven miles north of Crescent City to link with the Curry Public Transit bus line (Call: (541) 412-8806). The driver of the

Redwood bus was inspired to have me board and he talked the entire seven miles of his route. There wasn't time to get his name, but I bought him a coffee for his company. At the transfer station I would meet Terry. From that transfer point the Curry Public Transit bus would take me to Bandon and beyond to Coos Bay/ North Bend if I wanted more time with Terry and her Regulars.



I've taken buses to work as a commuter to my first job when married with children. I've taken subways in Washington, DC for work purposes. I've commuted from Washington, DC to New York City on a train and ridden Amtrak all over the devil's acreage across the 'highline' states of America. I have never ridden a bus with a load of such delightful passengers as I experienced on the trip to Bandon with my favorite bus driver ever, Terry.

Before the second passenger came on-board, Terry befriended me with her dedicated driver and personal nonchalance extraordinaire. Terry told me she had been in the driver's seat for 12 years. She finished recently, and will publish soon, a children's book. She manages family and some land out of Brookings, her basecamp for the bus lines. She interviewed me until we picked

up her first rider. I was to become the 'new guy' to all Terry's "Regulars" as they boarded at usual and weird, slightly off-route, bus stops heading north on US Highway 101. Terry introduced me to each of her regular passengers as they boarded, and after her personal first name greeting to each new rider.

Thus, each passenger shared the latest news with Terry as they boarded and paid their fare. Fares were variable given senior discounts, maybe some Vet's discounts and probably Terry's own credit fare for those lacking funds or awaiting the monthly income deposits in their rural mailboxes. This is likely not unusual in the neck of the coast where Terry's main riders are her friends, her Regulars.

I listened carefully to the cheery, or once or twice sobering, hard luck commentary which Terry always took the time to hear before nodding them toward their usual favorite seats. Looking back to the road Terry would announce to each rider; "Hey, that's Ron back there, he's the new guy!". I would get a friendly; "Hi Ron", each time and some form of an irresistible welcoming smile. Two or three riders later, Terry summoned; "Hey Bob, tell Ron the story about the beached whale a few

years ago.” Or another shout out from one of the Regulars, “Hey Terry, tell Ron about that time as a teenager when you got stuck in tidal quicksand up to your bra at Port Orford!”. This went on for every passenger hopping on board. I was surrounded by family before I made the stop in Bandon. “Terry’s Wayward Bus”; I shouted out as I walked away shaking my head all three blocks walking to my cottage. And of course, Terry did slide back her window and yell to me before I walked too far off; “Join us again when you need a lift, Ron. Love to have you back!”

Surely, I could ruin a few great stories in this rambling treklog, but Terry told me her next book was going to be the stories she heard during her years as the Chief Storyteller and Driver of a Curry Public Transit bus. I’m certain if you take this unforgettable ride sometime with Terry, her Regulars will gladly repeat each story I heard, maybe with a twist or two or some added embellishments, but you can count on it being your best ever bus ride in America too, when it’s your turn.

Trail Friends to the End

When Zach did come off the BFT it was due to the Hiouchi bridge closure and losing a way to cross the Smith River. Getting back on the trail to finish at Crescent City would wait for a time when I felt recovered and wanted to hike the redwoods and the last 10 miles from Hiouchi to Crescent City with him.

I found Zach in Hiouchi about six days after I hung up my trail runners. We drove together to Ashland to unload stories on D=rt. Zach had lost about a third of his goal weight sticking to the low-carb feed bag approach. He was inspired by the energy he felt going the entire 100 miles on his fat reserves rather than the usual high-carbo trail bars and freeze-dried dinners. Crystal Light@, electrolytes and water were his primary inputs. It was a fine, yet scary feeling sending Zach on his way back



to Montana with D=rt’s shorty cramp-ons and an ice axe. He wanted that gear in case he had the opportunity to summit Mount Hood on his way back to Montana. Montana is a boring 12+ hours of driving from Ashland especially given his new-found energy from a fat-protein lifestyle change. He texted me from Mount Hood that there was too much rock fall on The Hood. He made the wise decision not to attempt that high point challenge this time. I returned home to lick my wounds and contemplate future

day hikes with a Tenkara rod and that style fishing. I had ghost casted D=rt’s Tenkara

flyfishing outfit at his house. Maybe the South Fork of the Smith will be a Redwoods and Tenkara day hike when Zach returns.

Thru hikers need Angels. D=rt revealed his archangel alter-self this trip giving Zach and me a father-son experience of a lifetime, generating dreams of times to come, and of course, affording me another chance to meet Bigfoot in my waning years.

The End... for now.

