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# WEEKEND BREAK

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Photos  
courtesy  
Ed Hunt

Ed Hunt  
on Saddle  
Mountain.



## NO MEAN FEET

### It's always a good day for a hike

By ED HUNT  
For The Daily Astorian

*"In the beginning was the foot."  
—Marvin Harris, American anthropologist*

Some of my greatest memories are uphill. "Let's go for a walk," my dad would say. With the sky turning golden in the late summer sun we would hike up the trails to the top the hill, dad smoking his pipe tobacco as the sound of the diving nighthawks low-whistled in the crisp air.

In the hills of the Columbia River Gorge, all trails went uphill eventually. Where I lived the scrub oak would thin out toward the top as the trails doubled back and grew steeper. At last the view would open to reveal white-topped mountains and vistas worthy of postcards.

Climbing a trail through a forest — hiking to that payoff at the top — is a pleasure I'm continually rediscovering.

My hiking days started with my dad when I was young. Wherever he lives, he always knows the local trails. We were never formal hikers, with special boots and backpacks and planned excursions. It was always, "Let's take this trail and see where it goes."

Walking is older than man.

"In the beginning was the foot," famed American anthropologist Marvin Harris wrote. "Four million years ago, before speech or consciousness, our ancestors already walked erect on two feet."

We walked with our hands free to hunt and gather. We walked to follow game and lost the hair from our bodies in the African sun. As we walked, our brains grew bigger. As we walked, we spread across the planet to almost every corner — on foot. Long before the common modes of horse or cart or car or train, we walked.

We walked to the top of mountains — in the Andes, the Alps and the Himalayas — and built cities in the clouds.

Anything that ceases to be necessary soon becomes either art or recreation.

Such was the case with hiking.

#### Vistas to discover

In rural areas, walking a trail through the woods is still often a necessity — for hunting or fishing, for work in the forest. Walking a trail for the sake of the experience is different, a byproduct of the increasingly urban landscape that developed with the Industrial Revolution. In Europe the Pilgrimage trails and market footpaths that lead from village to village became embraced by pioneers like Philipp Bussemer, who promoted and published some of the first hiking guides through Germany's Black Forest at the end of the 19th century.

In some ways, hiking is a true "swords into ploughshares activity." In this country, it was the surplus of sturdy shoes and camping equipment after the Civil War that first led to a discovery of the outdoor pleasures of hiking in the wilderness to an increasingly urban and affluent America. The creation of the National Park system and the construction of trails by recreation clubs and, later, the Civilian Conservation Corps ensured that these vistas were preserved and trails were maintained.

Interest in hiking has increased after each subsequent major conflict, with a boom particularly after World War II. Special equipment replaced the surplus gear, guidebooks mapped out trails and advised trekkers. Generations of scouts discovered the joys of walking in nature. Some have argued that the more divorced and urban the lifestyle, the more novel and enriching the experience.

These days, of course, have progressed beyond written hiking guides to internet sites with detailed photos and videos of the hike. Now you know what you are getting into even before you leave the warm comfort of your home.

Yet there are still surprises, still vistas worth ascending to discover. Vistas to which no photo can do justice, because the hike itself is somehow integral to the experience.

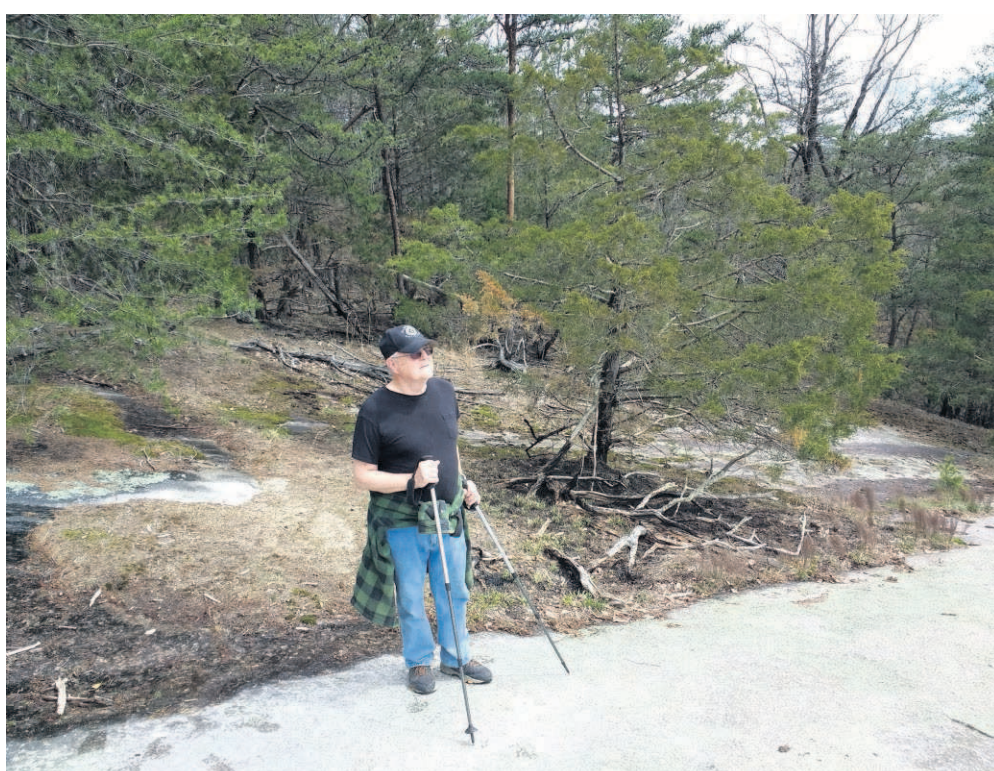
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Lia Willenbrock, left, and Grace Hunt, behind a waterfall on the trail Goat Rocks.



Amy Hunt on the trail at Coldwater Lake.



John Hunt, at 80, pauses to enjoy the view at the top of Stone Mountain in North Carolina.



Mount Rainier from Sleeping Beauty Trail.