

**WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH HIDE OUT AND
READ
11/21/00**

The inspiration for this column was provided indirectly by an influx of grandchildren far greater in extent and intensity than the Allen household is accustomed to. We frequently are subjected to an occasional day of babysitting our two resident grandsons and family holiday meal events. These pale in comparisons to the past two weeks' turmoil.

Our daughter Nancy is visiting from France and we have had a prolonged spell of four young cousins making up for lost time. An old timer once told me that if you had one boy, you had one boy. If you had two boys, you had half a boy and with three boys you had none. He referred to boys working for you, and I assumed the analogy applied to boys in general. Wrong! When you have four grandsons from 20-months to six years old underfoot, they all count big time.

Between the young tads and the campaign rhetoric dominating the boob tube, I have closeted myself with books. And therein lies my story.

Both books happen to embrace the same subject. One is titled *My Grandpa's Woods* and the other, *A Walk In the Woods*. Both authors expound on their experiences hiking woodlands by trail and bush-whacking or cross-country.

The first author, a native New Yorker, explores the Adirondacks in the vicinity of Cranberry Lake and points south as far as Stillwater. His grandfather was a turn-of-the-century logging contractor and he explores his early roots and beginnings. This takes him up, over and around much of the area by shanks' mare.

His search from Stillwater to the Five Ponds Wilderness adds a little local color to a couple of well known residents.

Mahoney's Stillwater Inn cinnamon buns were declared, "exceptional." He gave a later update noting that on another visit while Mrs. Mahoney was away, husband Dan "tried, but he doesn't have the hand with the cinnamon buns that Mrs. Mahoney has." Sorry about that, Dan.

Ranger Terry Perkins and the Old Forge Hardware were other local lights that were mentioned.

A Walk In the Woods is a humorous account of a middle-aged author who decides to walk the length of the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail. He is joined by an out of shape buddy from Iowa. It is one of the funniest true-to-life accounts from a real professional writer. I never laughed so hard in my life.

At the same time, he recounts much of the early history of the area and its plants and animals. Most of it was a revelation to me and something I am sure I would otherwise be unaware of without having read the book. Granddaughter Cynthia gave the book to me for my birthday for which I thank her.

Both books were of special interest to me, a guy who has covered his share of woodland haunts. I differ in many respects, however, with both authors in my reasons for my jaunts.

They, for the most part, were hiking for the sake of proving they were up to the challenge presented by the terrain and elements. Their endeavors were somewhat similar to hitting oneself in the head with a hammer because it feels good when you stop.

I, for one, am not into the trend of conquering nearly unobtainable heights or goals simply because they are there. I have always had to have a definite reason for my travels. Generally, it was in pursuit of fur, fish or game at one end of the trail and home or camp on the other.

I may have used all three as reasons to explore uncharted territory from time to time. In fact, I admit that I have. My other reasons were substantiated by my professions.

I may have put in some arduous hard days and nights bivouacking about, but they never included gorp, wet bedding and frozen clothing. Not for other than a short space in time, anyway.

Although hiking has claimed the greater part of my life, the similarities of both authors differ widely from my own experiences. Much of theirs were testimonials to the herd mentality projected by the Adirondack Mountain Club and Sierra Club. (Both organizations I deign to extend much credit to for their socialist ideology and elitist attitude.)

Both missives were of interest to me, although neither convinced me to embrace hiking by the numbers. They have given me a greater appreciation for my own sojourns and gave me some insight into how the other half lives.