

Robie Hensley

Story # 5

Hiking up the Appalachian Trail near Snow Bird VOR, a navigation facility for aircraft, I heard a plane circling overhead. Although I had not made arrangements with Steve to contact me I knew that it must be him looking for me. He had been very supportive of me and my dream of backpacking the AT after I retired from the postal service. My plan was to parachute onto Springer Mtn. GA the starting point of the famous hiking trail from Georgia to Maine. Steve was skeptical and feared for my safety but after some persuasion I got him to fly me over Springer Mtn. When he saw the target both he and Ted tried to talk me out of jumping but they wished me luck as I went out of the door. This soon earned me the trail name "Jumpstart".

Now when I heard the plane overhead I wondered if there was an emergency back home, why else would he be looking for me. Standing in the clearing at Snow Bird I waved my hands evidently he spotted me and dropped a package with a little parachute attached. FOOD, home cooked food like manna from heaven landed right at my feet. This was the first of many food drops he did as I progressed North.

Later I carried a hand held transceiver with which I could communicate and advise him of my location. The other hikers learned of Steve's food drops and tried to be there to share the leftovers, which usually was sufficient to go around. Sometimes it would be pizza, Kentucky Fried Chicken, or home cooked food.

Two years later when my wife Lana accompanied me on another through hike, Steve was on the job again dropping much bigger batches of food because by this time the word had spread and many hungry hikers were there to share the goodies. Of course Steve enjoyed this so much that he continued to do this years later for other hikers even strangers on the trail.