

TOMORROW

Self magazine's Quickie Workout touts results in less than 30 minutes.

Life

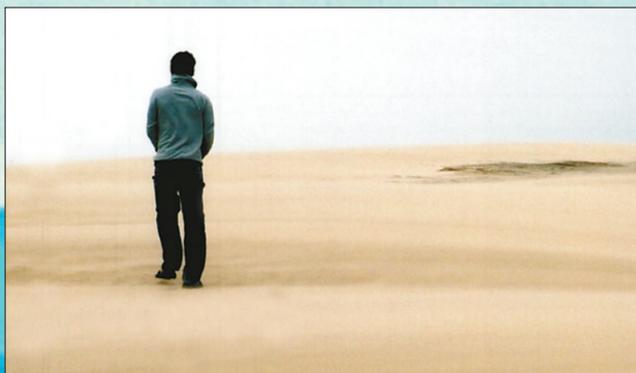
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Adam Collins shot these photos while hiking the Mountains-to-Sea Trail: (from left) Ocracoke Lighthouse; shadow of Grizzly Adam; horses in a pasture; and sunset on the Neuse River.

A long, long walk

A Greensboro hiker likes to walk. Really far. His latest adventure took him from end to end of the state's Mountains-to-Sea Trail.



LENWOOD COLLINS

Adam Collins hikes in Jockey's Ridge State Park, the eastern terminus of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

BY MELISSA TURNER
Staff Writer

It starts in a parking lot, but the trail winds its way into the woods, high and fast.

Before long, signs of civilization melt away, leaving an Eden of soft ferns and scrubby trees.

Even trees downed by acid rain and insects are being reclaimed by the earth — they're slowly sinking into the forest floor, blanketed and alive with verdant green moss.

This feels as far from civilization as you can get.

The only sign of human contact is a narrow path cut through the grass, barely worn down by heavy footsteps. And the faded white dots that mark the path of North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Here, Adam Collins walks. He walks to the top of Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River, where he'll stand in the rainy mist and look down on the path that lies before him. If he follows it, it will lead him all the way to the ocean.

It was a bold vision: North Carolina's own footpath, stretching from one end of the state to the other.

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail would form a backbone to a network of trails and greenways that would spiderweb across the state — from Clingmans Dome on the Tennessee border to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks — providing a unique way for people to explore their neighborhoods, their communities and their state.

That's what appealed to the 27-year-old Greensboro native, a long-distance hiker and photographer who splits his time three ways among Greensboro, Asheville and the trail — whichever path calls his name.

Hiking the MST is his most recent in a string of adventures, but it has become more than another notch in his belt. The MST provided a new way for Collins to explore the state where he grew up.

And it wasn't easy. Collins has slogged through waist-deep snow; endured cold rain, wind and being chased by dogs; fought knee pain, ankle pain and shin splints.

Why? Because the rewards have been great: hiking in solitude on a trail lit by the stars

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MORE: See more of Adam Collins' photos from his trip. **C10**

The view from Clingmans Dome, the western terminus of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

HUMOR, SINGLES COLUMNS DEBUT THIS WEEK

Columns add new voices to News & Record pages

We want to bring some new voices and a little more laughter to the Life section.

So, starting this week, you'll find two new columns. Today, meet Jim Rosenberg. His real job is director of knowledge management for Charles Aris Inc., an executive search firm in Greensboro. But he's also a keen observer of all things sublime, ridiculous and sublimely ridiculous, and he'll be sharing them with you in a column every Sunday.

This is how Jim describes himself: "I have two exceptional middle-school-aged boys, and therefore a lot of Febreze and a ringing in my ear from that constant Instant Messenger ding. I have coached over 20 youth teams of various sports and served as a volunteer with the crisis line and as on-air host of the Greensboro Youth Council's High I.Q. Bowl. My family moved to Greens-

boro in 1970, and I've been providing smart-alecky goodness to the Triad ever since."

You may remember him from Triad Style. He wrote a column for the alternative weekly from 1994 through 1997.

Starting Friday, look for Vexed in City. It's a weekly column about being young and single in the Triad, written by various News & Record staffers. They'll be writing about dating and relationships, roommates, apartments, career issues, diversions, favorite gadgets — pretty much anything that touches their lives.

First up is Amy Dominello, who wonders if she's outgrown the club scene.

Take a look at these new features, and let us know what you think.

Contact Features Editor Susan Ladd at 373-7006 or sladd@news-record.com.

In the Triad, laughter and respect shouldn't be mutually exclusive

Hi, neighbor! My name is Jim, and I'll be serving you piping hot local humor here on Sundays.

As a veteran local humor columnist formerly with Triad Style, I'd like to strike a deal with you right at the start. I know what this culture has done to your soul. You've been watching reality television for so long, you think that entertainment means finding someone to hate.

Well, I refuse to be your Omarosa, even though there is a deeply repressed part of me that would love to dress up and feel sassy and pretty for once in my life. Is that so wrong? Of course, it is wrong. I mispoke.

My point is that, up ahead, two roads diverge in the woods. The first path is lined with petty bickering and offended feelings. The second path is



JIM ROSENBERG

paved with good-natured kidding and shared laughter.

If we take the first path, flying Argument Monkeys shrieking like Fran Drescher will yank us up by the belt loop, bump our bottoms on the roof of Skip Alston's Navigator, then drop us down one of Billy Yow's freshly drilled wells to a horrifying death. That's just a fact.

If we take the second path, dogwood petals and Krispy Kreme sugar dust will be scattered at our feet, and hey, look — there's Lee Kinard and the Old Rebel shouting encouraging words from a roadside bench. I love those guys!

Let's take the latter road, all right? You can join in the fun by sending me items to the e-mail address below and agreeing not to have an aneurysm every time someone or something you

like gets kidded.

In many ways, we are lucky. The Triad is blessed with an abundant supply of raw humor material and citizens willing to fight for their comedy rights.

We may not have a natural water supply, but Guilford County is the Garden of Eden when it comes to original political sin. On a date uncertain, at a time unknown, the Lord did say to the people of Guilford, "Do not eat from the tree of local politics that grows such beautiful apples, for you shall be cursed big-time if you do." (I'm paraphrasing here.)

In about 10 seconds, the sound of crunching and core-tossing filled the sweet Southern air. From this day forward, Triad citizens would suffer like Job under the governance of a series of colorful and confrontational leaders. But for a humor writer, this creates a

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Trail

Continued from Page D1

and a sliver of moon. Logging 29.3 miles in one day, his longest yet with a full pack. Photographing the sunny Blue Ridge Parkway through a tunnel draped in blue ice. Sharing a meal with new friends met along the way.

Because, simply, this is what Adam Collins does. He walks. With a camera around his neck and a Bible and two small notebooks in his pack, he walks a really long way. In search of nature, great photos and adventure.

■■■

"ah, my home state. at times i think that i could live this life forever, never returning home. but, north carolina is where i come from. it is where my heart is. i will always return to her."

— Grizzly Adam, Oct. 17, 2004, the coast of Maine

■■■

Just four months after writing this, Adam Collins (aka Grizzly Adam) would start his journey on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Traveling — mostly on foot — is a way of life for Collins.

Ever since he rediscovered backpacking in 2000, he has sought adventure, filling the time between hikes remodeling houses for cash and developing his photography business.

It was a book that got him started: "A Walk in the Woods," Bill Bryson's account of hiking the Appalachian Trail.

"I was sitting at the Laundromat one night, and it hit me, I'm going to go hike the AT."

Twelve days later, on a starlit path, he reached the summit of Georgia's Springer Mountain, the southern terminus of the national scenic trail that stretches to Maine, carrying about 100 pounds of food and gear on his back.

"The first time he took off to leave, his pack was so heavy I could barely put it on without falling over," says Jon Offner, 24, a friend and fellow hiker.

It was October, and Collins' friends were worried about his lack of long-distance experience, his heavy pack — and him starting a trek just as the cold set in and most through-hikers were finishing the trail.

"We weren't very hopeful," Offner says. "We tried hard to talk him out of it."

But Grizzly Adam had made his decision.

Offner was not surprised. "Once he gets it in his head what he wants to do, he goes for it," Offner says.

"He's very determined." That first AT hike was no exception. Collins hiked through the rest of 2000, stopping only for Christmas.

After a serious bout of sickness, he left the trail in January 2001, only to return less than a year later for more.

He just couldn't stay away.

■■■

About a mile into the hike to Mount Mitchell, Collins stops and slides off his day pack.

Fueled by a massive cinnamon bun and a bottle of Cheerwine, he is hiking a mere nine miles this day, filling in a leg of the MST he skirted last winter when the trail was blanketed with nearly waist-high snow.

Collins drops his pack on the ground and pulls out his 35-year-old Nikon, focusing on a grove of vibrant, feathery ferns, the lens cap dangling from a short, blue rope.

Bugs flutter and buzz nearby, but all else is silent. Collins

shoots a few frames, then scribbles some notes about the shot in a small, spiral-bound pad.

He packs up and heads further up the trail to a ridge line where he can see his destination, the tower atop Mount Mitchell.

When he began hiking, Collins just took photos to record his adventures, but a friend saw his photos and suggested he consider pursuing a career as a photographer.

Collins hasn't been able to make his hikes pay for themselves yet, but he has been published on the cover of an important Appalachian Trail guide, had regular shows in Asheville and sells prints through his Web site.

"What he's trying to do as a landscape photographer (is) combine his two loves," says Kurt Peterson, a friend and AT through-hiker, who has one of Collins' prints.

Peterson says the print Collins gave him, called "Bradley Gap at Dusk," holds much more than an image.

"It brings up so many memories of being out there. It inspires so many feelings of nostalgia."

■■■

"i am excited about the adventure and the unknown and the great journey that this trail has to offer. i am excited about seeing this great state where i was born and raised, in a way that most people never will. the good Lord is going to show me great things over the next few months."

— Grizzly Adam, 2:30 a.m., Feb. 15, 2005, Greensboro

■■■

The hiking world is crawling with AT through-hikers — the 2,175-mile trail is arguably the most well-known long-distance hiking path in the world, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy estimates 8,425 hikers have completed the trek.

The MST doesn't enjoy such notoriety. The trail is only about half complete, so for now, the route — and the few people who traverse it — follows roads through much of the eastern part of the state. Just seven hikers are considered official finishers.

When Collins started hiking the MST, he set out with the intention of getting his name on the list of official finishers — he would be No. 8.

He's nearly there. To be official, he needs only to go back and hike a few sections he missed in deep snow and a couple of spots where he biked instead of walking.

But now that Collins has traversed the state, from the towering Smokies to the smooth, rolling dunes of Jockey's Ridge, he realizes he's already done what he's set out to do.

There was the day in Stone Mountain State Park when he witnessed poachers stuffing a deer into their trunk — and later helped rangers catch them, earning him two bowls of chili, a ride down the trail and the promise of a freshly baked cake, a debt he intends to collect one day.

On another day, Collins hiked with two friends and photographed their snowball fight while ducking the fire.

And Collins found people on his trip kinder than he ever thought possible — complete strangers opened their homes to him, offering hospitality, fellowship and a warm meal, teaching lessons of trust and friendship.

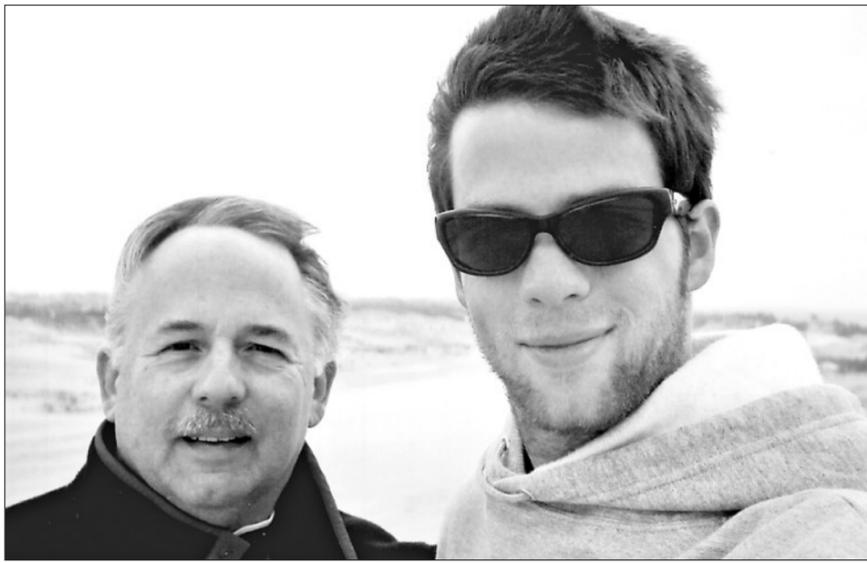
It doesn't mean he won't fill

mysterious visitor who follows their every move.

If you buy in bulk, you also get Bruce Davis' seminar agendas, which are in mint condition, having never been used. All sales of the inexplicably popular Bendable Don Vaughan with Real Fence-Sitting Action are final. The success of COMICON CL is an encouraging sign of the Triad's willingness to laugh.

So, let's get started. I want everyone to get on this train before it leaves the station. Tom Phillips, loosen that necktie and here's a conductor's hat for your inner child. Terry Grier, put down those test scores and hop on board before you get you outta here. Skip Alston, call me a racist, but give me a big ol' hug, you teddy bear. Everyone rides this train. See you at the next stop.

Contact Jim Rosenberg at jim.rosenberg@gmail.com



PHOTOS BY ADAM COLLINS

Adam Collins (right), with his dad Lenwood Collins, discovered hiking through a book on the Appalachian Trail that he read after his cable television service was discontinued.



Adam Collins packs a 35-year-old Nikon to shoot photos of scenes he passes during his hikes, including Window Falls in Hanging Rock State Park near Danbury (left) and footprints in the sand at Ocracoke Island.

in the last few miles at some point, nor does it mean he won't one day hike the whole thing again, end to end.

He might. "But it won't be so that I can get a plaque and have a party," he says. "There was more to it than that. I got to see the state that I was born and raised in and the state that I call home."

"And I think that was more important than saying I'd done it."

■■■

"this adventure didn't quite play out the way i'd envisioned it. in my mind, i would wake up and walk all day and take pictures. the walking would be easy. the progress would be smooth. this journey has definitely not been easy. the progress has definitely not been smooth. it has been incredible, though. incredible."

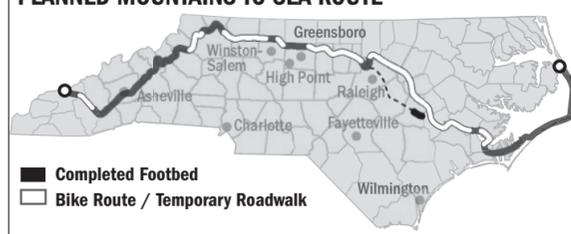
— Grizzly Adam, April 11, 2005, on ferry from Cedar Island to Ocracoke

■■■

The final ascent to Mount Mitchell — after a leisurely, grassy approach — is steep and quick.

Adam Collins maintains his

PLANNED MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA ROUTE



TIM RICKARD/News & Record

confident stride. He negotiates the rocky trail with ease and speed.

Collins records his adventures in a small notebook he carries (his other notebook is used for recording the photos he shoots) and catalogs them in a journal online.

He also collects rocks from many of his hikes. On this day, he will pick one up at the summit of Mount Mitchell and drop it in his pocket — another piece of this adventure for him to carry with him.

He has accomplished what he set out to do — nine miles and a few careful photos.

It crystallizes what hiking is all about for him.

"The simplicity of it, for me," he says. "Once you get out of (civilization) everything else doesn't even matter. All of the hustle and bustle of the outside world doesn't even matter."

"I'm a Christian, and for me, there's something about just being out in God's creation.

There's just something really beautiful about it that really hits home for me. It just breaks it all down for me and knocks down all those barriers.

"It's where I feel the closest, where I walk the strongest spiritually."

Mist turns to rain near the top. Collins, in his usual hiking uniform of shorts (even on the coldest days) and trail sneakers, seems unfazed as the damp chill sets in.

The tower atop the mountain is entirely shrouded in fog, and the view is a swirling sea of white. Still, Collins leans against the summit marker and smiles for a photo.

He's happy to be outside, atop a mountain, on an adventure.

There's no better place to be.

Contact Melissa Turner at 373-7092 or mturner@news-record.com

ABOUT THE MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL

Origin: Proposed in 1977, by the state Division of Parks and Recreation, although citizens — including Greensboro's Louise Chatfield had been pushing for such a trail for years.

The trail now: About half the trail, comprising more than 900 miles of footpaths, roads and bike routes, is completed, but the toughest work — blazing a path through mostly private lands in the eastern part of the state — lies ahead.

The plan: Nearly 1,000 miles of foot trails that cross the state and link to other trails.

The goal: To raise general trail awareness and use and give people a new way to see North Carolina.

How it's done: The Mountains-to-Sea Trail is primarily built and advocated for by volunteers. It's paid for with grant money and local trails funds. Groups such as the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail help organize support.

The timeframe: There's no way to know when the Mountains-to-Sea Trail will be finished, supporters say. It depends on money, the logistics and politics of trail-building and the support the effort gets.

Western terminus: Clingmans Dome, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 6,643 feet; www.nps.gov/grsm/

Eastern terminus: Sand dune at Jockey's Ridge State Park, 140 feet; www.jockeysridgestatepark.com/

The route: Passes through 37 counties, including Forsyth, Guilford and Alamance, three national parks and a handful of state parks and national forests. Trekkers must cross two rivers on foot and a handful by bridge. The trail goes over mountaintops and along beaches.

Learn more: www.ncmst.org

TRAIL TIDBITS

■ It was a book that got Adam Collins out on the trail for his first long-distance solo trip, but it's really his television he should thank. Collins moved into a new apartment and found the cable was already turned on — free cable is a young bachelor's dream come true — so he and his roommate reaped the benefits for a few months. When the free entertainment source dried up, Collins turned to books, where he discovered the Appalachian Trail.

■ A trail name is key for long-distance hikers. If you don't pick your own, fellow hikers are likely to choose one for you, Collins says. His trail name, Grizzly Adam, comes from the TV show "The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams," a childhood favorite of Collins, who watched reruns growing up. His brother chose it before Collins' first long-distance hike.

■ Collins helped catch some deer poachers in Stone Mountain State Park, but the story didn't end there. When rangers apprehended the poachers, they opened the trunk of the car to find the evidence and were surprised when one deer leaped out of the trunk. Another deer was found dead inside.

MORE ONLINE

Read Adam Collins' Mountains-to-Sea Trail journal and others online at www.trailjournals.com/grizzlyadam05/. Click on "First" to read about the hike from the beginning.

View more of Collins' photos at www.wacphotography.com.

Humor

Continued from Page D1

situation akin to Lee Greenwood singing at a VFW convention: It's almost too easy.

Triad citizens took these lemons and made lemonade. The Koury Center will soon play host to COMICON CL (Civic Leader), widely known as "the nation's largest conference specializing in comics and action figures of civic leaders."

Rockers Molly Hatchet will be in the house as the new Jim Melvin bobblehead doll is formally introduced.

The most expensive item is likely to be County Commissioner Capers No. 2005-07 featuring Bruce Davis and Paul Gibson in "Hawaiian Hideaway," a thrilling issue where the commissioners battle unbearable buffet lines and awful sunburn peeling, as well as a

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