

# Walking with Spring

by Earl Shaffer (1981)

This book was the results of him (in 1948) being the first man to complete the Appalachian Trail (AT) in one season (thru hike). Congress took another 20 yrs to save what was left of the wilderness around the trail. Most of the trail was built by CCC during the great depression. He read that it was impossible to thru hike the entire length & decided it would help him get the war out of his mind. He went back years later & wrote it from his journal notes on the trip.

Maintenance of the trail lapsed during WWII. Mile by mile, nature was reclaiming the trail by storms & overgrowth. The trail wasn't marked as well as it is today & he didn't get maps in time (he just had a road map). The valleys were so covered with brush that placing the trail along the ridge worked out better. He quickly learned he was starving & started eating more. Much of his food came from oatmeal, raisins & brown sugar. He also found out his 7 lb tent was useless.

The forest rangers in the lookout towers kept an eye out for him & gave him food & shelter. There were other shelters along the way. He got off the trail once & found out it is better to backtrack than to bushwhack. He estimated he took 5 million steps with his 40 lb pack. He used twig fires & the pine sap helps get them started. About midway his dad met him to make sure he was OK. Boiling springs is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest springs in the world at a million gal/day (51dF). He averaged 17 miles per day for the 124-day journey.