

HISTORY IN THE MAKING



By **Barney Scout Mann**

The Pacific Crest Trail is made of dreams. Dreams fulfilled and broken. When I put down the phone in May 2012, I sadly wondered whether the time for this dream had passed.

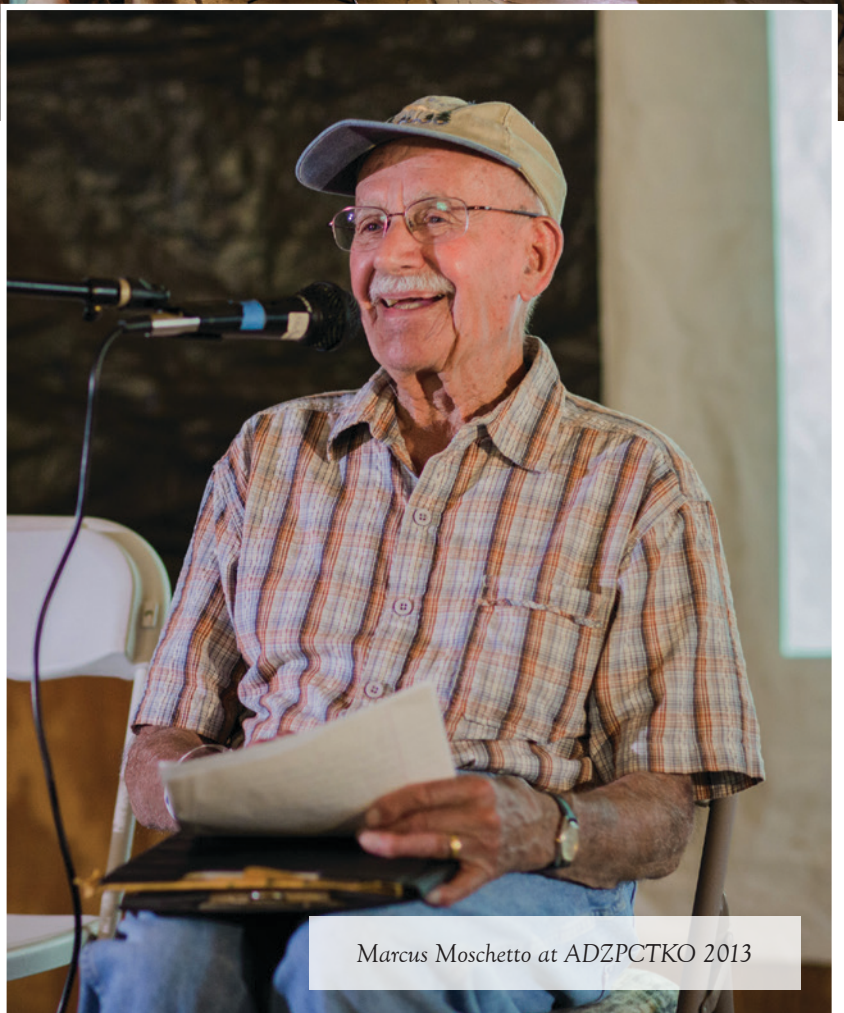
Gordon had said “No.” He was nearly 91, and he’d been the only real hope.

Finding **Gordon Petrie** was a dream fulfilled. He was one of the 1930s YMCA Relay Boys who first put the Pacific Crest Trail on the map. Over four summers from 1935 to 1938, 40 teams of teenaged boys carried a leather logbook, handing it from one team to the next, as they walked from Mexico to Canada. Gordon was on Team 27. [See: “The Search for the PCT Relay Boys” *PCT Communicator* Sept. 2011]

I’d dreamed that a Relay Boy might still have photos. Gordon had a dozen. I’d dreamed of finding a second Relay Boy. We found three more. We recorded 96-year-old **Blake Bevill’s** memories six months before his death. And in a cluttered garage in Santa Ana, Calif., a fireproof safe held the original logbook.

I dreamt once more. I wondered if one of the surviving Relay Boys would come to a hiker gathering. Perhaps speak? That had never happened. Could we, after 75 years, re-unite a Relay Boy with the logbook – listen as he reads his own handwriting after all that time? Blake had died, two others were in rest homes, and Gordon didn’t want to travel.

In late 2012, a letter came to the PCTA. It began: “My father, who is now 90 years old, was a member of one of the legs of the first Pacific Crest Trail hikes in the 1930s. Are there any books on that historic hike I could get him for his birthday?”



Marcus Moschetto at ADZPCTKO 2013

Marcus Moschetto was a member of Relay Team 38. He’d been 15. Marcus had kept photos, his memory was still sharp, and he lived in Portland, Maine, with **Beatrice**, his wife of 69 years. His story appeared in these pages in Spring 2013, “Found: 1938 Relay Boy Marcus Moschetto.”

Portland, Maine, was so far away, I didn’t even ask.



But the Spring 2013 annual Kickoff at Lake Morena was fast approaching, and the dream wouldn't go away. I called Marcus' son. "Dad might be interested," he said. "I'll talk to him."

I contacted the Kickoff organizers, even though their schedule was full. **Scott "Shroomer" Williams**, Kickoff Program Coordinator, wrote back: "Just thinking about the log book being held once again by that boy, now an old man, about brings me to tears."

I called **Don Rogers** in Santa Ana. Don is the son of PCT pioneer **Warren Rogers**. Warren led most of the YMCA Relay legs and then safeguarded the logbook for 50 years. Upon Warren's death in 1992, Don became the keeper. To Don, the logbook represents his dad. It had left the house only twice in 20 years. Moreover, on that Kickoff Saturday, Don had a big birthday bash planned for one of his daughters. But he said he would be there.

I didn't hear from Marcus' son. When I called, he said Marcus had been all set to buy plane tickets, but Beatrice said no. Among other things, she was concerned it would be too tiring. I tried to address each of their concerns. In the end, the weight of the decision rested on Marcus' shoulders. At age 15 on the PCT he'd shouldered a 45-pound pack, more than half his weight. How had that spirit weathered the past 75 years?

Kickoff, meanwhile, was calling it "History in the making." USC film school grad **Ryan "ProDeal" Christensen** planned to film the talk. I'd worked up an introduction and slide show.

Then I heard from Marcus. He and Beatrice were going to fly to Phoenix and stay with their daughter, **Maureen**, who'd drive them to Kickoff and back. Marcus might be 90, but he could still hoist a pack.

The day was warm and cloudless as the pavilion slowly filled that Saturday afternoon. **Ryan Christensen** and Marcus fussed with a microphone. Don Rogers sat well off to one side. There were empty chairs when I began my introduction. But when I turned the floor over to Marcus, it was standing room only.

With a trimmed narrow mustache and a lined face beaming a smile, he raised a leathery hand to acknowledge the warm applause. Marcus told me before, "Don't worry. I'm talking about something I love." And Marcus started telling the stories from his hike. The canned corned beef, Ry-Krisps and dates. The awful mosquitos. "I gave myself the name Marcus "Mosquito" Moschetto." Someone blurted out: "That's the first trail name ever."

Both pages, l-r: A standing-room-only crowd at Marcus' presentation.

At Buck Creek Pass in the Cascades, Marcus age 15, uses his pack and the YMCA Relay logbook as a pillow. Photo courtesy of Marcus Moschetto.

Marcus, left, poses with PCT legends Teddi Boston, center, and Billy Goat.

Unless otherwise noted, photos by Linda "Gottago" Jeffers

To make his living, Marcus had run a service station, but he said that the hike "made me a lifelong outdoorsman." A 60-year Maine resident, Marcus hiked the trails near his home, but, "I never set foot on the PCT again."

And he rarely spoke of the Relay. "It's been many, many years. I'd take out the photos and nobody paid it much interest." Eager hands rose with questions. One hiker explained that June 21 was Hike Naked Day and then asked Marcus, "What do you think about that?" Flashing a smile, Marcus said: "Sounds good to me."

Marcus couldn't recall another time in his life when he'd felt, "I'm a hero." That day at Kickoff, hikers asked for his autograph. "It's too bad some of the other 'boys' aren't here for this," he said.

With minutes left, I projected a photo of the logbook on the screen and then a photo of Marcus on Buck Peak Pass. Marcus' head rested on the logbook. He was using it as a pillow.

"Marcus, what would it mean to you to hold the logbook again?" I asked.

The 200 people in the room were silent. Don Rogers stood. Marcus looked at me.

"It would be amazing," he said.

Don walked over and handed it to Marcus. Marcus held the black leather book in his hands and simply said, "Oh my." He had tears in his eyes.

"Marcus, read us what you wrote."

He turned pages he hadn't turned for 75 years. Overcome, he was too choked up to find it. The crowd rose and gave him a standing ovation.

Ten days later a note came from Marcus' son: "I can't tell you how much this has meant to my family and especially my father. ... For that brief time he was 15 again." 🐛

An edited clip of Marcus Moschetto's Kickoff presentation should be available soon on the PCTA website, www.pcta.org