



Saved for Another Day

BY LARRY LUXENBERG

Clockwise from left, Bruce Dunlavy, who was in charge of dismantling the Earl Shaffer shelter, along with Martyann Gutierrez, Jack Vose, Chuck Wood and Larry Luxenberg carefully dismantle one of the shelter's walls.

One man's junk is another man's treasure. That old saying is apt for many things collected for the A.T. Museum Society's A.T. Museum, some of which narrowly escaped being tossed out. As of this past August, our most treasured item is the Earl Shaffer Shelter and that barely avoided the wrecking crew.

Shaffer built a half dozen shelters in Pennsylvania, largely by himself, and often including castaway materials. The one on Peters Mountain, east of the Susquehanna River, was his last intact shelter. After some 40 years in use, it became superfluous in the mid-1990s when the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club (SATC) built the larger Peters Mountain Shelter. According to Jeff Buehler of SATC, who led the project, the club considered tearing down the Shaffer Shelter. However, some club members valued the connection with Shaffer, the pioneering thru-hiker, and wanted to keep the shelter. Several years ago the A.T. Museum Society offered to preserve the shelter. After a complicated two-year historic review, approval came one month before the 60th anniversary of Earl's first thru-hike in 1948.

In the meantime, Charlie Duane, a member of the Earl Shaffer Foundation, suggested that the museum turn the preservation effort into a historical moment itself. This took the form of a ceremony marking the anniversary

combined with a work trip to dismantle the shelter and carry the logs three miles out to a road. About 40 people—half from SATC including president Karen Balaban—and others from a wide variety of clubs turned out. After people shared their memories of Earl in a one-hour ceremony, the shelter was dismantled.

The historic ceremony and work trip were preserved with some high quality photos by Charlie Duane, a video on YouTube by "Trail Angel" Mary Parry, a videotape of the whole event by Eli Luxenberg, and a segment broadcast by the Harrisburg ABC affiliate.

Now that the shelter is safely stored, all that remains is to reassemble it in a new home. If current discussions go well, that could be in the Old Mill building in Pine Grove Furnace State Park near the midpoint of the A.T. And there, this tiny, old, and well thought out shelter could begin a new life as a connection to the old Trail and an example of what the A.T. community is capable of doing.