



Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Fall 2009

Inside

President's Report:
Moving the OTA
forward

Clean-up of derecho
damage to the OT

Forest Service
recognizes OTA and
our own

**In memory of John
Roth**

Friendship and trails
can flourish in tough
times

The Ozark Trail Association
is a non-profit group with
the mission to develop,
maintain, preserve,
promote and protect the
rugged natural beauty of
the Ozark Trail

John Roth A tribute

By Steve Coates

I met John in January 2003 at the second-ever Ozark Trail Association planning meeting. He was there in jeans, sweatshirt and an OTA ball cap. There once was a John who wore suits and ties to work in his "businessman" days. However, the John I came to know was frequently dirty, sweaty, and covered in scratches and scrapes, at home in work boots and a hard hat.

Four months prior to meeting John, in September 2002, my dad died suddenly leaving me with a big hole in my life. I struggled with this during the holiday season that year and later, I learned from a co-worker about this new organization called the OTA. I was looking for something to get involved in, to help plug the hole in my life. This seemed like a good fit for me because I love hiking and the Missouri Ozarks. It was my dad who introduced me to the Ozarks when I was a boy.



John Roth: Ozark Trail Association founder, leader and friend

He led the charge into the woods...Missouri has John Roth to thank for recognizing how important a long-distance trail in the Ozarks would be.

—Steve Coates

I went to that January meeting and sat in the back, staying quiet and observing this guy named John Roth run the proceedings. He seemed to have a lot of passion for what he was talking about and ran a very well-organized meeting (as I would come to expect from John). His enthusiasm for the Ozark Trail was infectious and it drew me in. After the meeting I decided to stick around, introduce myself and offer my support of the trail. We chatted briefly and after learning that I wanted to get involved, and the rest is, shall we say, history.

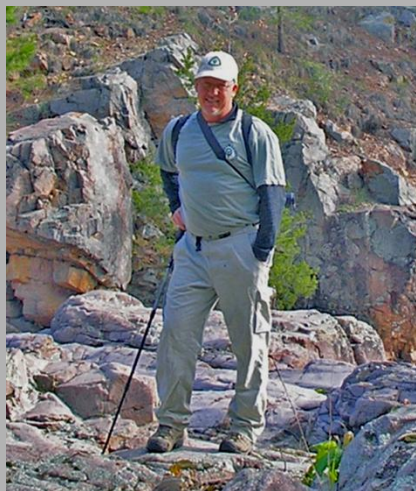
Continued on page 7

The Ozark Trail Association Newsletter is published four times each year and is mailed to all members. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact kathy.atnip@ozarktrail.com.

Contributions are welcome and may be emailed to the editor at the above address or mailed to:

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John: May you build a ladder to the stars.
And climb on every rung. May you stay
forever young.



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President's Report

I'm not going to lie; it has been a tough summer. And this is a tough *President's Report* to write.

How does the OTA move forward without John Roth? In my previous stint as President, I would turn to John for advice a lot. He would help me work through issues. I would often run things by him to pass his litmus test. As I write this, I'd like to call him and ask "how does this look?" I will miss the many ways that John guided and mentored me. It will be strange not to see him in the woods this fall, barking out instructions to the crew leaders, inspecting trail, handing out stickers to the first-time trail builders; well, the list goes on.

In spite of the strangeness of it, I'm ready to get back in the woods this fall for it is my love of the Ozarks and trails that originally drew me to the OTA. John provided the spark to start the OTA and it's this group that is my outlet for an activity that I truly love. The OTA has also been the source for something else I deeply appreciate and that is the friendships that I've made over the years. These friendships are dear to me and they helped buoy my spirits during this difficult summer.

The OTA is a collection of some of the finest people I've ever worked with. This organization of people, from all walks of life, is special. Yup, you are special. Who can explain why someone would come to a trail construction outing in the rain (even a driving thunderstorm with lightning and tornados), or snow and sleet? Yet, OTA volunteers do this repeatedly, without batting an eye.

We will gather this September for the kickoff of our **8th construction season!** Can you believe it? We've come a long way from our first four-person outing back in November 2002. We'll be moving our operation back to the Courtois section where we'll finish work remaining from last fall. I've been out with a scouting crew to check the flag line of the new trail. It's going to be a very nice piece of trail folks, with some very nice views overlooking the Courtois. We'll have a one-day kick-off outing on September 12th to "dust the cobwebs off" and then we'll hit it hard at our fall MegaEvent the weekend of September 25-27 at our host campground, Bass' River Resort. As with previous fall mega events, REI will again be our co-sponsor and we have all the fun in store; trail building, camping, barbeque, bonfire, bluegrass, and some nice stuff to raffle. I'm ready and looking forward to it.

We had a great spring at Johnson's Shut-ins working on the Taum Sauk section, until that "little" storm came through and undid a lot of what we had done. We've been working with Jeff Ayers, JSI park superintendent, to create a plan to finish the trail and clean up the rest of the damage. It'll take a while. It's possible we'll be able to get back to JSI this winter sometime.

We've suffered setbacks this year, but the future of the OTA is bright. John laid a good foundation for all of us. The blueprint is there, all we have to do is follow the directions. Even though I can't ask John "what should I do now?" his legacy is firmly planted within this organization and I know that someone else will be there to answer the question for me. I will do my best to carry on what John started. I'll need a lot of help, but I know I have it.

See you in September,

Steve



Storm clean-up on the trail

By Todd Horn

A severe storm known as a “derecho” with straight-line winds and several tornadoes hit southern Missouri on May 8. Forty-four miles of Ozark Trail within the Mark Twain National Forest were devastated in the worst damage event on the trail in its 30-year history.

Thanks to hard work by OTA volunteers, and money secured by the Forest Service for paid crews, the Trace Creek, Middle Fork, Karkaghne, and Blair Creek sections of the Ozark Trail are now cleared and open, although large holes remain in the tread from root balls. The Taum Sauk section’s new Scour Loop Trail to the Overlook off Hwy N at Johnson’s Shut-Ins State Park is open, along with Mina Sauk Loop to Hwy 21, also with some holes in the tread. The following sections are still closed:

Taum Sauk – Hwy A north into Bell Mountain Wilderness, and Hwy A south through Johnson’s Shut-Ins to the Mina Sauk Loop. This section suffered heavy damage with the highest number of trees down per mile.

Marble Creek – the first two miles from the campground has been cleared, but there is no estimate yet on fully opening that section.

Blair Creek – Pioneer Forest boundary south of Midridge to Little Blair Creek (5 miles north of Powder Mill)

The Forest Service is working to find additional funds for clean-up and will be making repairs on the tread on their sections over the next year. It will take some time and there is no estimate of when the trail will be completely cleared of trees. The OTA has submitted a damage report to the Department of Natural Resources and Pioneer Forest. We will be working with these land stewards to help secure support for cleanup, but we are still in the planning stages at this time.

As we get more information, we are posting updates in Trail Conditions and in the forums at www.ozarktrail.com. You can help by volunteering at a future OTA event or by sending tax-deductible donations to cover our fuel, oil, repair and administrative costs. Send checks to the Ozark Trail Association at 406 W. High St. Potosi MO 63664. 🌱



Derecho: (“deh-RAY-cho,”) a sustained, widespread windstorm over 57 miles per hour. Damage to the Karkaghne section (shown) included downed trees and holes caused by exposed root balls

Forest Service honors OTA and members

By Kathy Atnip

The US Forest Service has presented the Ozark Trail Association with the 2008 Forest Service Volunteer Program Award for a 20-state northeastern region. The honor recognizes OTA’s sponsorship of two dozen trail construction or maintenance outings during the year and nearly 13,300 hours donated by over 500 individuals, devoted to trail work in the Mark Twain National Forest. MTNF Supervisor David Whittekiend said, “This is a great example of a public private partnership working together to develop and maintain a wonderful Missouri asset.”

In addition to the program award, John Roth was posthumously awarded a 2008 Forest Service Volunteer Award for the same region. Last year, Roth contributed over 1000 hours to the Ozark Trail. “John showed an unprecedented level of initiative and energy as a Mark Twain National Forest volunteer,” said Whittekiend.

For his contribution of over 850 hours of volunteer training, leading work crews and serving as the Ozark Trail Association’s Adopt-a-Trail program coordinator, Robert Smith has been awarded a 2008 USFS National Volunteer Award. Smith has “greatly improved the condition of the trail,” according to Whittekiend. Thanks to Smith’s efforts, 90% of the existing Ozark Trail has been adopted and is under regular maintenance. OTA volunteers Kathie Brennan and Adam Rothermich were also honored with regional Volunteer Awards for 2008. Brennan led teams of trail workers in building over 4 miles of new Ozark Trail, while Rothermich contributed over 150 hours to trail construction and maintenance.

The OTA is proud of our hardworking and dedicated volunteers! 🌱



OTA Volunteer extraordinaire: Kathie Brennan receives USFS Award. Also pictured: Kris Swanson of Mark Twain National Forest and Steve Coates, OTA President



John Roth

A fond farewell.

Mr. Roth loved to hike, and while on a section of trail in the summer of 1997, he found trees down, weeds overgrown and no trail markers. He called the U.S. Forest Service to complain. That's when Paul Nazarenko of the Forest Service told him to come on down and help fix up the trail. Mr. Roth showed up a day later, ready for work.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 9, 2009

John was instrumental in getting my family out of the city and into the woods. He always had a great suggestion for a destination, or an answer to any question.

Our kids named John "Santa" because he gave them all Mega Event raffle tickets, and after seeing they weren't winning anything, kept "finding" prizes to give them.



Ozark Trail volunteers are the most impressive group of people I've had the pleasure of working beside. Your dedication is inspiring. Your collective work is amazing. Your achievements are stunning.

Thank you for turning a once neglected trail into a National Recreation Trail. Thank you for your part in 60,000 hours of volunteer work. Thank you for making the OTA events the most rewarding experience I've had. Thanks for the memories of the past six years, and the achievements yet to come.

John Roth, September 10, 2008



Michelangelo could paint a Sistine Chapel...John Roth could design a switchback!

I had the privilege of getting a shuttle ride with John as the driver. We drove maybe 45 minutes. In that time, John gave me the entire history of the area, complete with Civil War trivia, and he talked me into signing up for a section of Adopt-a-Trail, which I currently maintain.

I have since used the skills and tips John showed us that weekend in various other jobs and projects. I will always remember how he enriched my life...

John Roth simply had us all under his spell...he was a "Pied Piper of people" with trail building tools as his flute! We would follow him down the trail, across the river, & through the jungle to reach our goal...

John, it is you we thank now for having the vision, the tenacity, the zest, the drive, the dedication to inspire us...we will continue in your honor because you honored us by your love of the Ozark Trail.



We'll miss you, John
("I can split that log with one swing") Roth!



1959 - 2009

..a lasting legacy



Here are some of John's statistics... odds are you could double everything and not be close to what he really did:

254 events (18 Mega Events) and John was the crew leader/coordinator for most of them.

Saw the Mega Events go from 17 people in September 2003 to 185 in April 2009.

Volunteered over 2,800 hours in the 5 ½ years since he started the OTA.

1,246 different people have attended events and I am sure John met every single one.

John really did take a leaf blower out one snowy morning and blow the snow off our work site, rather than cancel the event.

John always told me, "Wouldn't it be great if Missouri was considered the trail state?" He wanted this trail to last for generations... we are going to carry on.

*Three Rivers Publishing Online
August 3, 2009*

I met my husband the first time I attended a trail-building event, which surely wouldn't have happened without John.



We called John the "Energizer Bunny" and some of us had a hard time keeping up...

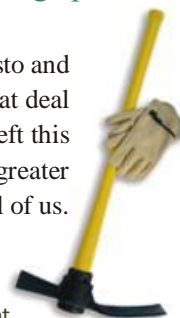


Through John's dream, many new relationships were born and will continue to grow...

I was amazed by John's organizational skills and dedication to the OTA. I think the OTA is the most effective non-profit I have ever encountered.



John lived a rich, full life with gusto and savvy. He accomplished a great deal more than most and he left this planet with a greater gift for all of us.



Imagine for a moment if John had never been... who else could have accomplished all that he did to develop the legacy of the Ozark Trail?

Happy Trails, John!

John Roth was an enthusiastic proponent of the outdoors. As the founder and guiding force of the Ozark Trail Association, he was responsible for completing many miles of new hiking trails and - perhaps more importantly - motivating and involving hundreds of volunteers in the effort. He had the passion, drive, and persistence to lead trail-building events that grew to huge proportions in recent years.

The Ozark Regional Land Trust

Few people are blessed with the intelligence and other abilities John had. Fewer still are natural leaders. It is truly rare when such a talented individual applies their abilities toward a greater good.

Building trail and friendship on the OT

By Susan Zimmerman

Anyone who knows of Johnson's Shut-Ins will remember the day the Taum Sauk reservoir breached; the legacy of December 14, 2005 will forever be written in water. It took only 12 minutes for the dam to empty its 1.3 billion gallons and wash away everything in its path except the hard volcanic rock of the shut-ins. The grounds were left a sorry sight, but for visitors returning in 2009, the park is a sight for sore eyes.

"It's a brand new park," said Jeff Ayers, the new superintendent who took the helm in May 2008. It was no easy feat to rebuild a place filled with uprooted trees piled up to 15 feet high and sand several feet thick. Like a phoenix rising from the debris after a three year plus make-over, Johnson's Shut-Ins is both transformed and better than ever.

"We were getting calls non-stop," commented Ayers about a public eager to get in the water and on the trail last spring. Although the park's been available for limited day use the last three summers, when the gates swung open on June 6, 2009 to one of Missouri's most popular state parks, there were lots of double takes starting with the new Highway N entrance.

The main day-use area that's currently accessible includes a new boardwalk to the shut-ins, picnic areas, interpretive shelters, park store and access to the East Fork of the Black River. Both the Black River Center in the day-use area and the Johnson's Shut-Ins Campground, now a mile down the road at Goggins Mountain, are scheduled for completion later this year. New campsites include basic, electric, full-hookup, equestrian and walk-in options, Camper cabins, a store, shower house and laundry facilities are also available.

"The Scour Channel is open to the public as well," said Ayers referring to the area where the water poured down Proffit Mountain and cut 20-30 feet into the earth uncovering billion-year-old rock, a new "attraction" that has caught the eyes of geologists worldwide. The new Scour Trail includes an overlook and interpretive pavilion. Another added attraction are the hundreds of boulders sent crashing down and now repositioned on the grounds as witnesses to the disaster.

The washed-out two-mile stretch of the Ozark Trail has also received some much needed attention. After the Department of Natural Resources flagged the areas to be rebuilt, Ozark Trail Association volunteers grabbed their McLeods and hit the humus. Hundreds of dedicated individuals made light work of this heavy load to put the

OTA fall events

Selected upcoming events from the current OTA calendar: for details and more events visit the calendar online at the OTA web site: www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php

SEPTEMBER COURTOIS MEGA EVENT

9/26/09, 7:30 A.M.

BASS' RIVER RESORT

Work on the Courtois section of the trail. Free camping Friday and Saturday nights, complimentary lunch and evening BBQ, live bluegrass music, raffles and more! Bring water, gloves, boots and a hat, and wear loose-fitting clothing

HUZZAH TREAD WORK

10/3/09, 8:45 A.M.

NEAR ONONDAGA CAVE

Widening and leveling the section along the Courtois bluffs. A wet crossing will be necessary. BBQ and possible campfire with camping available.

COURTOIS CONSTRUCTION

10/10/09, 8:45 A.M.

BASS' RIVER RESORT

More trail-building in the Courtois Valley. Bring water and lunch. Complimentary BBQ.

OCTOBER COURTOIS MEGA EVENT

10/24/09, 7:30 A.M.

BASS' RIVER RESORT

See September 26: we're doing it all over again!

trail back on the map. The trailhead which used to be inside the park is now off of Highway N.

"There was no way to get this done without their help," said Ayers who was really impressed with the almost 200 pairs of helping hands at the OTA's April MegaEvent. "It's been a very good partnership—I'm nothing but pleased," he continued about the backbreaking work the organization has shouldered since January 2009.

John Roth, OTA founder had echoed a similar sentiment about Ayers just several months earlier during a shut-ins trail-building weekend. "I've worked with agency reps from two states and three federal agencies and we've never had a better friend in 12 years," said Roth. For the OTA and Ayers, it's the beginning of a beautiful friendship for building trail. 🌲

Susan Zimmerman is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in such publications as National Geographic Traveler and Earthwatch magazine

John Roth tribute

Continued from page 1

I will remember John as a person who was about making connections. After he formed the OTA, he quickly embarked on a project to bridge a 28-mile gap in the Middle Fork section of the trail; three years later, this connection was completed. Because of his vision and drive, we now have the Ozark Trail, which attracts users from all over the Midwest.

John also made connections between people. He welcomed people from all walks of life to trail events with a smile, a word of encouragement, a *Monty Python* quote, or a steak dinner. He knew that to expand the trail, he had to expand the family. And John was the catalyst for that. You would frequently find John walking around the bonfire greeting people after a 16-hour day of trail building. OTA volunteers now number over 2,000 and this family was a major source of comfort at a time in my life when I was trying to fill the void left by the loss of my dad. I owe that all to what John started.

John was a natural leader and it showed both off and on the trail. I could tell this was a man who knew how to get things done. From the day he walked into the US Forest Service office complaining about the terrible condition of their trails to the days before he died, John wasn't shy to speak his mind. Good leaders put themselves out there and John did that for the OTA, at times frustrating the government agencies that weren't used to his rapid pace. But now, due to John's leadership, the OTA enjoys wonderful partnerships with all of the federal and state government agencies; they look to the OTA to help guide *them* now!

John was also a leader on the trail. I recall a wonderful day of hiking with him in April of last year at Lower Rock Creek in Madison County. I asked John to guide me and we took a bushwack through the woods, over beautiful cascading hillsides full of water, rocky ledges and cliffs, wildflowers AND snakes. Cottonmouths. I had never even seen a cottonmouth before, but with John that day, I saw four. John had no qualms in taking the lead and he cleared the trail for me (exhibiting excellent vertical leaping and screaming skills after stepping on a snake.) He kept in front, blazing the path in spite of the risk.

John's friendship with me went deeper as he became a mentor to me. He approached me late in 2004 and asked me to consider taking over the reins as President of the OTA. I was floored, honored and apprehensive. He recognized that the OTA needed to be bigger than him, and he asked ME to be his successor. He told me not to worry; he would help guide me and he did. He helped me to push myself to be better. John had that way about him; he made people better. I am better because of him.

The OTA Board of Directors met after John's death and unanimously approved a motion to rename the Middle Fork section of the Ozark Trail – the connection that started it all – in honor of John. It's our hope that future generations of trail users will know about the man who was about connections, about leadership, and about friendship. I will miss him, but I will carry his spirit with me for the rest of my life. 🍷

Steve Coates delivered these remarks at a family memorial service for John Roth on July 18, 2009.

Memorial contributions in honor of John Roth may be sent to:

**Ozark Trail Association
406 W. High Street
Potosi MO 63664**



Talking OT: Danny McMurphy, OTA Membership Coordinator and Ambre Tiggs, OTA Volunteer, July 29, 2009, at REI for one of several presentation about the trail

Volunteer with the OTA!

For general volunteer information or to become a certified Trail Leader, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jeff Goetter at OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at **7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month**. Check out the web site at www.ozarktrail.com for exact times and locations. If you can make it, stop in. The meetings are open to the public and input is welcome. Meetings are professionally run so you can count on finishing at 9:00 p.m. But the group usually goes out for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun; we'd love to see you!



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