

# Ad'k Expeditions

EXPLORING THE OLYMPIC REGION

HAVE A FAVORITE EXPEDITION?

LET US KNOW

Call or e-mail Mike Lynch,  
our outdoor writer,  
at his office in Saranac Lake.  
(518) 891-2600, ext. 28 or  
mlynch@adironack  
dailyenterprise.com

## At 103, Petty still has that outdoors spirit

MIKE LYNCH

NEWS OUTDOORS WRITER

SARANAC LAKE — Sitting in his room, alongside a Remington typewriter, with a photo of the High Peaks above him and leather hiking boots on his feet, 103-year-old Clarence Petty talked about first seeing legendary hermit Noah Rondeau walking along Coreys Road in 1913.

"He was pushing a baby carriage full of steel traps and cartridges for his gun," Petty said with a smile. "He was on his way up to the Cold River."

An Adirondack native, Petty is a historic figure in the conservation movement of the Adirondack Park. He has worked on both sides of the movement, for various forms of the state Department of Environmental Conservation and as an advocate who speaks his mind at public meetings. He now lives in an apartment at Saranac Village at Will Rogers.

When he met Rondeau, Petty was a child living on Stony Creek Pond in Coreys between Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake. His home had no electricity. In the summers, meat and butter were kept cool in an ice house.

The Pettys moved twice when Clarence was growing up. For the first three years of Clarence's life, his family lived in a small cabin built by his father on Forest Preserve land on Upper Saranac Lake. But in 1908, the Pettys relocated when the Forest Fish and Game Commission started to crack down on squatters living on state lands.

First, the Pettys moved to a place near Bartlett's Carry, and then in 1911, they moved to a house on First Pond, part of Stony Creek Ponds, in Coreys. Here, Petty's mother Catherine ran the post office and his father Ellsworth worked as a hunting and fishing guide, an occupation that his two eldest sons shared.

"Because we lived in the woods, my older brother and I, they thought we knew where every deer and every trout were," Petty said. "They used to hire us to drive deer long before we were 11 years old."

Although it was a sparsely populated area, Coreys had a variety of characters, including wealthy New York City residents, lumberjacks, guides and hermits.

When Rondeau came strolling down the dirt road in 1913, the hermit stopped at the post office to inform Catherine Petty of his new "residence" on Cold River. Living on his own since he was a teenager, Rondeau had become frustrated with being a barber in Lake Placid.

"You know, I asked him why he didn't stay with it, and he says, 'That was something that was never rewarding,'" Petty said. "Well, I don't know what he expected."

Over the years, Petty would see Rondeau occasionally. Although the two differed in many ways, they both appreciated wilderness. Sometimes, the hermit would visit the post office or even come over for a family dinner; other times, Petty and his brother Bill stayed in Rondeau's cabin located 13 miles away on a remote



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NANCY TRAUTMAN/ADIRONDACK COUNCIL  
Above, Petty, left, with fellow environmentalists Gary Randorf, center, and Greenleaf Chase take a break in the wilderness. Below, Petty today remains a go-to resource for anyone looking to gain a deeper understanding of the Adirondacks and its people.

stretch of the Cold River.

Often, Bill and Clarence would visit in the spring to take advantage of the great brook trout fishing in remote pools along the river.

"We'd cast out and, as long as you didn't disturb the area and startle them, boy, you'd catch a six- or seven-pound brook trout," Petty said.

"I remember, we brought some back and gave a couple to one of our neighbors, and they thought it was a peculiar looking fish ... they'd never seen anything quite that size."

### Falling through the ice at OK Slip Pond

A graduate of Saranac Lake High School in 1925, Petty went on to receive a forestry degree at what is now Syracuse School of Environmental Science and Forestry.

He later worked as a forest ranger, became the first aerial firefighter in the Adirondacks and collected information that is still utilized today by the Adirondack Park Agency. One of his jobs was to study rivers in the Park to determine how they should be categorized under the federal Wild, Recreation and Scenic Rivers Act.

In 1970, while working for Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's Study Commission on the Adirondacks, Clarence had a life-threatening experience that not only showed his fortitude but also his knowledge of how to escape dangerous situations in the backcountry.

Petty's job was to lead wildlife ecologist George Davis into the backcountry for studies. In this particular case, Petty said he was traveling alone on a six-mile snowshoe hike to OK Slip Pond in the dead of winter. Petty's job was to see how much development had taken place on the pond's shores and how much logging had occurred on the nearby private

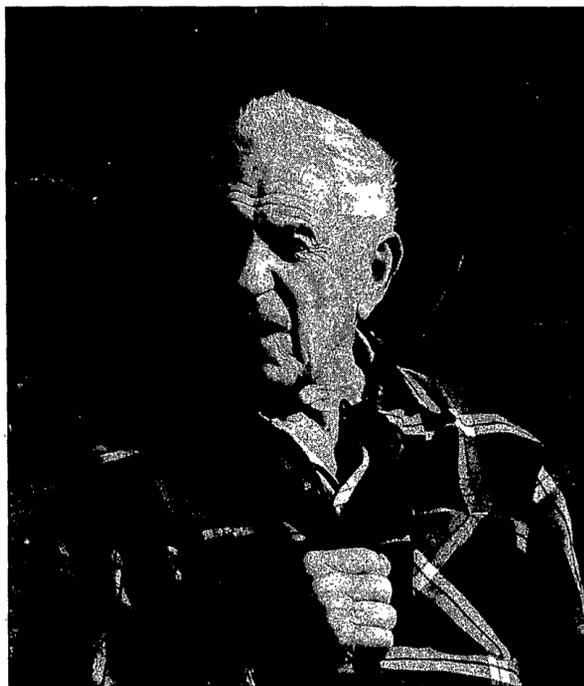


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILD CENTER

lands, according to "The Extraordinary Adirondack Journey of Clarence Petty," a biography written by Christopher Angus.

When Petty arrived and walked out on the pond, he fell through the ice at a weak spot near a log, plunging into water above his waist. Davis recalled in the Petty biography that the temperature was 34 below zero that morning.

"Boy, it was cold," Petty said. "My hands were freezing, so I couldn't get my boots off. So I had to just leave

them on with all the water in them."

Petty said he then managed to jog back to his car and get to his hotel room, where he later met up with Davis. He was able to survive because he was wearing all wool, which retains body heat, and because he had experience falling through the ice.

"I was accustomed to falling through the ice in the winter," Petty said. "Years ago, I used to trap and go across a pond somewhere, and the ice would break and I'd fall, in snow-

shoes and everything. It was no fun doing it, but I got so that I found out that, in order to keep from drowning, you had to roll out. You had to roll over and over. If you didn't, you kept breaking the ice. I learned that from my father... you learn those things the hard way. Fortunately, I never got pulled under."

### A native environmentalist

In the Adirondack Park, there is a constant tension between people who believe that state regulations are too restrictive and prohibit development and economic growth, and environmentalists, who fight for stricter protection of forests and wildlife.

Petty is adamantly behind the forces that fight to protect the natural resources of the Park, even at the expense of some modern conveniences. That desire to protect wilderness grew within him during the earliest days of his life, from the time he lived in that cabin on Upper Saranac Lake to his days growing up in Coreys, he said.

"Some people are willing to put up with the inconvenience of living in the backcountry and others are not," Petty said. "That's the big difference. I always felt, from the very time that I lived back in the woods, that that was the best time of my life."

Today, he continues to follow environmental issues that affect the Park. He contributes regularly to Adirondack Explorer, an environmental magazine based in Saranac Lake, by answering questions about the Park from readers called, "Questions for Clarence."

He supports land acquisitions in the Park by the state and conservation organizations, singling out the recent purchase of Follensby Pond by the Nature Conservancy as a prime example.

A pilot for decades who even owned his own floatplane, Petty said he supports the recent decision by the APA to ban floatplanes from Lows Lake because it's in a Wilderness Area. The decision has brought opposition because it will negatively affect two floatplane businesses.

"The department doesn't want to interfere with their business, but that's wrong," Petty said. "The people of New York state as a whole are more important than just two floatplane operators. I think it's something that all of the people should decide, not just one or two. The majority of the people believe that these areas should be free of these things."

No matter how long he lives, he will continue to be a conservationist and a lover of wilderness. He confessed that life has been difficult in recent years. His body sometimes fails him. But his passion for wilderness is still strong. When questioned if he ever wavered in his environmentalist mindset, he quickly responded, "No, I'm steady," raising his right fist above his head as he spoke.

"I was born in the woods," Petty said. "I liked the woods to start with. It's stayed with me. I haven't lost that feeling."

## Packing a wallet and on the hunt for gift ideas

With Christmas around the corner, I recently spoke to local sport shops and outfitters for gift suggestions for outdoor enthusiasts. Although advancements in technology and materials have produced a new generation of gadgets and gizmos, there remains a tried and tested collection of traditional equipment and clothing still to be found at most local shops.

With this in mind, I asked store owners for suggestions on specialty items, unique products or an unusual service that they can provide.

In Saranac Lake, I first spoke with Cory at the Blue Line Sport Shop, a venerable local outfitter with a history of providing outdoor sporting equipment. With such a wide selection of merchandise, it was difficult to tag down just a few select items.

Endlessly evident on the television at Christmas time is the one item that fills every boy's dreams and it's not a Wii. Rather, it's a Daisy Red Rider B-B gun, which is also available in a pink model for little girls.

Blue Line also carries a selection of reliable Filson clothing including fly vests, as well as wool-felt crusher hats, long considered a North Country fashion.

Shoppers will also find high-tech items such as colored stainless steel (BPA free) water bottles, Swiss Army knives and a Timex watch complete with digital compass and altimeter.

Down Broadway is the Two Horse Trading Company, which carries a variety of gift items as well as tradi-



Adirondack  
Gadabout

Joe Hackett

tional sporting accessories including handmade sheath knives, Russell knives, fur hats and wool blankets. The store also maintains a wonderful library of "How To" books covering a wide range of topics.

Next door on Broadway is Major Plowshares, a traditional Army/Navy surplus store with a pleasant twist. In time for the season, they stock numerous wool items, bomber hats and other accessories geared more towards function than fashion. For stocking stuffers, check the display of pocket knives and Leatherman tools.

Around the corner on Dorsey Street is St. Regis Canoe Outfitters which offers canoes, kayaks, paddling supplies, tents, bags, stoves and more. Stuffers of stockings should consider Dave Cilley's new Adirondack Paddlers Guide, considered the most current and comprehensive source for canoe routes.

Adirondack Lakes and Trails Outfitters is another outdoor specialty shop located in Saranac Lake. Providing paddle sports rentals in season, this little store offers equipment for hiking, camping and water-sports. Featuring the latest in canoes and touring kayaks, with packages

beginning at just \$399; they also carry a full line of Mountain Hardware clothing, and gift certificates are available for rentals and guided trips, as well as season passes for Dewey Mountain Ski Center, where the first Ski Jam this season is scheduled for Jan. 9.

At Eastern Mountain Sports in Lake Placid, shoppers are easily overwhelmed by the variety of clothes, equipment and accessories. To help, their experts have assembled gift packages for ice climbers, bolderers and snowshoers.

Check out stocking stuffers such as a Backpackers Scabbie set, down booties or wool-lined Crocs. In addition to high tech, Hammerhead Carving Sleds, EMS now carries Ziffy sleds, a more maneuverable, mini-luge sled. Watch for their upcoming Holiday Booster sale featuring 20 to 70 percent off everything in the store.

On the other end of Main Street is Maui North, one of the area's leaders in snow sports equipment. Always a place to find the unique or unusual piece of equipment, Maui also carries a fully stocked clothing department for the latest in high performance ski wear. Stocking stuffers? Check out their goggles! Cunningham's Ski Barn, by the post office, also has a good selection of ski gear.

Further down Lake Placid's Main Street, I found Brian Delaney at High Peaks Cyclery ready to answer gift giving questions. "We have one of the best selections of nordic skis,

boots, and poles in the area!" he informed me. "And we're now carrying a new snowshoe from TSL that I discovered in Chomanix, France and made in Burlington, Vt. It's different because the full platform is under your foot, not just the toe."

High Peaks carries some unusual items such as small, handheld kites that allow skiers or skaters to ride the wind. For stocking stuffers, check out the new Flea lights, a brilliant, rechargeable bike light that attaches to both the front and rear.

Moving across the building, from one quality purveyor to another, I visited with Georgia at Jones Outfitters. Jones has a full line of Orvis gear and gifts, including sporting art and books.

Dog lovers can find items for four footed friends that include skijoring harnesses, Dog First Aid kits, booties and coats. Stuffers include decorative fly earrings, Gift Certificates for Orvis Fly Fishing Schools or a selection of flies in a small wooden flybox.

Jones also has a boat sale, which includes a novel, sit-on-top kayak hybrid by Native. The unique craft features a pedal powered prop that is geared for speed and reverse. Incredibly stable, the roto-mold boat is a fisherman's delight.

If you still haven't found that perfect gift for your favorite outdoor traveler, all is not lost. Among those stores not to be overlooked this holiday season is the ski shop at Cascade Ski Touring Center on state

Route. 73. Operated by Art Jubin, the store offers equipment for everyone from the casual ski tourist to the backcountry enthusiast to the most dedicated racer. A Season's Trail Pass is included with purchases over \$200 and the first Full Moon Party is set for Jan. 10.

Further along state Route 73 in Keene Valley is a store not to be missed. Currently busy with shoppers looking for quality clothing, boots, packs and tents; they provide a wide ranging inventory of outdoor equipment, with everything from flyrods to ice axes, sleds to slippers.

For enthusiasts of old school outdoor items, The Mountaineer carries Adirondack packbaskets by Cindy Tripp in traditional Mohawk style and wool ski knickers by Woolrich.

The Mountaineer and the Rock and River Guide Service will soon be hosting their 13th annual Adirondack International Mountaineering, from Jan. 16-18. This unique educational adventure will feature internationally and regionally renowned mountaineers instructing a variety of clinics and courses, including ice, mixed and alpine climbing, avalanche awareness and snowshoeing as well as other mountaineering subjects.

The combination of clinics, slide shows and gear demos make this event a must for anyone interested in winter recreation. Registration gift certificates are still available. Visit [www.themountaineer.com](http://www.themountaineer.com) for course availability.

Get outdoors; enjoy the holidays!