



May 30, 1998

Alex and I are starting on our latest ambitious adventure—we're hiking the Long Trail. We got up early this morning and drove to North Adams, Massachusetts. We arrived mid-afternoon, and started hiking north on the AT to the Vermont line, which marks the southern end of the Long Trail. The AT and LT will use the same treadway for the next 100 miles, when the AT turns east toward Hanover and the LT continues north to Canada.

We only hiked 6.8 miles, but I've already learned a few things: (1) my pack is *way* too heavy, (2) my bug repellent doesn't work at all, (3) I'm out of shape, and (4) Alex still seems to have boundless energy. That puppy forced me to play frisbee with him for hours.

These bugs are terrible! I brought my "organic, environmentally friendly" bug repellent, but it doesn't work at all. The mosquitoes and black flies are everywhere, and they're not easily chased away. Even Alex is getting pissed off about them.

Ok, time to come clean about what a dippy guy I can be. I'm supposed to meet some folks on June 1st at a shelter about 13 miles from here. I originally was going to stay in North Adams tonight, but changed my plans to save money. I was actually supposed to drive up here tomorrow, but I was so tired yesterday (I was doing the 00-12 shiftwork thing) that I packed up everything and was convinced that I was supposed to head out *today*. Duh! Enough rambling for now. I'm tired!

May 31, 1998

Hiked a fairly easy 7.3 miles from the Seth Warner shelter (where we slept last night) to the Congdon shelter, where we will stay tonight. The temperature has been in the 60s (estimate), but the sun has been going in and out behind the clouds all day, and I think that we may get some rain.



I made another discovery today. I'm already lonely. Even Alex senses it. I hadn't realized how much I enjoy the security and stability of our little family. Oh well, we'll be home in just a few weeks. I'm looking forward to meeting up with Slick tomorrow night. That should make me feel better in the meantime.

Maybe I'll make a quick detour tomorrow into Bennington. I forgot to bring Alex's wormer pill, and he's eating his dog food like it's going out of style. It would also let me do something to keep my mind off of things. Hey, maybe I could get some bug repellent while I'm there!

We got a really big thunderstorm at around 5:00, just as I was cooking my dinner. Lipton garlic shells, you know. They were pretty good, although Alex wasn't too interested in them. I also had a cup of cider and hot chocolate, too.



I'm feeling a bit better than I did earlier, when I wrote that stuff about feeling lonely. I don't know—I seem to have lost my self confidence, and I can't seem to find it anywhere. There's always some problem nagging at me, and I feel beaten down after a while. For this trip, the problem is how to get home when I'm done. I left my Jeep in North Adams, Massachusetts, but I'm not sure how I'll get back there from upstate Vermont. I'm pretty sure that it'll work out, but it still worries me.

Enough for now because I have a headache (caffeine detox).

June 1, 1998

We hiked down into Bennington for some supplies. I bought some "Off" to try instead of that other crap that I brought from home. I also bought some extra lunch stuff and dog food to get Alex to Manchester Center. However, we didn't get Alex's wormer pills because all of the vets (there are three of them) are far enough from town to require a car. We'll have to try again in the next town.

My moods still keep flipping between excitement and dread. I sure hope that I can arrange a ride soon. Speaking of rides, Slick should be arriving at any time.

Dinner tonight is Lipton creamy garlic shells (again). It was good last night, and it's pretty good tonight as well. By the way, after I finished writing, I ate a second dinner (Uncle Ben's fried rice) and had some hot chocolate. I was really hungry!

Tomorrow, we plan to hike from here (the Melville Nauheim shelter) to the Goddard shelter. The guide book says that it is supposed to be really nice ("classy"), so we'll check it out.

June 2, 1998

Slick arrived (finally) at 1:00 this morning, muttering something about being on Illinois time. I think it's a lot of crap. Nevertheless, both he and his friend Ben are here, and I feel much better.



We hiked from the Melville Nauheim shelter to the Goddard shelter (about 8.5 miles). The hiking was actually very easy, even the long climb up to the top of Glastenbury Mountain. That big rain storm that I wrote about on Sunday (5/31) apparently caused a lot of damage around here, and we had to make our way through several very recent blowdowns.

I'm still trying to sort out the dynamics of this group. There's me, Alex, Slick, Ben (now called Comrade Ben), and Jesse—another northbound hiker

that we met last night. Ben seems to be a really bright guy, and Slick is, well, just Slick. Pretty much the same as I remembered him, but a little bit older and heavier. I don't know about Jesse—he just seems to laugh at our three stooges antics.

Tomorrow, we plan to hike another easy 8.9 miles to the Story Spring shelter, which will put Manchester Center into range for late Thursday or early Friday. It's not late yet, but I'm cold, so I'll end here and climb into the sleeping bag with Alex. Brrr, we are so cold tonight. Alex is going to be bundled in tight.

June 3, 1998

We spent a very cold and rainy night at the Goddard shelter. Two really big rain storms blew through, and the winds were horrendous. We were glad that we didn't get soaked.

Today we hiked to the Kid Gore shelter for lunch (about 4.3 miles). The weather has remained cold and rainy (we even got some snow and small hail). Alex was cold, so I dug out my sleeping bag and tucked him in for a while. After about an hour or so, we packed up our stuff and headed on to Story Spring shelter.

Looks like another long night; the rain has been falling off and on this evening, and it's already getting pretty cold. In fact, I think that I will climb in the sleeping bag with Alex and call it a night.

June 4, 1998

We hiked to the Spruce Peak shelter today, and I have a confession to make: we hiked *around* Stratton mountain instead of going over it. Slick talked us into going around, and I have felt guilty about it ever since.

This shelter is really nice! It's a log cabin with glass windows, a door, and a stove. I cranked up a good hot fire which really warmed the place up well. We were even able to cook over it, which was good because I'm just about out of fuel.

Tomorrow morning, we will be headed into Manchester Center for resupply and a good cleaning. I am really looking forward to a nice hot pizza, or maybe a giant sub, or maybe some bagels for breakfast. Oh well, got to get up early tomorrow, so that's all for now.

June 5, 1998

Town day! We hiked out to the highway to hitch a ride into town and were picked up almost immediately by a woman because Alex "was just so cute." So, we were able to get into Manchester



in time for a late breakfast.

We've been able to get a lot of stuff done today. So far, we've done laundry, bought groceries and dog food, picked up a wormer pill (which Alex already ate) and flea drops, bought stove fuel, new pants (heavier than the ones I brought), and fixed my water filter (it needed a new cartridge). Oh yeah, got to take a much needed shower, too. The only bad news is that I spent about \$200 to get all of that done (that included dinner for Alex and me on the patio of the Mexican restaurant—I got chicken and Alex got steak).



With all of that out of the way, it's time to get down to business. We have not been exactly burning up the trail this last week, and we (Slick, Ben, Jesse and I) have been discussing ways to pick up our pace a bit. I explained that I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere fast (Ben agreed), but Slick has some muscle pains in his leg, so we're hanging back to see if he gets better. Hopefully we will be able to pick up the pace soon, but we'll just have to be patient.

Alex has been forcing me to play games with him all afternoon, and I'm

really getting pooped. So, this is all until tomorrow. Oh boy, a really heavy pack and a big hill to climb.

June 6, 1998

Left town (finally) and hit the trail at about noon. We hiked to the top of Bromly mountain, had lunch, then hot footed to the Peru Peak shelter. I had to pay \$5 to stay at this rather crappy place.

I don't know what more to write; I suffered the normal first-day problems. My pack is too heavy, I ate too much in town, and my feet are sore. Today's bonus came when I tripped and wiped out while walking on some puncheon. I wasn't hurt, but I felt like a turtle trying to get up.

Oh well, it's getting dark, so it must be bed time. Maybe something interesting will happen tomorrow as we hike about 15 miles to our next destination.

June 7, 1998

The word of the day is RAIN! The drizzle started just after dawn, stopped for a few hours, resumed, then intensified into full fledged rain. We finally just quit hiking when we got to the Little Rock Pond shelter because Alex was soaked and starting to get cold.



The day wasn't completely awful; we stopped for a bit on Baker Peak this morning and were treated to great views and cool effects as the clouds drifted past us. And most of today's hiking, while uneventful, was pleasant as the drizzle and mist kept us cool. We only got rained on heavily for the last few miles.

I'm starting to get a bit annoyed with Slick and Ben. Slick keeps promising that we'll pick up the pace, but it seems that Ben's idea of a hard day is 10 miles. I really want to get moving, so we may wind up separating sometime this week if things don't change. Beside that, I've been getting quite pissed off at the way Ben tries to pick on Alexander.

I believe that we will walk to the Clarendon shelter tomorrow (about 12 miles) with a short detour off of the trail to pick up a few items at a store near the road crossing.

Oh well, time to climb in and make sure that Alex stays warm.

June 8, 1998

Today can be summed up by the "3R's": rain, roadwalks and radio. Rain continued all night long, finally tapering off to drizzle shortly after we started hiking this morning and then stopped altogether at about lunchtime. I was quite surprised at the amount of roadwalking that we had to do to follow the blazes—it must have been 4 to 5 miles of dirt, gravel and paved roads (not to mention our one mile detour off the trail for lunch and groceries).

I started listening to my radio while hiking (something that I haven't done in a while) because I was really bummed out at the thought of yet another cold, rainy hiking day. I listened for much of the morning, and a bit during the afternoon. It was comforting, but not something that I plan to do every day.

Alex and I took a two mile detour (one mile out and one mile back) to visit the Clarendon general store (which was a bit of a letdown). I wound up buying some cheese,



one beer (Fosters—what can I say?), and an overpriced turkey sub. Alex and I split the sub, packed up our things, and then stopped at the restaurant (also a letdown) for another sub—steak & cheese. After pigging out, we hiked on to the Clarendon shelter, enjoying the sun (wow!) and our full bellies.

We've played our game of frisbee for today, and Alex has had dinner. Tomorrow will be a harder day as we climb up to the top of Killington peak. I will end here, as I can hear my Foster's calling to me.

June 9, 1998

Excellent hiking day! Alex and I started hiking just after 8:00, and stopped for lunch at the Governor Clement shelter at about 10:30 or so. We were a little surprised at how steep the trail was just north of Clarendon shelter. It was easily the most difficult part of the day.

After lunch, we climbed up Killington mountain to reach Cooper lodge. The lodge was pretty run down, so we decided not to stay there. However, before leaving, we hiked up the (nearly vertical) side trail to the top of Killington Peak. Great views!



After a quick game of stick with Alex, we headed off to Pico Camp, which was about three miles further up the trail. The sun was shining (no kidding!), so I hung out some of my stuff to dry out. The damp weather had caused some of my stuff to get wet, so I really appreciated the chance to put it out for a while.

The afternoon has been delightful. The cabin faces out toward Killington, and I can see for miles. Alex and I played some frisbee, and he has settled down for a nap. I'm not sure, but his snoring seems to be getting louder. Dinner is ready (tonight I'm having red beans and rice), and I will dig in after I'm finished writing.

Tomorrow, we're going into the town of Killington (now called Sherburne Pass) to get groceries and pick up our mail. I had planned to go on to Logan shelter, but just found out about a hostel near here (with showers!), so we may stop there instead. Oh well, time for dinner.

June 10, 1998

Today was a day of misunderstanding and miscommunication. I read about a hostel yesterday at Pico Camp. Today, when we got to Killington, we called, but the owner didn't seem to have any idea

what we were talking about. So, we just wrote off the whole thing. However, as we were getting ready to leave the store and head back to the trail, the owner of the place (the Trailside Lodge) showed up and asked us if we'd like to stay. So, we said "yes."

I didn't want to have hiked only 2.5 miles in one day, so I suggested that we slackpack a few miles up the trail to the crossing of a road that (on the map) seemed to be quite close to the hostel. We all threw our packs into the back of his truck, and he took us up to the trail and dropped us off. We had a great, easy hike (in the sudden rainstorm) to the road crossing. But, instead of hiking a short distance back to the hostel (as the owner had assured us), we hoofed about two miles to find the place. What a goof!

The "hostel" is, in fact, the employees' bunkhouse for the Trailside Lodge, which is a rather nice B&B located just outside of the GMNF, and adjacent to a big golf course. It's nothing fancy, but seems ok, even though it costs \$15 per night. The owner was a bit strange; he wanted a \$100 deposit to stay, but was happy enough with a photocopy of my VISA card and driver's license.

I did something pretty rotten this evening. We went for pizza at 10:00, and I was talked into leaving Alex behind at the hostel. I realize that I would have had to leave him in the car, but I felt awful leaving him alone at all. He didn't seem too angry, but it took a long time to calm him down once I got back. What was I thinking!?!

It's very late, and I'm tired. I'll write more tomorrow.

June 11, 1998

The trail really beat me up today. The hostel thing really turned bad this morning, really fouling up the whole day. I had washed some clothes last night, and had to wait until after 9:00 to get quarters for the dryer. The owner kept coming around asking things like "How come you're still here?" and "Why haven't you left yet?" Certainly not very hospitable, to say the least.

We finally got so upset that we decided to walk back to the trail (with packs!) instead of waiting around any longer to try to get a ride. The walk was long and hot, but we were anxious to put the "hostile hostel" behind us.

We regrouped at the Rolston Rest shelter, then headed off for the David Logan shelter. My end-to-end guide said that the trail had minimal climbing involved; however, we climbed, dropped, and climbed again and again. We were *so* tired when we go to the shelter.

The weather forecast calls for rain during the next three days (what else is new?), so we'll have to see how far we get. I may have to adjust my mileages after this is all through. Oh well, that's all for today.

June 12, 1998

Rain! Shortly after Alex and I left the Logan shelter, clouds rolled in and the wind picked up.

However, we didn't get heavy showers, just drizzle, which was actually quite pleasant for hiking (at least for me). Alex dutifully hiked along, but I think that the drizzle was bothering him a bit. He started to get cold when we stopped at the Sucker Brook shelter for a quick snack before climbing up to the Worth Mountain Lodge.



The lodge was an unexpected delight. It was clean, dry, and big! Alex and I wasted no time lighting a fire in the wood stove and opening the storm shutters over the windows. We quickly had a nice hot fire, and Alex dried off and took a nap, his wagging tail showing his approval.

Slick, Ben and Jesse didn't show up as agreed. They must have stayed at Sucker Brook. Oh well, their loss. I'll take a warm cabin over a cold, wet shelter any day. However, another hiker named Paul did show up, and we chatted all afternoon and into the evening.

Tomorrow, we plan a slightly shorter day (just over 13 miles) to the Cooley Glen shelter. The only caveat is that the trail may be very difficult due to the large amount of damage caused by an ice storm this past winter. We have been seeing lots of blowdowns; fortunately, trail crews have done a great job of clearing the trail. However, we will be entering a designated wilderness area (mechanized equipment prohibited), so trail clearing may not be completed.

Enough for now—I'm tired, and Alex still needs to be brushed.

June 13, 1998

Hike rained out! Alex and I had to stop short of today's destination due to heavy, heavy rain. We got as far as the Emily Proctor shelter before we got washed out. At least the hiking was pretty good up to that point.

We were hoping to get into Jonesville on Monday afternoon, but it may be just out of our reach unless we have a heroic hiking day tomorrow. We'll optimistically plan to reach the Birch Glen camp tomorrow.

I'd write more, but I'm just not in the mood right now.

June 14, 1998

Rained out again! Alex and I spent the night at the Emily Proctor shelter last night, and it looks like

we'll be here tonight as well. The rain has fallen almost continuously since it started yesterday afternoon, and I have no idea when it will stop. I really want (actually, need) to get moving so that I can get to Jonesville for supplies. However, I must admit that I've enjoyed the extra rest that I'm getting because of our forced layover. Alexander doesn't seem to mind either.



Since I seem to have some time on my hands, let me recount some of the things that have happened during the last few days. Slick, Ben and Jesse are still missing. They may be one shelter back (about two miles) or they could be a day or more behind. No matter, because I can't afford to wait around for them until I get to Jonesville.

I've been sharing the shelter with two guys from Montreal—Paul and Ernest. Paul speaks English and broken French, while Ernest speaks French and broken English. Both seem to be very nice. Ernest has been trying to start a fire all day, but he hasn't had much luck. However, he seems to be having a good time trying.

The rain let up for an hour or so this afternoon, but then it started coming down again in buckets. I was tempted to try and make a break for the next shelter, but I'm glad that I didn't go. We would have been soaked by the time we arrived, and it wouldn't have helped much with tomorrow's hiking. Tomorrow will be a long hiking day, rain or shine.

June 15, 1998

Put the pedal to the metal! Alex and I hiked our longest day yet (24.6 miles). When we woke up this morning, the rain was dissipating into drizzle, so we packed up our things and took off. The drizzle ended quickly, leaving fog which later gave way to sun! The trail was pretty crappy (we walked for miles in ankle-deep mud and water), so our speed wasn't too good.

We climbed over Mt. Abraham, but the summit was socked in by clouds, so we missed out on the great views. Everything was great until we reached Appalachian Gap—what a difficult section of trail. We must have spent two hours trying to get through all of the difficult boulders. I can't remember how many times I had to lower Alex off of huge boulders so that he wouldn't get hurt.

We're staying the night at the Birch Glen camp. Tomorrow, we hope to climb over Camel's Hump and reach Jonesville before the Post Office closes. It will be another long, difficult day, but a bit easier than today. After that, we may slow down just a bit to recover.

June 16, 1998

Time to regroup. Alex and I spent a miserable morning trying to make our way to Camel's Hump. Somewhere along the way, I realized that I just wasn't having fun anymore. Slogging through ankle and knee deep water and mud for mile after mile just wore me down. And the endless climbing over slippery boulders didn't help, either. So, I promised Alex that if we made our way to Jonesville, we would head home for a while.

We arrived at the Jonesville Post Office at 5:35, just five minutes after it closed. No big deal, we'll just have to pick up our package tomorrow. We wandered over to the local store, where I got a big turkey sub to split with Alex. After that, I called a local B&B in Richmond (about three miles away) to arrange for us to be picked up and delivered for a much needed night of clean clothes, clean sheets, and hot food.

So tomorrow we will figure out how to get back to the Jeep without making too much of a fuss. The weather forecast is for more rain, at least through the next few days. I don't know when it will end. I want to finish this hike, but I want to *enjoy* it.

June 17, 1998

Homeward bound? As I write this, I am riding a bus through Vermont, on my way to pick up my Jeep in North Adams, MA. Alex is being watched at a puppy daycare place in Richmond. I dropped him off just after 10:00, and I hope to pick him up again this evening. I really hated to leave him there, but there was no other good way to retrieve the Jeep.

It's raining; in fact, most of Vermont is under a flood warning (again). It's supposed to rain off and on through tomorrow night, but the sun may come out for a while on Friday (between the rain storms). However, more rain is expected for Saturday, Sunday, and next week. Why did I mention all that? Well, I'm getting sick and tired of the rain, and I'm actually glad that we're going home for a while. Everything is wet, moldy, and smelly. My legs are covered with cuts, scrapes, and bruises from falling down on the wet rocks. And Alex is sick of the rain, too. Every morning, he would get wet and stay wet until evening. He has had his share of falls, too. A few times, he landed so hard that I was surprised that he could still walk.

I hope that we can return in a few weeks, after the rain has stopped and the trail becomes more friendly. And maybe next time, we'll be able to admire some of the great views that the trail offers.

July 8, 1998

Alex and I are back on the LT, and guess what—it's raining again. We left home at 6:00 this morning, drove back to Jonesville, parked, and hiked 2.5 miles to the Duck Brook shelter. The shelter is full, and we're tired from all the driving. Tomorrow we will hike 17.2 miles to the Butler lodge, which will set us up to cross Mt. Mansfield the next day. The dash to the border has begun.

No sign that Slick, Ben or Jesse got this far. I'll keep looking.

July 9, 1998

Holy cow, sunshine! Alex and I woke up at 6:30, packed up, and we were on the trail by 7:00. The trail was wet and muddy, just like we left it. However, the rain let up, then ended altogether just after lunch. After the fog burned off, we actually got full intensity sunlight!

We hiked our full itinerary for today, covering 17.2 miles from Duck Brook shelter to Butler lodge. Tomorrow, we will climb over Mt. Mansfield, then proceed north to the Roundtop shelter, for a 22.8 mile hiking day.

July 10, 1998

This Vermont weather really played a trick on us today. We began and ended our day in rain, and in between we had fog, 40 mph winds, sun, more rain, and lightning. Not exactly what we were expecting.

Yesterday, the weather forecast was for sun for today, and on onto next week. Last night, after we arrived at the lodge, heavy thunderstorms began, and lasted until we began hiking just before 8:00. Our hike up to the top of Mt. Mansfield wasn't bad (we took the Forehead bypass trail because we wanted to avoid the ladders). Once we were on top, we were engulfed in fog (so much for any good views). As we crossed the Nose, the wind whipped up, and I could hardly walk in a straight line. I was so cold!!! We crossed the Chin (wow, the highest point in VT), but visibility was only about 50 feet.

We descended into Smuggler's Notch, where we were drenched by heavy rains. As we climbed out of Smuggler's Notch, the rain ended, but the fog remained. However, as we began climbing Madonna Peak, the sun actually came out for a while! As I approached the summit, I could hear the rumbles of thunder, and I contemplated how stupid I was to climb to the *top* of a mountain knowing that a storm was coming.

I ducked into the warming hut on top of the mountain less than a minute before the rain started to fall. A couple of seconds later, lightning struck the ground at about the point where we would have been walking if we had kept going. A couple of minutes later—crack!! Lightning hit the warming hut and the ski lift that was about 50 feet away. I actually saw an arc between the panes of glass in the window. Alex barked, but didn't seem to be too upset. Moments later, the rain was gone, the clouds blew off of the mountain, and the sun was back.



We were underway again, and I was feeling pretty good after all. We stopped briefly at Whiteface shelter, then climbed over Whiteface mountain, supposedly the northern end of the “Long and Hard Trail.” We were cruising along now, when the rumbles of thunder returned and the sky darkened. Just five minutes before we reached the shelter, the rain began to come down in buckets. Which brings us to now.

Alex and I are spending the night at the Bear Hollow shelter; a beautiful new shelter. We’re sharing it with two other north bound hikers and the French Canadians. I can’t understand a damned thing that they say in French, but so what? They are very nice, and even speak some English, too.

As for tomorrow, how about the Rittenbush shelter for a goal. It’s as good as any.

July 11, 1998

I’m not in a good mood. Alex was injured during our hike yesterday, and he can barely walk. Looks like he sprained a front paw—at least it doesn’t seem to be broken. We’re heading home.

Now I feel worse. I got Alex up and walking, with the help of some cheese and aspirin. We had some trouble crossing a swollen stream—Alex got swept downstream into some logs. I lost my hiking pole into the stream as I tried to help him. Another hiker grabbed him (trying to help) by the collar and Alex went wild. He was being drowned and strangled at the same time, so he panicked—and bit the guy on the lip. It looked pretty painful.

Ok, so we hiked up the road into Johnson, then hitched back to Jonesville. We’ll be back...

September 10, 1998

We’re back, and I intend to finish the trail this time, even if it kills me. We left home at 9:30, drove back to Johnson, and we’re camping out behind the Long Trail Tavern. I’m tired, so this is all for tonight.

September 11, 1998

Hiked all the way to Ritterbush camp. I had made a math error when setting up my itinerary, so Corliss camp (our original destination) seemed too short of a hike. Alex handled the long hike like a pro, while I kept letting myself become dehydrated. I need to take a drink every time that Alex stops for one. Pretty simple, huh?



Today was an awesome day! Beautiful weather lasted all day, and we actually could see the views! We might get some rain tomorrow, but we’ll just have to deal with it then.

Guess who was at the shelter when we arrived? Motrin Along—he hiked the AT in 1994. Alex and I ran into him near Pearisburg. Pretty damned weird. Oh well, I'm really tired, so more tomorrow.

September 12, 1998

Rain again. The rain started just after we started hiking today, and lasted all day long. We only hiked to Tillotson camp because I didn't feel too great during the trip over Belvedere mountain. I don't think that I'm sick; I just got dehydrated. I drank a bunch of water and I feel pretty good now.



My dog is so great! Alex would stop to check on me whenever he thought that I wasn't doing so well. It's little things like these that remind me of how much Alex really loves me.

Since we got to the shelter pretty early, we had plenty of time to nap before dinner. I cooked up some stuffing and gave Alex the last of our salami and cheese.

A group of college kids showed up and made the shelter a bit too crowded for our tastes, so I decided to go set up the tent so that Alex and I could sleep.

Only two days to the border! We're going to hike 15-20 miles tomorrow so that we can have a short hike to the border and get back to town the following day. I'm tired and we have a lot of miles to do, so that's all for now.

September 13, 1998

Hiked to Laura Woodward shelter (14.9 miles). We actually had nice weather, with plenty of sun and temps in the 60's by afternoon. I felt great, and I think that Alex did too. We met lots of hikers, and they were falling over each other to say hello to





my boy. Of course, he loved the attention.

My last night on the Long Trail, and I am at a loss for words. I've been waiting for this night for so long, and now I can't even think up something witty or profound.

Today's hike was pretty hard, actually. Although we didn't hike a whole lot of miles, we put in thousands of vertical feet in elevation changes. And that mud! I certainly won't miss it or the slippery rocks. But the views have been wonderful. It's like somebody jumped a month ahead of the rest of the country. Reds, yellows, golds, browns, and greens are everywhere.

Tomorrow morning we will pack up our things one last time and head to the border, and the end of the Long Trail. Then it's a walk into town and a ride back to the Jeep and our normal lives. I think I'll end here so that I can tuck in Alex and let him know that I'm proud of him.

September 14, 1998

We made it! At 10:48 am, Alex and I reached Journey's End—the northern end of the Long Trail.

