

## WALKING ON WEDNESDAYS: THE HISTORY OF MCM MIDWEEK HIKES

August 1, 2024

For about the first four decades of our existence, the Mountain Club hiked only on weekends. But in the 1970s, for the first time MCM started offering hikes on Wednesdays. Since then, the popularity of these hikes led MCM to add new categories of Wednesday hikes over the years (and sometimes on other weekdays). This article explores the history of our midweek hiking program.

In our 75<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary booklet printed in 2009, the club history section included the following information about how Wednesday hikes began:

*Recognizing that there were a growing number of able retirees, a walk to Lake Roland was organized on Wednesday, October 10, 1973. This was the first of a weekly schedule, consisting largely of local walks, arranged by two members. This group, known as the Midweek Leisure Hikers, has grown from an initial six to as many as fifty participants.*

Since then, we've added three more categories of Wednesday Hikes—one of them as recently as 2023. In addition, we have added Meetup hikes that are typically midweek—although not on Wednesdays. This article reviews the history of MCM's midweek hiking program.

### A Few Words About Trip Schedules

In addition to the Council minutes and newsletters that have been a major source of information for my recent articles about MCM history, our old Trip Schedules are a useful source of information about this particular topic. For this topic, it will be helpful to review how our earlier members received information about upcoming hikes.

From the beginning of the club in late 1934, our newsletter (the MCM Bulletin) included a one-page Club Calendar that listed the upcoming events for the quarter followed by a more detailed description of each trip – date, location of the hike, meeting place, and sometimes the distance. Below are a sample of a Club Calendar and a page of hike descriptions from an early newsletter.

CLUB CALENDARJanuary

- Wed. 10 Square Dancing, Y.W.C.A., 9 P.M.  
 Sat. 13 Soldiers Delight, 2 P.M.  
 Sun. 21 Carrick Knob, 7 A.M.  
 Wed. 24 Shelter Benefit - Iolantle - Guild Theatre  
 Wed. 31 Square Dances - Y. W. C. A. - 9 P. M.

February

- Sat. 3 Western Run, 2 P.M.  
 Wed. 7 Lecture, Enoch Pratt Library, 8 P.M.  
 Thurs. 8 Square Dancing, Y.W.C.A., 9 P.M.  
 Sun. 11 A.T., Overview to U.S. #11  
 Sat. 17 Belair Road to Harford Road, 2 P.M.  
 Thurs. 22 Valley Forge, 7 A.M.  
 Wed. 28 Fireside Meeting, Harriet Caspari's, 8 P.M.

March

- Sun. 3 Parnoll Knob, 7 A.M.  
 Sun. 10 Carroll Island, Bird Observation, 8 A.M.  
 Sun. 17 A.T., Across the Cumberland Valley, 7 A.M.  
 Sat. 23 Moonlight hike, Loch Raven, 7 P.M.  
 Sat. 30) Range View Shelter, Shenandoah, 2 P.M.  
 Sun. 31)

April

- Wed. 2 Lecture, Enoch Pratt Library, 8 P.M.  
 Sat. 6 Black Rock Run 2 P.M.  
 Sun. 7 Bird Observation, 7 P.M.  
 Sun. 14 Third Hill, 7 P.M.

Ice-skating every Tuesday til Easter at the Sport Centre  
7:30 - 8:30 P.M. Show H.C.M. Membership Card.

TRIPS FOR THE QUARTER"ALL TRIPS START AS SCHEDULED REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER"ALL TRIPS LEAVE FROM SOUTHEAST CORNER OF NORTH AVE AND ST. PAUL STREET.JANUARY 13. SOLDIERS DELIGHT

Six miles more or less over dirt and secondary roads, trails and pasture - a nice assortment. Rolling country with views of Patapsco River, pine woods and open hills, snow covered if it can be so arranged.

DIRECTIONS: Leave at 2 P.M. No fees.

Leader: A. D. Kennedy, Berwick Ave., Ruxton, Md., Towson 1413-W.

JANUARY 21. CARRICK KNOB

Our scouts have been bringing in reports of this ridge north of Eagle Mountain and west of Emmitsburg for three years now. This time Don is going up on the Knob, others may ski and toboggan if the weather affords an opportunity. Hiking distances about 10 miles.

DIRECTIONS AND COST: Bring lunch, cup, canteen, change of footwear. Leave 7 A.M. Transportation 90¢, Guest Fee 25¢, Dinner 55¢. Map U.S.G.S. Emmitsburg Quad.

LEADER: Don Reese, 5313 Windsor Mill Road, Lib. 7818.

FEBRUARY 3. WESTERN RUN

This Saturday afternoon trip takes us along Western Run in the hilly country northwest of Cockeysville, Map Baltimore U.S.G.S. Quad. or Baltimore County Map.

DIRECTIONS: Leave at 2 P.M. No fees.

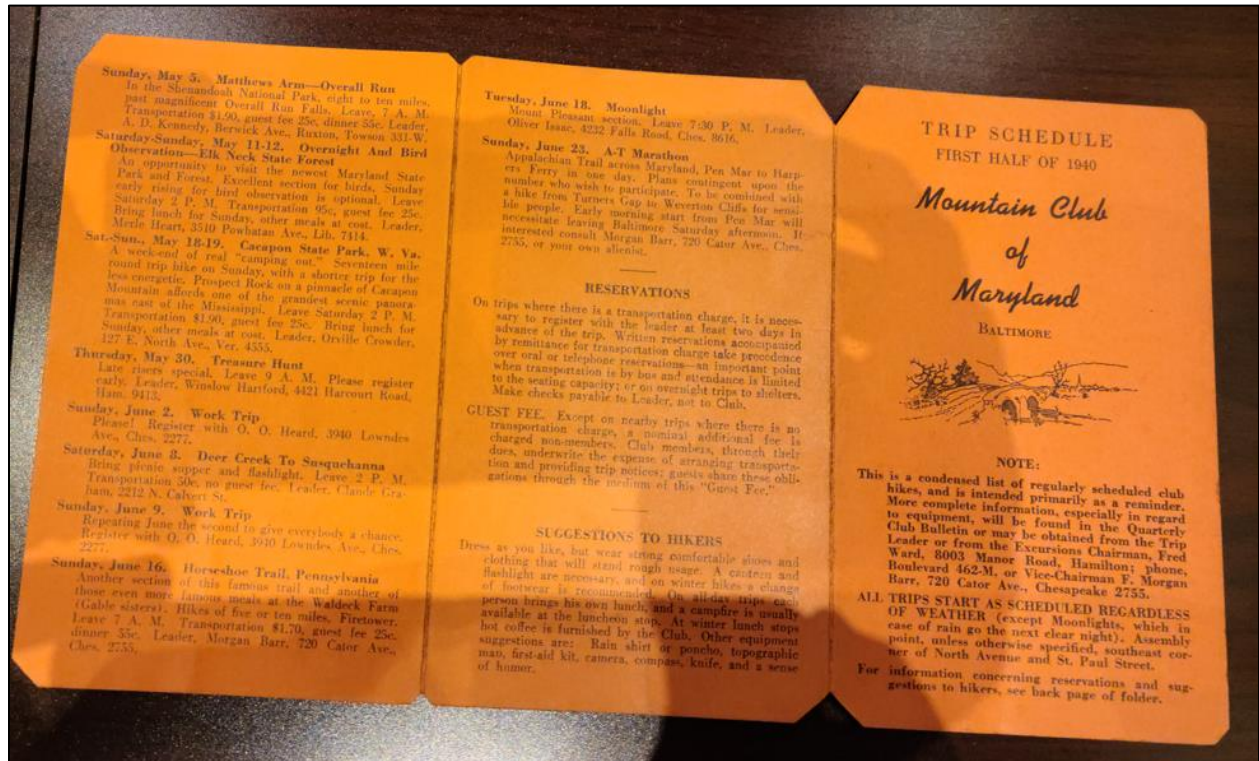
LEADER: Winslow Hartford, 4421 Harcourt Road, Hamilton 9413.

FEBRUARY 11. A-T. OVERVIEW TO U.S. 11

Continuing along the Appalachian Trail, south of the Fort Hunter Section, which we covered last October. Magnifi-

But at some point in those early years, the club also started printing a separate Trip Schedule. Our boxes of records in the Maryland State Archives include copies of some of these early schedules. Below is a copy of a trip schedule from 1940. Apparently, these were prepared to

provide our members with a more portable list of the upcoming hikes than the descriptions in the newsletters. Note that this Trip Schedule says it is for hikes in the first half of 1940, while the Bulletin schedules only showed hikes for the current quarter. This suggests that trip planning may have looked further ahead than the three months that were printed in the Bulletin. (Also note, as a matter of historical interest, that this schedule shows the first club Marathon hike across Maryland on the Appalachian Trail that was held on June 23, 1940.)



But beginning with the July-September 1948 issue, the Bulletin no longer included the individual hike descriptions. From then on, the newsletter only showed the single-page Club Calendar, which had the date and name of the hikes for the coming quarter (as well as other club meetings or events), but no details. Starting in mid 1948, the separate Trip Schedule became the only source of details about planned hikes.

MCM continued to print a Club Calendar page in its newsletters for another 23 years. The last Club Calendar was printed in the January - March 1971 Bulletin--shortly before the club switched to a more abbreviated newsletter, the MCM News. A note from the club president explained that the change in format was necessary due to the amount of work involved, and insufficiency of volunteers, to continue producing the Bulletin. (The Bulletins had always contained long descriptions of recent club hikes, members' vacation hikes or adventures, etc., as well as more directly relevant MCM and Appalachian Trail news. After the change to the News, the newsletters were much shorter.) From April 1971 on, hike plans were provided only in the Trip Schedule.

## The First Midweek Hikes: Leisure

As mentioned earlier, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book states that the first Wednesday hike was held in October 1973. I reviewed our club documents from that time period in hopes of learning more about what led to this change, as well as later expansions of our midweek program. In the August 1973 News, I found the clip below, which indicates that Wednesday hikes for retired members were suggested at the 1973 Annual Meeting (which took place each year in June). I am unable to locate a copy of the minutes of that annual meeting to provide any additional information about that discussion. However, this announcement appeared shortly afterward in the August 1973 News:

### "GOLDEN AGE WALKERS?"

At the annual meeting it was suggested that those who are retired may like to have mid-week hikes, at a "set your own pace" and a "select your own place". Those who are interested should contact Jim Millen (433-4668). If this proves successful, we will make this a part of our regular Trip Schedule effective February 1974.

Based on the level of interest from our members, MCM decided to implement the proposal. The October 1973 MCM News included the following schedule of Wednesday hikes to take place in October and November for "Golden Age and Leisure Hikers." The hike locations varied greatly, and the lengths were 4-5 miles.

GOLDEN AGE AND LEISURE HIKERS: (4-5 mile limit)

There has been a good response to Jim Millen's idea as stated in the August Newsletter. These hikers have gotten underway and would like your suggestions and participation. If you have any questions, call Jim on 433-4668. The following hikes have been scheduled:

All hikes will be on Wednesday, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Meet</u>
10/10	Lake Roland	Mary Kendrew	Main Parking Lot at Lake Roland
10/17	Greenspring Trail	Henry Vincett	Across from Country Club east of Reisterstown Rd. on Greenspring Valley Rd.
10/24	Oregon-Ivy Hill	Jim Millen	Hunt Valley Inn Parking Lot
10/31	Patapsco State Pk. McKeldin Area	Jim Millen	Information Booth
11/7	Pretty Boy Dam	Betty Fisher	Pretty Boy Dam Parking Area
11/14	Glencoe Area	Reuben Leypoldt	Sparks Bank - York Road
11/28	Upper Loch Raven	Alex Kennedy	Northwest end of Towson Plaza Parking Lot

If transportation is needed, call the Leader or Jim Millen.

In the next month's newsletter—the November 1973 News--this group was now called the Mid-Week Leisure Walkers, and the newsletter listed one more upcoming hike in December.

MID-WEEK LEISURE WALKERS - Addition to Schedule

Wednesday, December 5, Soldiers Delight - Leader, Ranger Tracey  
Meet at Deer Park Road - two miles north of Liberty Road  
Call Jim Millen - 433-4668 for details

Then the December 1973 News had the following notice, listing two more December hikes with comments about the popularity of the midweek hikes:

MID-WEEK LEISURE HIKING BECOMES REGULAR M.C.M. ACTIVITY

With attendance increasing steadily and reports of considerable enjoyment of the hikes, the Mid-week Leisure Hiking program will continue indefinitely, according to Jim Millen. Although locations of the respective hikes probably can be announced only month-by-month in the Newsletter, each Wednesday there will be a hike in the local areas. Membership in the Club will be available to guests on these hikes who qualify in the usual manner. If there are any questions concerning these hikes, please contact Jim Millen or the leader.

Additional hikes scheduled:

12/12 - Little Gunpowder River - Dick Greenfield

12/19 - Mt. Pleasant Golf Course - Dorothea Owens

After that, for some reason, I found no further mention of midweek hikes in the newsletters until October 1974 (unless information was provided in a January newsletter--we do not have a News issue for January—but there are no upcoming midweek hikes listed in the February through August newsletters). The October News does contain a full schedule of these hikes for the October -December 1974 period; this seems to be the first regular printing of a whole Midweek Hikers Schedule. (It seems probable that Wednesday hikes were taking place throughout 1974, with the hike information being communicated to members in a different way.)

Starting then, there was a Midweek Hikers Schedule included in each quarterly newsletter. As the sample below shows, these Midweek Hiker Schedule pages showed a meeting place, start time, and hike location, but no details about hike length or difficulty (presumably because they were all leisure hikes and the distances were typically 4-5 miles). The Wednesday hikes were not listed in the printed club Trip Schedules at that time—only in the quarterly newsletters. Jim Millen continued to serve as the Midweek Hike coordinator until 1988.

MID-WEEK HIKER SCHEDULE  
January through April - 1975

<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Meeting Place</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Area of Hike</u>
1-2	Jastro Levin	Hillsdale & Liberty Hgts. Aves. - 4600 Block - Browns Super Market	9:45 a.m.	Leakin Park
1-8	Dick Greenfield	Carney Shopping Plaza - Joppa and Harford Rds.	10:00 a.m.	Lower Gunpowder - Belair Road
1-15	Alex Kennedy	Towson Plaza Pkg. Lot - N. W. Corner	9:30 a.m.	Loch Raven Lake
1-22	Margaret Haille	Hunt Valley Inn - Shawan Road	10:00 a.m.	Western Run Stream
1-29	Gordon Filbey	Murphy's Mart - Liberty & Old Court Rds.	10:00 a.m.	Woodstock Area - Patapsco
2-5	Jim Poultney	Overlook - Soldiers Delight - Deer Pk. Rd.	10:00 a.m.	Soldiers Delight
2-12	Dick Greenfield	Westview Shop. Plaza - Front of Hutzlers	9:30 a.m.	Roosevelt Island-Kennedy Center
2-19	Myra & Karl Knox	Finksburg Bank Parking Lot	10:00 a.m.	Liberty Lake
2-26	Henri Siegel	Westview Shop. Plaza - Front of Hutzlers	10:00 a.m.	Patapsco Park-Glenartney
3-5	Harry Michel	Towson Plaza-near P.O.-N.W. Corner	9:30 a.m.	Deer Creek-Norrisville, Md.
3-12	Jim Millen	Westview Shop. Center - Front of Hutzlers	9:30 a.m.	C & O Canal - Great Falls
3-19	Betty Fisher	Prettyboy Dam Parking Area	10:00 a.m.	Prettyboy
3-26	Reuben Leypoldt	Sparks St. Bank Pkg. Lot - York Road	10:00 a.m.	Glencoe or Hereford
4-2	Mary Kendrew	Westview Shop. Plaza - Front of Hutzlers	10:00 a.m.	Patapsco Park - Hollofield
4-9	Myra & Karl Knox	Amoco Sta.-Oakland Mills & Liberty Rds.	10:00 a.m.	Liberty Lake
4-16	Jastro Levin	Murphy's Mart - Liberty & Old Court Rds.	10:00 a.m.	Patapsco Park-McKeldin Area
4-23	Dorothea Owens	Carney Shopping Plaza - Joppa and Harford Rds.	9:30 a.m.	Susquehanna State Park
4-30	Dorothy & Earl Rinehart	Visitors Center - Catoctin Park	10:30 a.m.	Catoctin Mountain Park

NOTE: Anyone who has missed a previous week's hike or who is hiking for the first time, should call Jim Millen (433-4668) or Mary Kendrew (448-1341) to register, as it is possible for hikes to be cancelled due to inclement weather or switched in date due to a swap between two leaders.

ROCK CLIMBING TRIPS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Special Trips</u>
1-5	Carderock
2-2	Carderock
3/24-31	Easter Vacation Ski Trip - Aspen, Colorado
5/10-11	TOSRV (Tour of Scioto River Valley) - 210 mi., 2-day bicycle trip starting and ending in Columbus, Ohio. <u>Registration closes mid-January</u>

NOTE: For information regarding Rock Climbing and Special Trips, please contact Bob Carson - 426-0830

The February 1974 Council minutes included a comment that the Midweek Leisure Hikers had had six trips (for an unspecified time period) with a total of 63 participants. Other than that, there is little or no mention of the midweek program in Council discussions.



## Expansion of the Wednesday Program: Moderate Hikes

The discussion of Wednesday hikes in the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book included the following explanation of the next addition to the midweek hike program:

*In March 1979, a second mid-week group, originally known as the "Wednesday Truckers" and renamed the "Wednesday Walkers," was formed by a member in response to a request to join a group of friends who were, in addition to walking with the Leisure Group, enjoying more strenuous hikes on their own. Walks of 6 to 10 miles, not involving a car plant, and seldom more than an hour's drive from the starting point, were placed on the regular trip schedule.*

I could not find any notes in the Council minutes, or any announcements in the News, around that time that explain how the addition of the new hike came about. However, the March 1979 Council meeting, in discussing the Excursions (hiking) program, included the following sentence: **"There were 12 people on each of the Wednesday trips on the regular schedule."** This comment must refer to the new hike category (because Midweek Leisure hikes were not on the regular schedule), although only a few of these hikes could have taken place by that time. As the comment indicates, this new category of moderate Wednesday hikes was included, along with weekend hikes, in the printed Trip Schedules starting with the March-June 1979 schedule. Those hikes varied from moderate hikes of six or seven miles to strenuous hikes on the A.T. and the Billy Goat Trail, among others. The schedule for the original Midweek Leisure hikes continued to appear in the News issues, while the new moderate hikes were in the Trip Schedules. The November 1979 newsletter mentions that the non-leisure Wednesday hikes coordinator as Eleanor Sewell.

In addition to these new moderate Wednesday hikes, the January 1980 Council meeting mentioned the addition of Thursday hikes to the midweek schedule:

*Ron Bowers was very pleased with the turnout at the Excursion Meeting. However Ron still had to call many people to get commitments. We have a full schedule with the addition of Thursday hikes. There was some discussion about the possibility of the Thursday hikes pulling leaders and hikers away from the weekend. It was decided to keep track of what is happening on the weekend hikes with regard to turnout. Lester suggested that we require leaders to report to the treasurer any cancellations.*

### EXCURSIONS

Starting in March 1980, the Trip Schedules listed moderate Thursday hikes as well as the regular Wednesday hikes. The Thursday option continued for more than a year, but by the end of 1981 they no longer appeared on the schedule. Perhaps the turnout was too low to continue with this additional day of midweek hiking.

After 1987, MCM stopped printing the Midweek Leisure Hikers schedule in the quarterly News issues. The last such schedule I can find in our newsletter was in 1987, providing a list of hikes through December. There is no explanation of the change in the newsletters. From that time on,

these hikes were included in the printed MCM Trip Schedule. The Leisure hikes were marked with an MW initial to identify them specifically as Midweek Leisure and distinguish them from the moderate hikes.

#### Expansion of the Wednesday Program: Hard Hikes

MCM continued to offer two hikes--moderate and leisure--on Wednesdays for the next 20 years. Then, the November 2006 Council minutes include the following report:

Cathy Alden reported that our new practice of having 3 hikes on Wednesdays (a Leisure group hike, a Tweeners hike, and a MCM hike, rated from gentlest to most difficult in that order), is working well for her group. Last Wednesday 29 hikers attended the Hashawa Nature Reserve hike. John Heyn reported the Tweeners hikers are also pleased with the arrangement: somewhat smaller, more consistently paced and enjoyable hikes have resulted for both groups. It was noted that new leaders would need to step forward for the Tweener hikes for this arrangement to continue.

Earlier that year, in the July 2006 Council minutes, Cathy Alden (who headed the Leisure hike committee), had reported that there were 64 hikers on the Leisure hike. According to long-time MCM member Mike O'Connor, such large numbers of hikers on Wednesdays was the primary reason for creating a third category of hikes.

Cathy Alden's comment at the November 2006 meeting seemed to suggest that the practice of three Wednesday hikes had been going on for a while, but the July-October 2006 Trip Schedule had only one Wednesday with three hikes (Wednesday, October 18). Starting with the next schedule (November 2006 – February 2007), there were three hikes each Wednesday. The previous moderate Wednesday hikes, which had typically varied between six and ten miles in distance, were now separated into Hard and Tweener hikes.

Cathy Alden's report in the November 2006 minutes is also the first use I found of the Tweener designation. The first use of the word in a Trip Schedule seems to have been in this hike description offered by Jim Koury on March 21, 2007.

*WEDNESDAY - MARCH 21 - PATAPSCO VALLEY STAE PARK/OELLA TO PICKALL AREA - C+ "TWEENER HIKE" - This 7.5 mile hike should be a new hike for most members of the club as it employs unmarked and unmaintained trails along the Patapsco River. Most of the trails are in very good shape, but a couple are on the rugged side. So, bring hiking poles if you have them. Pace will be 2 mph as we go up and down a couple of mountainsides, along the defunct Oella mill race past the ruins of the old dam, under the Rte. 40 overpass, and over a couple of small streams. MEET: 9.45 A.M. at the municipal parking lot behind the Trolley Stop Restaurant, located at 6 Oella Ave. (corner of Oella and Frederick Avenues, in Baltimore County just before the bridge leading to historic Ellicott City).*

#### Expansion of the Program: Moderate+ Hikes

MCM continued the practice of offering three Wednesday hikes (Leisure, Tweener, and Hard) for the next 16 years. In 2023, a group of MCM hikers and hike leaders expressed interest in adding a fourth hike category that would offer longer distances and a faster pace than Tweener hikes, but at a slower hiking pace than the Hard hikes. MCM leadership concurred with the suggestion, and the new category was designated as Moderate+. The Moderate+ hikes are not offered every Wednesday but, when available, they are well attended.

### Meetup Hikes

Meetup hikes are different than our usual scheduled hikes. They are led by MCM members, but hikers do not need to be paid members of the Mountain Club—they just have to be registered members of the Mountain Club of Maryland Meetup Group. But most hikers on our Meetup hikes are also MCM members. These hikes are not posted in the hike schedule on our web site; instead, the hikes are announced by emails through the Meetup app. Meetup hikes can be offered on any day of the week, but nearly all of MCM's Meetup hikes take place on weekdays, so they deserve recognition as part of our modern midweek program.

MCM established its Meetup Group in the fall of 2020 in hopes of increasing our club's recognition among persons who hike with Meetup hiking groups. A first, MCM offered one or two weekend Meetup hikes each month. Over the last couple of years, our Meetup program has grown into a regular series of moderate Thursday Meetup hikes in local parks (Patapsco Valley State Park, Liberty Reservoir, etc.), as well as a smaller number of hikes on other days and in other locations. These hikes well attended by both regular MCM members and other Meetup hikers (who often become Mountain Club members).

### Concluding Observations

The first MCM program of Wednesday hikes was created in 1973, almost 40 years after the Mountain Club was established, in recognition an increased number of retirees among its membership. As the midweek hike program grew in popularity, the club repeatedly added new hike categories to suit members' difficulty preferences and to spread the large number of midweek hikers across more hikes. The addition of Meetup hikes has added another set of weekday choices for our club. Overall, the midweek program is an example of how MCM has expanded and adapted in response to our hikers' wishes, one of the factors that have contributed to our 90 years of success and growth as a hiking club.