

## *M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure*



09-20 to 22-2008 – [Roaring Plains Base Camp and Canyon Rim Day Hike](#): This trip was identical to the trip we did almost a year ago to the day. I was joined by Shortstack, Judge N. Amy, Everybody Loves Raymond, Ted E. Bear, Lance (AKA Kia Kaha to some) and Indiana Moser. The weather was great although we did not see freezing nighttime temps as was the case last year. On the 2.5 mile hike in we found a [new vista](#) that looks back towards the north. I am not sure if this is the one called the Pancake Vista or not but the trail in now is quite obvious and I know from previous visits that it wasn't in the past. This made up for another easterly view that has now mostly grown in. We hiked casually and made it to camp by 3:00. After setting up our tents we hiked down the South Prong Trail to the Hidden Vista which offers a nice view of the [South Prong drainage](#) and its surrounding ridges. After playing on this massive boulder for a while we returned back to camp and lounged around before eating our dinner. The campfire that night was a communal effort. A previous camper left enough wood for one night and we pretty much burned it all.

We arose the next day, ate breakfast, re-hung the bear bags and headed out for a 12 mile day hike over some of the most rugged yet beautiful terrain in all of WV (if not the entire quad state area). Halfway through the Hidden Passage we met Conrad and his friendly dog, Shadow. (If you did not pet him he would nudge your leg with his muzzle!) He was very excited about finding a great view overlooking the North Fork valley. Jonathan Jessup told me about it when he first introduced me to the area but I never attempted to find it. This day our group left the trail and began probing the woods for a way out to the vista. Just as we started to see daylight through the trees Conrad and Shadow jumped in front of us and lead us through the rocks and heath thickets. The first probe took us about 200 feet too far south but offered a [very nice scene framed with large boulders](#). We backtracked a bit and finally found the spot that Conrad was looking for. Below us the valley was filled with fog. We could see [other easterly ridges behind those of North Fork Mountain](#). After taking in the view

for a while we returned to our packs, said "Thanks and goodbye" to Conrad and Shadow and Conrad. We soon found ourselves at the ["Meadows"](#) and the great campsite on its rim. The views were nice but pretty hazy. Such being the case and having spent some valuable time looking for "Conrad's Vista" we opted to by-pass the usual Pipeline vista and begin our exploration of the Canyon Rim as soon as possible. Along the way we found yet another [new vista](#) to explore with a pretty nice campsite. Technically it's a dry site but there are at least 2 streams within a 1/2 mile of it that were flowing when we hiked by them. After a short break we continued our hike out to ["The Point"](#) where we took [lunch](#) and enjoyed [the views](#). Anyone who has hiked this trail before (with or without full packs) knows how rugged this terrain is. They also know about all of the outstanding views. We stopped at most of them but didn't take a real break until we reached a spot I call ["The Crevice Overlook"](#). Here some of us took a 10 minute siesta. From there we hiked to the junction of the Tee-Pee Tr where we took a short 5 minute break before tackling that never ending talus slope from hell. Whenever we do this hike I have intentions of extending it to explore more of the Roaring Plains Tr and the trail that leads out to the microwave tower that my friend Jim Kirk always tells me about but, as usually is the case, when I finally get off of that pile of rocks I do a "gas tank check" and figure I have just enough fuel to finish the base hike. Today was no different. Collectively, we mustered our remaining energy and rubbery legs and continued on. Some how we found ourselves off-trail. We looked at our GPS units and compasses and decided to head due north up and through a nice spruce forest until we hit the Roaring Plains Tr. Judge and Lance were ahead of the rest of us and in minutes found themselves standing next to a tree with a blue diamond on it. From camp to this point our total speed, including breaks, was a mere 1.5 mph. For the rest of the hike we must have averaged over 3.0 mph (w/o counting breaks). Our legs and feet must have been really happy to be on something that felt like a real trail for a change. We stopped at the Pipeline to replenish our water before continuing down FR70. At that point everybody except me were like "horses smelling the barn". I was maintaining a good pace but the rest of the folks must have been running back to camp. We were all back by 4:45. Lance had to break camp and hike out so he could attend a work meeting the next day. We all enjoyed his company and hope that he and his wife can join us on more trips next year. The rest of us pretty much repeated the previous night's activities except the fire was a bit smaller and bedtime came a bit sooner. Around 3:00 o'clock most of us were awakened by the sounds of baying dogs and shouting hunters. We didn't know it at the time but the WV DNR opened bear season a week early. We have no problem with that but I am pretty sure that it is illegal to hunt for ANYTHING at night. The sounds moved away from our area around 6:00.

We broke camp a bit earlier than usual. I think the rough hike the day before really had our appetites going. We made good time getting back to Ted's van and made a bee line off of the mountain to a great breakfast at [Mallow's Roadside Café](#) in Cabins. I can't think of a better way to end another WV hiking season. I'm already looking forward to next year.