



AAC Publications

Ann Dodge Middleton, 1928–2012

Annie outdid her renowned father, Joe Dodge, as a mountaineer, and I believe that if she had not kept such a full plate with demands of wife, mother, and grandmother, she might have had time to develop her dad's oratorical experience as well. Joe was well known as the Appalachian Mountain Club's Huts Manager, with a distinguished career at New Hampshire's Pinkham Notch, which he called "Porky Gulch" because of all the porcupines. Joe was a dedicated servant to the community as a weather observer, search and rescue coordinator, and founding member of the Mt. Washington Observatory.

Annie arrived with her dad's great qualities and devotion to the area, but she stood all on her own too. I recall her berating me one spring evening for my alleged culinary shortcomings as a short-order cook at the old U.S. Forest Service's warming hut in Tuckerman Ravine, which was nicknamed "HoJo's" because its roofline looked like the Howard Johnson's roadside restaurants then popping up in New England. I fruitlessly explained to Annie that I, a one-man crew, was responsible for patrolling the ravine at the same time. Much to my chagrin, her father wholeheartedly agreed with her stinging comments. Fortunately, I was saved when two of the Yanakakis brothers from Lynn arrived to take over. "Get out of here, Putnam," Johnny Yanakakis, a formidable skier, war hero, and foodie, said, "you belong up in the ravine. Don't you know you can't run a restaurant without a Greek?"

I owe Annie a debt for keeping an Alaskan Malamute named Juneau despite the distress that caused to some members of the AMC Hut Committee. In 1946, her litter produced Skagway, which I obtained (for a price), and for the next five years that handsome dog accompanied, and sometimes led, me on many a fine ascent throughout the White Mountains, Alaska, and western Canada.

Annie worked in all parts of the AMC Hut system, packing supplies, cooking, guiding, and managing. She served as the hut master at the AMC's Pinkham Notch hut. She could also ski much better than her old man. She was a professional ski instructor, taught skiing for the Hannes Schneider Ski School at Cranmore Mountain, and was even a member of the U.S. Ski Team. Indeed, Annie's stiffest competition on the slopes came from her brother, "Brookie" Dodge, who developed the "two-pole turn" and was a member of the 1952 and 1956 U.S. Winter Olympic teams.

After marrying Jack Middleton, one of the most prominent members of the New England legal community and an active outdoorsman and mountaineer as well, Ann continued her climbing pursuits, making many fine ascents throughout New Hampshire, the western United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, Ecuador, Africa, and Nepal. She was a life member of the Appalachian Mountain Club and a member of the American Alpine Club.

I got even with Annie by inventing the procedure when Joe and his wife, Kerstin ("Teen" to everyone), decided it was time for their daughter to settle on a husband. (This is my account, as best as anyone can recall, anyway.) One day, the old man called in a bunch of us: "Moose" Damp, Nelson Gildersleeve, Sam Goodhue, George Hamilton, Vinnie "the Guinea", Graham Matthews, Jack Middleton, Bob Rutherford, Bruce Sloat, myself, and several others. We all stood around in Joe's living room, hoping for a free beer, when Joe strode in from the porch and demanded silence. He held up a dozen straws, and Jack drew the short one.

Annie thereupon left Porky Gulch for the life of a lawyer's wife, while upholding her family heritage on the old rock pile, all the while raising three wonderful children, Susan, Jack Jr., and Peter, and then four grandchildren, Abby, Ben, Kerstin, and Mansfield. She got Jack to do the worrying for the Mt.

Washington Observatory, in which her father took enormous pride.

Annie and Jack established their own camp in 1987 on Loon Lake in Freedom, New Hampshire, and it was gradually adorned with impressive trophies of the Middletons' ventures to Africa and elsewhere; I was disappointed never to have seen evidence of Jack's conquests in the courts of New Hampshire mounted on their walls. I am certain their home was patterned off the Lakes of the Clouds Hut—the highest and most popular hut in the chain, located on the southern shoulder of Mt. Washington—with countless additions built by Joe and Annie. Returning from the Wild West to the North Country, where we had all misspent so many pleasant days, my entire family was always made welcome, so long I brought along sufficient Laphroaig single malt and T-bones.

The remaining Middletons have a lot to be proud of in their departed matriarch. May her swash never buckle!

Images



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