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INSPIRING STORIES

GORDY AND AMC: AN 80-YEAR ROMANCE

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Gordy Hall, at Baker Pond, in October 2020, doffing his President's Society cap. In the background is Baker Mountain, 4,000 of whose acres

he's protecting through a Summit Trust deferred gift to AMC.

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With AMC, it was love at first sight for Gordy Hall. When he was 10, along with his best friend, Fred Preston, and their respective fathers, they took the "Snow Train" to spend a fall weekend at Pinkham Notch, hiking the Old Jackson Road, and up the Fire Trail. The following summer, much to Gordy's delight, the foursome returned, this time to climb Mt. Washington and spend the night in the Tip-Top House.

"I vividly remember excited whispered conversation with Fred before going to sleep while the wind screeched and howled across the rugged stone face of the building. You could even feel its drafts on your face as it found tiny openings to penetrate," says Gordy. "Six years later, when Fred and I were feeling our adolescent oats, we took delight in 'running' over many of the 4,000 footers, trying to hike them in 1/3 or less of the AMC guidebook suggested times."

The affection and level of fresh detail he imparts to these recollections make them sound recent; in fact, Gordy's memories are 80 years old. While technically a nonagenarian (his driver's license swears his date of birth is August 5, 1930), Gordy today remains an energetic and vital member of AMC. Even during these trying times, AMC continues to give him reasons to smile.

One is a special trip into the Northern Maine Woods in October 2020, where he walked in to his beloved Baker Pond in the ecological preserve section of AMC's 70,000-acre Maine holdings. Though the trail today is only a ½ mile walk each way, for Gordy each step was pregnant with decades of family and AMC significance.



Gordy hiking in to Baker Pond at age 90, October 2020

In 1948, when he was 18, and before there were any of today's networks of logging roads, he bushwhacked the six miles in to the pond. When Gordy was 12, while his father taught him how to fly-fish, he had spoken wistfully about going to the pond to fish. Unfortunately, he died prematurely and never made it. More than 60 years later, in 2010, Gordy and his three sons and four grandchildren built a campsite at the edge of the pond in remembrance of his father and as a gift to the AMC. Baker Mountain (3,500') looks down on the pond (see picture), and Gordy contributed ("quite a bit" as he puts it) toward a 4,000-acre conservation easement on its top and West side.

But on this October (2020) morning, almost as if the COVID-19 gods were smiling down upon him, the sun was shining, and Gordy, negative COVID-19 test in the glove compartment of his car, wanted to see Baker Pond again. After three cautious but deliberate steps on the raised wooden planks of trail bridgework, he abandoned his walking stick and proceeded with surprising ease and speed to the pond and back. Though he couldn't see any trout rising that morning, not even in the secret spot that historically served him well, Gordy was grateful to experience one of his happier moments of a challenging 2020.

In January 2021, Gordy learned about another smile-worthy AMC happening: For the first time the number of annual donors to the President's Society exceeded 1,000 and proceeds totaled more than \$3.5 million. While Gordy was on the AMC Board of Directors in 1989, he and Fred Stott (with subsequent help from Mary Jane Cross and Sam Pryor) began the Presidents Society. Of the latest fundraising tally, Gordy says, "That's one of my life's accomplishments I'm proudest of."

Former AMC President Andy Falender concurs and recently sent Gordy this congratulatory message: "Seriously, what the two of you got going in 1989 was one of the most important strategies of my AMC career ... and one of the most important strategies currently!"

Gordy started the President's Society by inviting people to join him in stepping up their annual support of AMC. He's doing that again today by encouraging others to think about what is important to them and how leaving a legacy with AMC is possible.

"All of my AMC connections have been a huge amount of fun and provided a great sense of accomplishment," Gordy says. Another case in point that he cannot share without a chuckle: securing the naming rights to the Little Lyford bathhouse as "Gordy's Back Country Spa," a philanthropic seed planted in him years before by Clare O'Connell, AMC's legendary development officer.

This and the Baker Mountain Easement are deferred commitments/bequests made through the AMC Summit Trust, an arrangement Gordy calls, "a very convenient and inexpensive vehicle."

"To be acknowledged for these gifts and be able to visit and see them in reality really makes me feel good," says Gordy. "There's a huge satisfaction about making a gift while you are still alive, and having people thank you is rewarding. You can't do that when you're six feet under."

AMC would like to recognize member Alessandra Bianchi for writing this inspiring story about Gordy's 80-year romance with the organization.

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