

THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

HOLT LAND ACQUISITION IN MOON TWP.

reprint of HOLT Press Release

In the face of the area's rapid development and subsequent loss of natural resources, the Hollow Oak Land Trust continues its campaign to acquire and preserve open space. On Wednesday, September 17, HOLT purchased a unird parcel of land in Moon Township, bringing the total amount of natural areas that it owns to almost 170 acres. The HOLT Board of Directors has designated the 37-acre parcel as the "Meeks Run Conservation Area" because it includes and will help to buffer both sides of that stream for almost a half-mile stretch.

This acquisition was financed in part by a Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Program grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. The grant provided by the Commonwealth was more than matched by the donated additional value of the

land, previously owned by the Anchor Supply Company.

"HOLT has proven itself to be a strong land trust organization in western Allegheny County, and I'm sure it will provide protection of this important natural area into the future," said Dion McMullen, Vice President of Anchor Supply Company. "With this transaction we have completed a total of over 100 acres either sold at a discount to HOLT or donated to Moon Township for green space."



The Property lies in the stream valley below the Londonbury residential plan and includes wetland areas and steep slopes as well as a portion of

Meeks Run, one of the cleanest tributaries in the Montour Run Watershed. Fifty-nine residential lots had been planned for the area, which would have added significantly to traffic in the Londonbury residential plan as well as impacting the natural resources of the area. The Meeks Run Conservation Area will be available to the public for non-motorized recreational uses and not be "improved" by facilities.

continued on page 6

MAJOR TRAIL GAP ACQUIRED

by Marshall Fausold

The 19th of November saw another landmark in the continued progress of the Montour Trail, as Arnie Schulberg and Marshall Fausold met with representatives of the Dick Corporation to close the purchase of the longest remaining segment of right-of-way still out of Montour Trail Council control. For \$24,000, furnished in equal parts by the Regional Asset District (through the Allegheny Land Trust) and the Pennsylvania Keystone Grant program, we acquired full title to approximately two miles of ex-Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way between Rt. 51 and Clairton.

First, a bit of history. We all think of the Montour Trail as being built on the abandoned line of the Montour Railroad. However, the Montour only ran from Groveton to Snowden (east of Library in South Park Township). At Snowden it connected with the Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which originated at Clairton and ascended Peters Creek from there. The Peters Creek Branch was

continued on page 7

INSIDE

MTC ANNUAL
DINNER MEETING
ELECTION
RESULTS

PAGE 3

PARK MANOR BLVD.
"DIRECT CROSSING"
ELIMINATED

PAGE 4

FOREST GROVE
SPORTSMEN
BATTLE EROSION

PAGE 7

FLAGPOLE
DEDICATION
ON THE TRAIL

PAGE 8



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dick Quasey	President
Dennis Pfeiffer	Vice President
Bruce Barron	Secretary
Judy Thompson	Treasurer
Don Bert	
Marshall Fausold	
John Hooton	
Nancy Reed	
Jack Swisher	
Stan Sattinger	
Paul McKeown	
Bob Boyce	
Ford Shankle	
Peter Kohnke	
Frank Keppel	
Pete Merther	
Stan Siranovich	

THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER is published bi-monthly January through December. All correspondence should be addressed to:

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER
33 STERLING DRIVE
CORAOPOLIS, PA 15108

Or E-mail to: debho@juno.com

All other trail correspondence should be addressed:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL PHONE NUMBERS:

For information: 412-831-2030

For administration and
business: 412-257-2328

Newsletter Editor Deborah Hoerster

Circulation Manager Joan Schweiger

Trail Talk

from the Editor's Desk

Happy New Year! Have you made your New Year's resolutions yet? How about a few suggestions? Here goes:

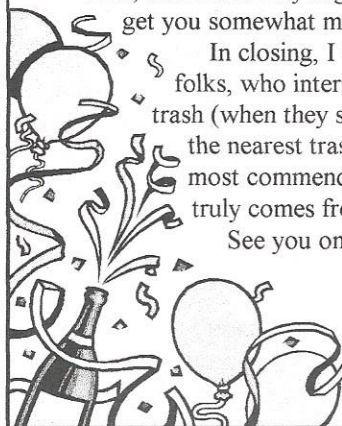
1. After all the "returns" are made and all the parties are over, close your doors and windows and hibernate. It's time for some R & R, peace and quiet. Get to know yourself and your family once again.
2. Pack up all those leftover goodies and ship them to the relative or friend farthest away. If they're stale, by all means, throw them out! Your objective - eat healthy again.
3. Most important of all, take a trip to the Trail nearest to you. Drink in its pristine beauty in the winter time. Even though the sun smiles higher in the sky now, it still glistens on the snow-laden trails below. Drag out those skis and do some cross-country skiing. Pull your kids on those new sleds that Santa brought them. Or, just take a walk and let nature fill you with serenity. (You'll also receive good aerobic benefits, too!)
4. Join a "Friends" group. Or, if you're not a group joiner, decide this year, to give one Saturday (approximately 3-4 hours) working on Trail projects. Volunteers are always needed, not only for physical work, but for many other duties. Everything done on and for the Trail is voluntary.

Remember, the Trail needs you!

Well, that's it for my suggestions. I hope they helped to get you somewhat motivated for the New Year.

In closing, I would like to thank all those kindly folks, who interrupt their workouts, to pick up trash (when they see it) along the Trail and take it to the nearest trash can. That has to be one of the most commendable acts anyone can perform. It truly comes from the heart.

See you on those winter Trails!!!



Debby



Letters



THE MONTOUR TRAIL- LETTER welcomes all questions and comments. Please send all correspondence to the address on the left.

The Montour Trail Council is an *all volunteer* organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

Calendar of Events

- ♦ **MTC Board Meeting**, every **third Monday** of the month - at Chartiers Valley High School, in the faculty lounge. Turn left off of the- Kirwan Heights exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go under the Interstate, and the school is on your left. Call Dick at 859-6864 for more information or to get on the agenda.
- ♦ **Cecil Friends of the Trail meeting**, every **first Tuesday** of the month - at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, at **7:30 pm.** Call 221-6406 for more information.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Cecil segment, every **third Saturday** of the month - **9:00 am.** Meet at the Storage shed at Hendersonville. Call 221-6406 for more information.
- ♦ **Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail meeting**, every **Thursday** before the second Saturday of the month at **7:00 pm.**, at the All Occasion Catering party room near the intersection of Silver Lane and Clever Rd. in Robinson Twp. Anyone from the communities near Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 859-3020 for more information.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Moon/Robinson segment, every **second Saturday** of the month - **9:00 am.** Meet at North Star Petroleum (formerly Robinson Petroleum). Call 262-3748 for more information.
- ♦ **Findlay/North Fayette Friends of the Trail**, call Don at 899-3695 or Pete at 788-4136 for more information.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Findlay/North Fayette segment, every **fourth Saturday** of the month - **9:00 am.** Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 788-4136 for more information.
- ♦ **Bethel Park Friends of the Trail** general meetings will be **January 6, 1998** and **February 3, 1998** at **7:30 pm** in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Bethel Park segment, every **second** and **fourth Saturday** of the month - **8:30 am.** Call Peter Kohnke at 854-1835 for location and information.

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING AND ELECTION RESULTS

by Judy Thompson

The Montour Trail Annual Meeting and Dinner was a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet fellow Trail members. Surrounded by golden fall foliage, the Lindenwood Golf Club in McMurray provided a beautiful backdrop for the November 2nd event. More than 50 Trail members enjoyed the camaraderie of the pre-dinner reception, and watched and listened as Don Hopey talked about his trip on the Appalachian Trail, a trail somewhat longer and more rigorous than the Montour. Don, the environmental reporter for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, hiked the central portion of the Appalachian in 1995 as part of a group of newspaper reporters. He presented colorful slides and colorful tales of folks and panoramas he encountered during his trek. Thank you to Don for his time and for his genuine enthusiasm for the beautiful, unspoiled outdoors.

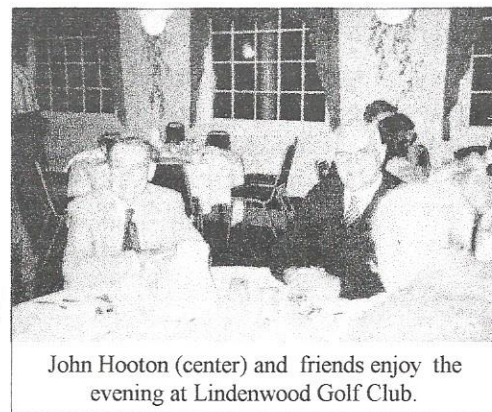
President, Marshall Fausold, brought the audience up to date on Trail building activities in 1997, plans for 1998, and exciting funding possibilities. Board members elected or four year terms were: Bruce Barron, Peter Kohnke,

Dennis Pfeiffer, Don Berty, John Hooton and Richard Quasey.

Molly Brovard, representing IKEA, presented a \$3000 check to the Trail Council for its massive volunteer help with the IKEA-

sponsored half-marathon on the Trail in September. Trail members, Bill Morphy and Dennis Pfeiffer, were recognized for spearheading the volunteer effort.

A buffet dinner and more conversation followed the business meeting. A good time was had by all. ♦



John Hooton (center) and friends enjoy the evening at Lindenwood Golf Club.

DIRECT CROSSING OF PARK MANOR BOULEVARD ELIMINATED

by Dick Quasey

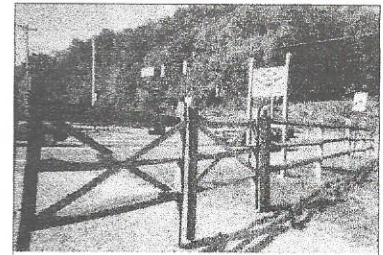
Hiker and biker Trail traffic across Park Manor Blvd. in the Moon/Robinson area was permanently shifted from direct traffic flow to the signalized crossing established years ago by PennDot at the junction of Park Manor Blvd. and Montour Run Road.

The direct crossing of Park Manor Blvd. was created to accommodate avid hikers and especially bikers, who do not like to change direction of travel or have their pace interrupted. MTC was pleased to honor those feelings.

However, four years of experience has demonstrated that "direct crossings" at this location are dangerous for all Trail users and can be an outright unhealthy thing to do! MTC decided it can no longer accept this risk to Trail users. Therefore, the "direct crossing" was closed in October and the direction of Trail traffic shifted to the Park Manor Blvd./Montour Run pedestrian crossing intersection thereby eliminating the risk and a public liability factor for MTC.

Trail users are urged to use the pedes-

trian traffic signal controls at the Park Manor Blvd./Montour Run Road intersection and not cross directly as in the past.



New gates at Park Manor Drive intersection prohibit "direct crossings."

MTC WEB
ADDRESS



Visit the Montour Trail web-site at: <http://trfn.clpgh.org/orgs/mtc/>

GENE SHAEFFER PRESENTS THE MONTOUR RAILROAD

by Dennis Sims

On a rainy Friday evening, Gene Schaeffer, author of the *Montour Railroad*, took members of the Robinson Township Historical Society and guests on pictorial tour of the Railroad from Groveton to its eastern interchanges with the Baltimore and Ohio (now CSX) at Snowden and the Norfolk and Western (now the Wheeling and Lake Erie) in Bethel Park. He spent time at Groveton which was the headquarters of the Montour Railroad where it interchanged with the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, and the Champion Preparation Plant where much of the coal carried on the Railroad was processed.

Mr. Schaeffer was employed by the Montour between 1976 and 1983 where he worked his way from the track gang to a Yardmaster and Train Dispatcher.

His love affair with the Montour Railroad began in high school when he would hitch rides on trains which passed near his Bethel Park home. His camera, tripod and flash were with him often, en-

abling him to take frequent photos of Montour operations.

His pictorial essay showed us the maintenance shops at Groveton where the EMD SW-9 locomotives, the diesel power of the railroad, were serviced and maintained. He then took the attendees eastward on the rails through the Montour Valley to Imperial to the Champion Coal plant showing numerous train operations. His winter scenes were especially striking. The structural steel used in the building of the Parkway Overpass across the Railroad was hauled in by the Montour.

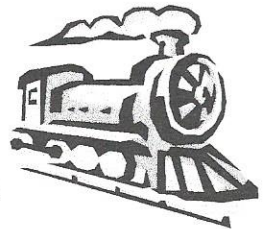
He spent time documenting the operations at the Champion Coal Plant where raw coal from the mines was brought to be cleaned and sorted. The Champion Coal Plant was located near the interchange of Route 22 with 980. The slate dump is about the only evidence left of the plant. In the latter years of the railroad, unit trains of 75 to 80 cars were brought into the plant from the

Conrail interchange at McDonald (now the parking area for the Robinson Township section) and then returned to Conrail to be taken to customers. Often in winter, the coal would freeze in the cars and these cars would be put aside waiting warmer weather for them to thaw.

Derailments became common place in the latter years of the railroad and he had many photographs of them. Penn

Erection was often used to assist in righting and re-railing cars.

So far, Gene has sold about 1100 books, most of those soft-bound, and he is looking forward to doing another book in color. Many of the photographs that were shown are in his book. Anyone at the slide show who had a copy of the *Montour Railroad* were able to get it autographed.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Membership Chairman

Jerry Agin

* Jan Beresford
* Ed & Char Bickar
* Keith Birmingham
* Kathy L. Kruger
* David G. Kull
* Patricia A. Malloy
* Tom McIlvain
* Bernice Molchan
* Patricia Schoener
* Edward & Sandra Smith
* Connie T. Walker
* Edward M. Zupancic

* Brian Koeberle/Koeberle & Associates
* MVS Training, Inc.

The Montour Trail Council would like to welcome these new members and thank them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have renewed their membership and remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

BENEFACTORS:



SmithKline Beecham



Saturn of Robinson Township



Total Equipment Company



PROGRESS IN BETHEL PARK

by Richard Baker

In the last newsletter you read about the history of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park. It's good to report now about the *future* of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park.

In the last two months, much has been happening in Bethel Park. Through the hard work of Peter Kohnke, the Bethel Park Friends of the Trail has been formed (although the official name has yet to be decided). Several Trail clean-ups have been well-attended and a considerable amount of debris has been removed. In addition, an application for matching State funds through the Keystone Grant program has been submitted. Efforts

are also underway to start a major fundraising campaign in 1998. A fundraising committee has already been formed and a plan of action is being developed. Work will soon be underway to contact neighbors along the Trail to let them know about the Trail and to build good relations. A short quarterly newsletter is also planned for next year. Last, two general coordinating meets have been held.

The volunteer support for Trail construction in Bethel Park is quickly growing. Anyone interested in becoming involved is encouraged to come to one of the meetings listed in the calendar. Hope to see you there! ♦

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

- ☐ I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
- ☐ I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the trail.
- ☐ My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
- ☐ I know a group interested in a presentation.
- ☐ I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council.

- ☐ **STUDENT** \$5
- ☐ **INDIVIDUAL** \$15
- ☐ **FAMILY** \$25
- ☐ **ORGANIZATION** \$50
- ☐ **SUPPORTING** \$50
- ☐ **SUSTAINING** \$100
- ☐ **BENEFACTOR** \$250 + up

(Membership is tax deductible)

- ☐ I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of \$ _____ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality.

(Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (day time) _____ (evening) _____

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE _____

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:
MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308 where you work.

HOLT LAND ACQUISITION

continued from page 1

We're planning to reach out to the neighborhood for volunteers to participate in our land stewardship program for the Meeks Run conservation Area," stated Roy Kraynyk, President of HOLT. An upcoming meeting will provide further information on the property to the public.

The parcel lies within the area suggested by HOLT's "Montour Greenway" and will help to protect water quality in Meeks Run. The Greenway Project proposes a natural corridor along Montour Run and its tributaries where protection of steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, forests, and other natural resources will ensure that flooding, water pollution, and aesthetic degradation are minimized for neighboring communities. Over 300 acres in the Meeks Run area, including Moon Park, HOLT's Meeks Run and Santucci Conservation Areas, and holdings by the Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club are managed as open space. This network of protected land begins to establish a significant "green corridor," or Greenway, that provides habitat, flood control, and recreation opportunities for residents of the area. ◆

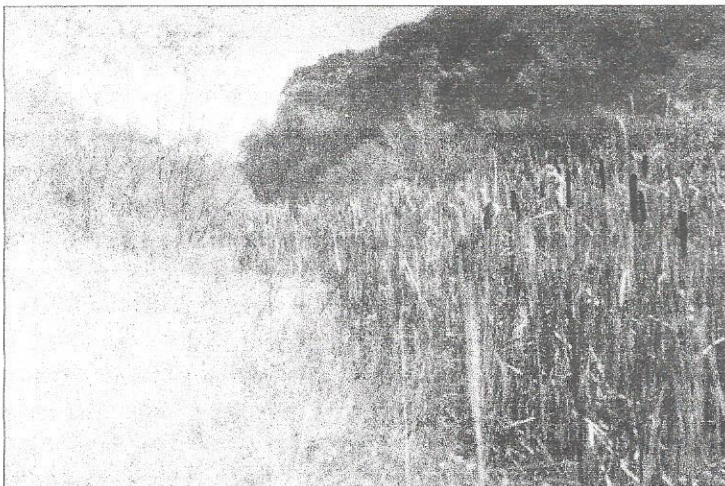


photo courtesy of Rick Kubia
Wetland area in Meeks Run, a newly acquired parcel of land.

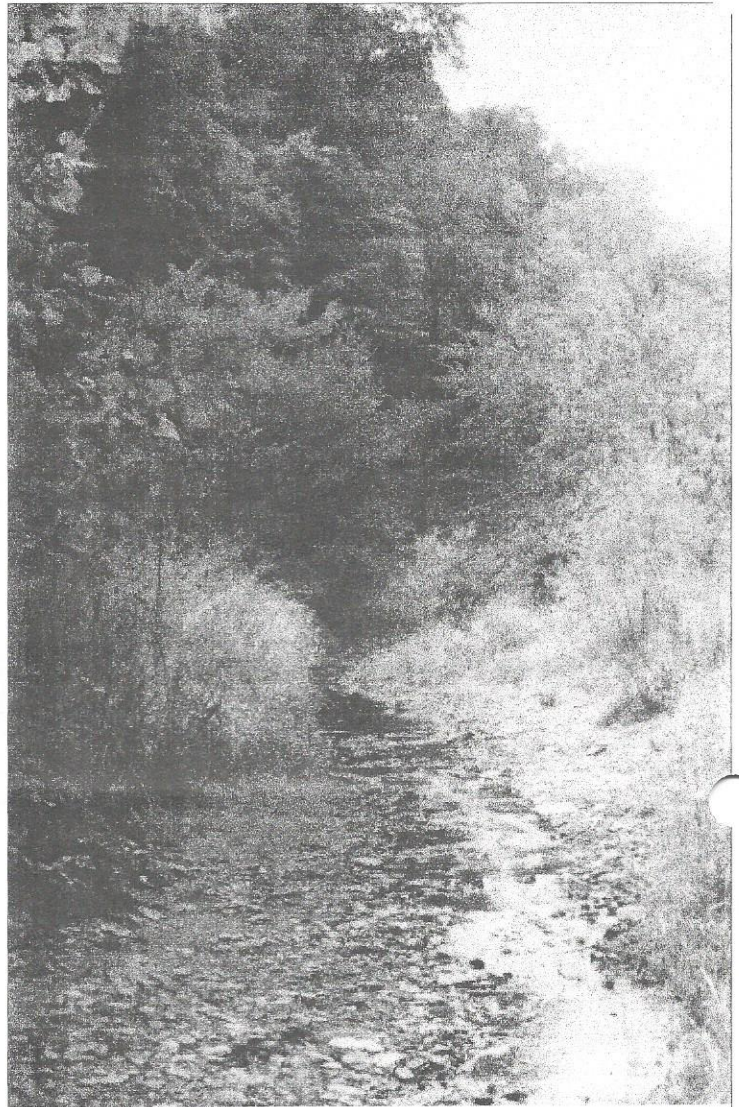


photo courtesy of Rick Kubia
"Meeks Run Conservation Area" is a 37 acre parcel of land that buffers both sides of this stream for almost a half mile stretch. It is one of the cleanest tributaries in the Montour Run Watershed.

MTC ELECTION OF OFFICERS

On December 15, 1997, at the regular MTC monthly Board meeting, the annual election of officers was held. Offices to be voted on were: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Those elected for the 1998 term were: Dick Quasey, President; Dennis Pfeiffer, re-elected as Vice President; Bruce Barron, re-elected as Secretary; and Judy Thompson,

Treasurer.

Congratulations to our newly elected officers, Dick Quasey and Judy Thompson. Many thanks to Dennis Pfeiffer and Bruce Barron for continuing their great efforts. We also say thanks and "well-wishes" to former Treasurer, Nancy Reed, who is moving away. Last, but not least, a hardy round of applause for outgoing President, Marshall Fausold, for all his hard work and tireless dedication to an all-consuming job. ◆



Newsletter Deadline

All articles for the March/April Trail-Letter will be due **no later than** February 2, 1998. Please see Page 2 for submitting correspondence. Thank you.

MAJOR GAP

continued from page 1

Progressively abandoned, first by the PRR and then by the Penn-Central, until it disappeared entirely in the 1970's. The right-of-way was sold: the major part to Jefferson Boro, a small part to South Park Township, and about 2 1/2 miles to the Dick Corporation. Dick built their company headquarters on the portion of their purchase west of Rt 51 but had no use for the two miles that lay east of the highway. It lay ignored by all except hunters and ATV users until the Montour Trail identified it as our route.

Negotiations were conducted late in 1995, and Dick agreed to sell for the

appraised value of the land. Allegheny County budgeted the money for the purchase, but the newly-elected County Commissioners decreed that the County would have no part of the deal. The MTC successfully applied for a 1997 Keystone grant for the purchase, and with the approval of the Regional Asset District to provide the required local 50% match, we again approached the Dick Corporation this August. They were still willing to sell at the old price, and we are now the owners.

The property begins at Rt. 837, opposite the Clairton Coke Works, and follows close beside Peters Creek through a pretty valley to a point about 1500 feet east of Rt. 51. Here our purchase ends, and final routing of the Trail

must await completion of plans for the projected interchange between Rt. 51 and the Mon-Fayette Expressway. We also need to reach agreement with the Dick Corporation regarding a route through their property west of Rt. 51. We have a preliminary estimate of \$200,000 for construction costs for this segment of trail. We have applied to both the Keystone program and the Regional Asset District for construction money, but it is unlikely that these sources will provide the entire amount. Jefferson Boro has declared their support for the project, and we are optimistic that we will be able to build this segment in 1998. Meantime, those with mountain bikes can easily enjoy it. ◆

FOREST GROVE SPORTSMEN BATTLE EROSION

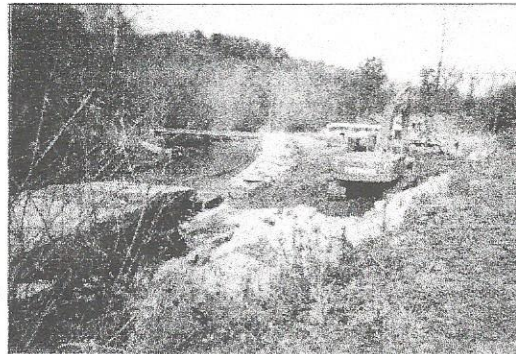
The Montour Trail, from mile 0 through mile 11, has been experiencing major erosion problems in certain sections. There is great concern that the creek's forceful flow may one day take parts of the Trail with it, if preventative measures are not taken now. MTC's Dick Quasey, has been securing rubble from PennDot's reconstruction areas, and (with PennDot's much appreciated aid) monitoring its placement along certain sections of the Trail most prone to erosion. (Kudos to Dick for his most diligent efforts!)

Also experiencing these erosion problems is the Forest Grove Sportsman Association. Their primary concern is near mile marker 2. The creek rises, (sometimes flooding its banks), after heavy rainfalls, and gouges its banks taking most of the soil downstream. Twice already, they've had to reinforce the banks with stone blocks and rubble, especially around their bridge. With no assistance from outside agencies, the FGSA undertook yet a third attempt to conserve their land, bridge, and other areas around the creek, with MTC approval to use our already existing rubble.

FGSA member, Dave Gasparovich, owner of Gasparovich Excavating, Inc., and some of his employees, all using heavy equipment, realigned the bank area leading towards the rifle range and bridge for a discounted rate. Even

with a discounted rate, it's still a drain on their finances. It is an Association, according to board member, Gene Summerhill, that promotes land conservation by sending boys and girls to Conservation School at Penn State every year through FGSA funding. He also maintains that because more than a third of their membership is made up of law enforcement officers, it saves the Townships money by allowing these officers to practice their marksmanship at a lower price than at a Police Academy.

Though the winter hunting season is an extremely difficult time for both groups, the FGSA remains a good friend of the Trail and continues to cooperate towards land conservation and safety. Some people complain about hunters on the Trail with guns, or gunshots in the area, but rest assured, safety matters receive first priority on both groups' agendas. So, don't be alarmed if you see hunters on the Trail. They are well instructed in safety matters.



Dave Gasparovich and crew build a new wall against land erosion for Forest Grove Sportmen's Club.

All in all, with public education and continued foresight and cooperation by both the MTC the FGSA, maybe these pesky erosion problems can be laid to rest, once and for all, in the very near future. ◆

FLAGPOLE DEDICATION ON THE MONTOUR TRAIL

Even though November 15, 1997 was a bitterly cold and cloudy day, a small crowd gathered at the Park Manor Boulevard intersection for a dedication ceremony. Mrs. Ruth Thomas, accompanied by her family, donated a flag, flagpole, and plaque in honor of her deceased husband, Vince Thomas.

Vince was an accomplished skydiver in the '60's and a flight instructor with Miller Aviation at the County Airport from '69 thru '73. He was last employed by Aristech on Neville Island until his death to cancer in 1995. He was a real nature lover, always providing corn in his backyard for the birds and other animals.

Because of this and the fact that

Vince's father, (Vincent F. Thomas), worked for the Montour Railroad in Groveton for 50 years (1924-1974), the Thomas family knew that the only place for Vince's beautiful handmade flagpole was the Montour Trail.

The MTC would like to thank Mrs. Ruth Thomas, and her family, for their thoughtfulness and generosity.



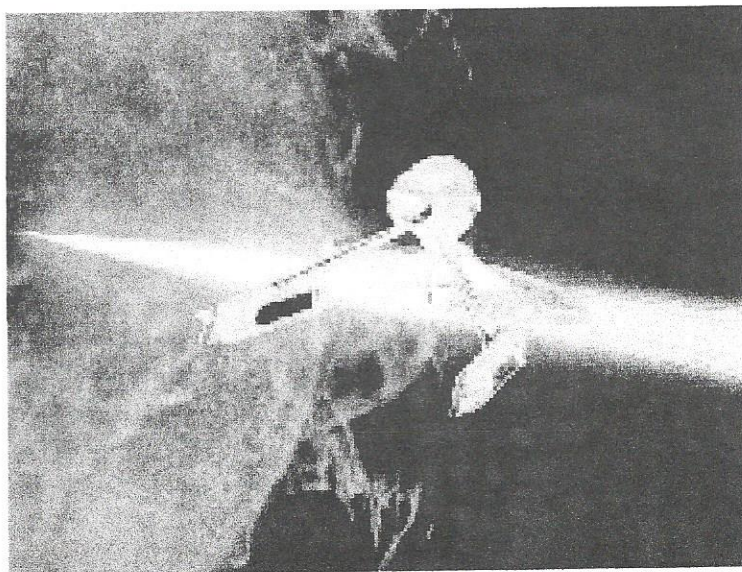
Mrs. Ruth Thomas (far right corner) and family members: Ric and Tracy Kennedy, Siggy and Tammy La Rocca, and Justin and Brooke La Rocca.



Troop 301 Scout member, Derek Burns, has the honor of raising the flag on the newly dedicated flagpole in memory of Vince R. Thomas.

8

"Beam me onto that Montour Trail, Scotty!"



NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PITTSBURGH PA
PERMIT NO. 2524

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA 15228-0866
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

