

# **Father and Son Together**

**Steve Temple**

**(Hiking Trip on June 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015)**

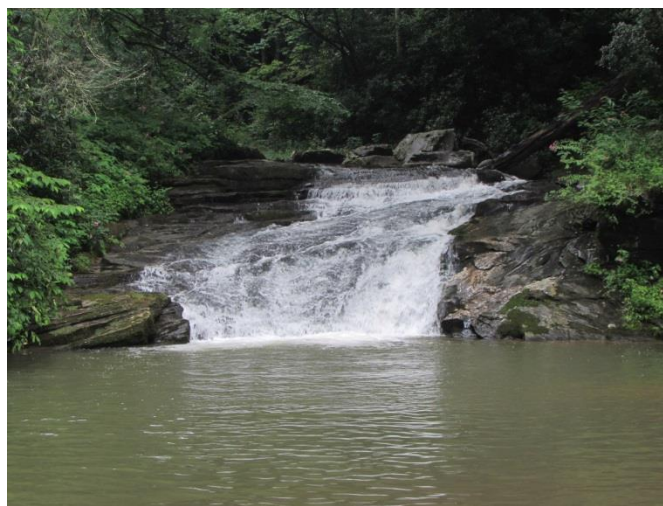
Over the past several years, my son Zach and I have traveled to the mountains at least once a year to do some hiking by ourselves. As he can, he and his new wife Abbey come along on some of the other family trips at various other times of the year, but they seem to have a multitude of friends who have likewise taken, or are taking, that wonderful step of entering into marriage. It seems that for them there is a wedding to attend or be a part of almost every other weekend (slight exaggeration), so it is very special when we find a time that we can head out together and perhaps do some exploring that might not be appropriate for one of our larger family group trips. This year (2015) we planned to leave on Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup> and return to the Triangle the next day.

Zach seems to be content to let me plan the itinerary for these trips and after reading several blogs and trip reports describing the approach to Big Bradley Falls from downstream, I thought that this would be a good time to check out that route. I had seen the falls from the upper overlook on a previous trip and had even made it down to “the rope” on another trip, but both of these previous views were partially obstructed and I knew that a much better view could be had from the base. We left Raleigh at 0600 and cruised down I-40 toward Morganton where we would turn off onto US 64 and head southwest. Last fall while looking through KA’s book, I saw the mention of a waterfall on Somey Creek which runs through a Methodist retreat called Camp McCall. I found their website and saw that they had announced in 2013 that the camp was now open to the public. I latter confirmed by phone that this was still true. The camp is off of NC 226 just a few miles southeast of its intersection with US 64, so this seemed a good time to check it out. After parking near a large tree just beyond the camp pond, it is a short trek up to the waterfall. It is surprisingly tall, but it is difficult if not impossible to get a good view of the entire falls from the base. Zach and I didn’t realize that there was a trail that followed up the right side of the falls so we just worked our way up the falls one section at a time until we made it to a point just below the first drop. Considering that there wasn’t a whole lot of water flowing down the falls, I think our approach worked pretty well. We probably spent a bit more time here than I had planned, but it was an interesting discovery for us.



**Middle section of the waterfall on Somey Creek**

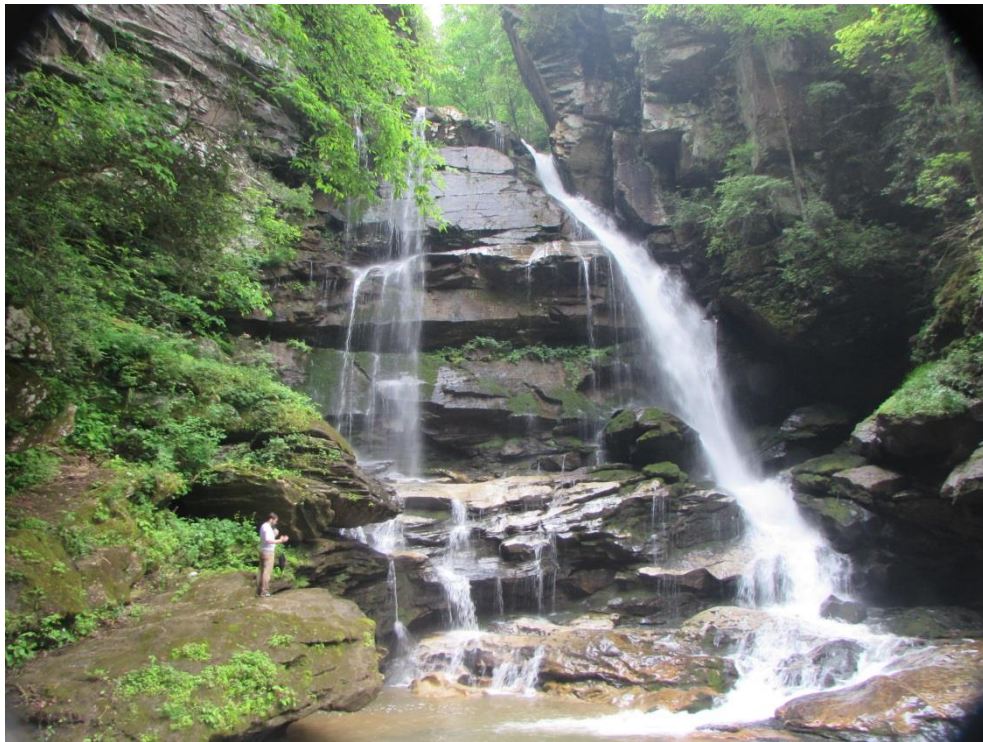
Our next two stops were in Rutherfordton where we connected with NC 108 which took us on down to Columbus where we stopped for a delicious lunch at Wendy's. Since I've recently developed a great interest in County Courthouses – especially the older ones – this route provided an opportunity to view and photograph the Rutherford and Polk County courthouses. Both are very impressive old buildings. After lunch we headed toward the trailhead for the hike to Big Bradley. It was in the mid 80s when we reached the trailhead and a line of showers had recently passed through the area so it was very muggy as we started out on the trail. I wondered if instead maybe we should have been tubing with those who were drifting down the Green River which paralleled the first part of our trail. With the directions I had, it was not difficult to find our way and we were properly impressed with the setting as we worked our way toward the falls and as the gorge began to narrow with the massive rock walls looming above us. Not only was Big Bradley a spectacular sight, but there were at least two other significant falls accessed from spur trails along the way.



**First waterfall on the way to Big Bradley – there is a huge pool at the base with a rope on the right.**



**Second waterfall – very nice ~20 foot drop.**



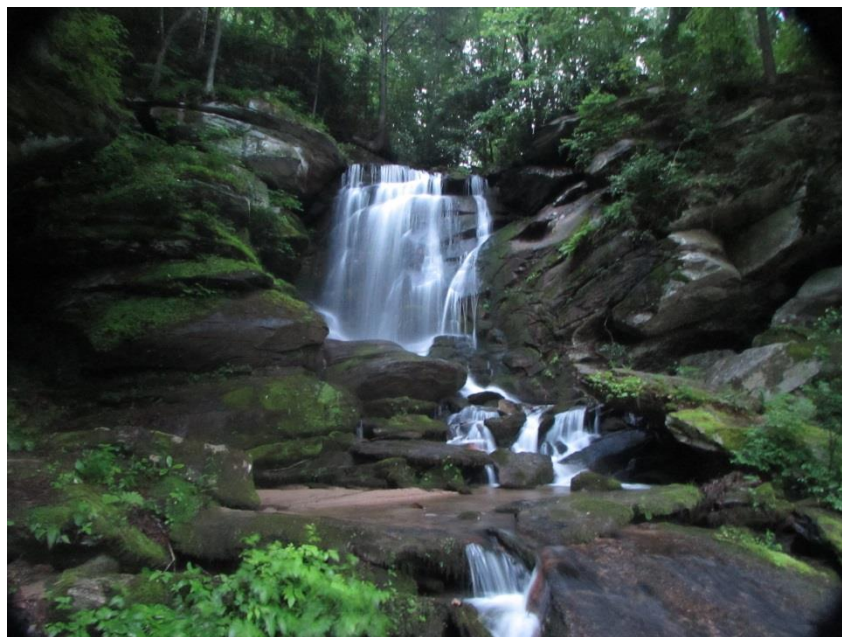
**Zach at the base of Big Bradley Falls**

Our return trip to the parking lot was a bit more challenging than the hike in. I missed the spot of our initial crossing of the creek and as we continued following along the creek, we did more climbing and bushwhacking than should have been necessary as we looked for a place to cross over without getting our feet wet. After a while we made it back across and from there were shortly able to hook back up with the trail. It was pretty smooth sailing from there and we arrived at the RAV4 soaked through and through with perspiration. I had originally hoped to also check out the waterfalls on Little Cove Creek, but I was pretty close to being spent and so we passed on that idea and will save it for another trip. We



also briefly considered Little Bradley Falls, but decided that it was late and time for a good shower in our motel run to be followed by a nice relaxing supper.

After check-in and a refreshing shower, we headed to Hannah Flannigan's on Main St. in downtown Hendersonville. I was hoping for a tasty Bison Burger, but settled for a delicious Angus beef cheeseburger. There was still some daylight remaining when we finished our meal so I thought to take Zach to see a couple of easily accessible falls on the east side of Brevard that he hadn't seen before. We headed down to Little River Road and around to Everett Rd. where we scooted quickly over to Key Falls. We then backtracked a bit to visit what some are calling Seven Falls. During normal daylight hours, there is a nice long range view of the falls as you head south on Pleasant Grove Church Road. Since the light was rapidly dissipating, we could barely see the falls and it was necessary to drive down to the gated road that leads to the base of the falls. Ignoring some information signs on the gate, we easily worked our way around the gate and headed toward the falls. The light was failing, but somehow my camera managed to produce some reasonably good photos – just don't ask me how it happened. That was it for the day and we headed back to the Red Roof Inn for a little Baseball Tonight and a restful night's sleep.



**Seven Falls off Pleasant Grove Church Rd. near Brevard**

I told myself before we left on this trip that I was going to try to be patient and not push as hard as I tend to do when I'm trying to see as much as possible in the limited amount of time available. Saturday started off fairly leisurely, but we still checked out at a reasonably early time. We had intended to eat at the motel, but found that their breakfast consisted of honey buns and a few other pastries. Cracker Barrel seemed like a better alternative and it was nice to have a hearty breakfast before setting out on our final day.

We took US 25 down into SC and turned west onto SC 11, following it over to US 178. Heading back up the Blue Ridge escarpment, we worked our way up to Rocky Bottom and turned onto the F. Van Clayton Memorial Hwy. A couple of miles up the road we reached Chimneytop Gap and found the starting point for our hike to Pinnacle Falls. There is a group of folks who have lately identified themselves as Team Waterfall. Andy Kunkle and Jack Thyen are perhaps chief among them, but there are certainly others including Brenda Wiley who usually join in their frequent outings. These folks are always looking for new challenges and searching for the location of unexplored or unknown waterfalls. Andy writes some of the most interesting trip reports that you will ever read, and Jack and Brenda share great information in their blogs. I sometimes wish that I could join them, but most likely I would have difficulty keeping up with the group. Nevertheless I am so very grateful for the willingness with which they share their adventures. Long story short, their reporting of a trip to Pinnacle Falls that they took in March provided me and Zach with the information we needed to make the trek ourselves.

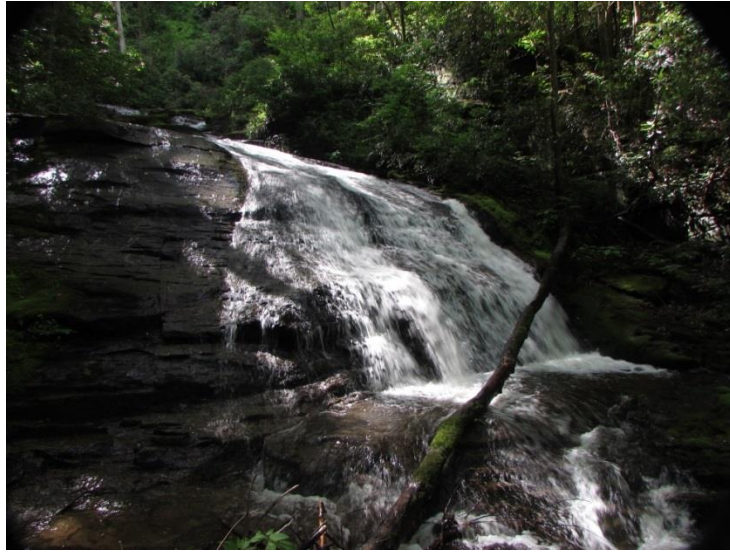
On the their way to the falls, they followed a ridge way around to the east side of Abner Creek and eventually worked their way down to the creek downstream from the falls. They discovered a trail up the left side of the upper falls that took them back up to a road they had originally bypassed on the way, but which connected with the unnamed road which lead back to the parking area. This cut out a significant amount of hiking and bushwhacking and made for a much easier return trip. This is the route that Zach and I followed both to and from the falls.

Back in 2006, Rich Stevenson posted some photos of Pinnacle Falls (<http://www.pbase.com/waterfallrich/image/55187972>) and ever since then I had wanted to see it for myself. Zach and I followed the clear directions that we obtained from various members of Team Waterfall and were able to arrive at the base of the upper falls with no trouble at all. As I said, the route was very straightforward but I knew that trekking the series of switchbacks back up the steep slope to the road along the top of the ridge high above the falls would be a good challenge for me. At least there was no off trail hiking required. Once to the top, everything was good. This was a beautiful waterfall that I would love to visit again – perhaps when the weather is a bit cooler.



**Upper Pinnacle Falls on Abner Creek near Rocky Bottom, SC**

We didn't make it quit to the base of the lower falls, but managed to get far enough to get a good shot of the top section. There was some flagging tape near the base of the upper falls which I guess supposedly pointed to a "trail" leading down to lower falls. For us it was really just a matter of trying to follow the path of least resistance, although all options seemed to provide significant resistance. Although I did see the top section, the main thing accomplished here was to sap more of my energy prior to the climb back up to the road. If you would like to see a good shot of the entire lower falls, check out Rich's photo here: <http://www.pbase.com/waterfallrich/image/55187609>. On the trail leading up beside the upper falls, there is a spur trail that leads up and off to the right to a spot near the base of the very top drop. Some of Team Waterfall found a cable there that allowed them to swing out over the top of the falls. Andy said that it wasn't as dangerous as it looked, but Zach (he was probably up for it) and I decided to save our energy.



**Top section of Lower Pinnacle Falls cascades on Abner Creek**

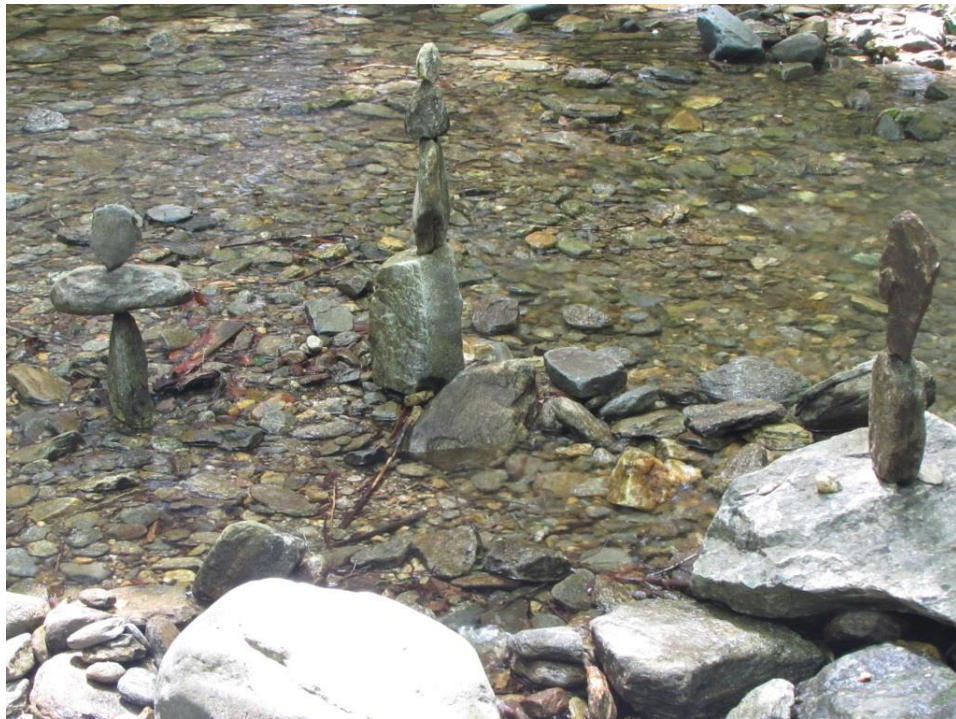
Back at the RAV4, we followed the plan for the day and took off toward beautiful Brevard to eat lunch at the Mayberry Café. Our timing was good and we just barely beat the crush of the lunch crowd. Friday night as I was pondering what to do on Saturday, I decided that it would be nice to head to higher elevations and enjoy at least a little bit of coolness before heading back to the sweltering heat of the piedmont. I accessed the BR Parkway off of NC 191 near the NC Arboretum and we followed this lovely road up north of Mount Mitchell State Park to the intersection with NC 80. The drive was so enjoyable with its many spectacular views and the glory of Craggy Gardens with the Rhodos, Laurel and Azaleas in bloom. From the intersection we had only a short drive on Hwy 80 to reach the trailhead for Roaring Fork Falls, and later a quick run on over to Setrock Creek Falls. Roaring Fork Falls is truly one of my favorites as it is unique in the way it tumbles and cascades down the side of the mountain. It is steeper and higher than it appears in most photos, including the one below. The trail to each of the falls is ~0.5 miles and definitely easy enough to be accessible to many of a wide range of fitness levels. Setrock Creek Falls is located near the Black Mountain Campground which nestles next to the South Toe River. A point of interest there is the 5.5 mile Mt. Mitchell trail that leaves from the campground and switchbacks all the way up to summit of the highest mountain in the eastern US.

When Zach and I arrived at the base of Setrock Creek Falls we found a group of what many refer to as “cairns”, which are technically supposed to be rocks stacked in such a manner as to provide directional guidance and are usually found at a critical point along a trail. Here these rocks appeared to be only reflections of someone’s patience and imagination in the way they were artfully stacked in the middle of the creek. It was quite interesting to see how the “artist” was able to balance the rocks to make some interesting and unique formations. Although the sun was poorly positioned for photos, the falls were very pretty and we enjoyed some cool moments as we walked about on the stones in the creek and examined more closely the surprising handiwork we found.

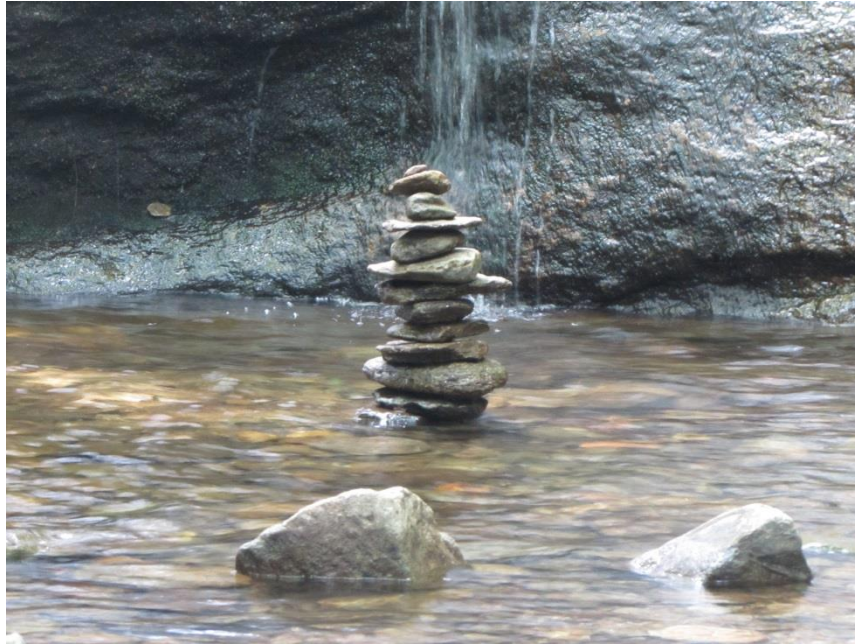




**Roaring Fork Falls off of Hwy 80 near the Busick community just west of the Blue Ridge Parkway.**







**A selection of the interesting rock sculptures (some would call them “cairns”) that we found at the base of Setrock Creek Falls.**

It had been great fun and it was sad to have to leave, but the time had come to head down the mountain. We had lots of time to chat about a number of different topics, but it seemed that eventually our conversations always wound up returning to the subject of baseball. Along with waterfalin’, baseball is definitely one of our common passions. This is especially true regarding a friend of Zach’s who is currently the ace of the Tampa Rays pitching staff. It just so happened that his friend Chris Archer was pitching for the Rays Saturday afternoon as we were traveling home. Normally we would have been in front of our TV set watching the game on MLB.TV, but since we were on the road we had to settle for Zach following the progress of the game on his Smartphone. Chris has done some remarkable things this year and was in the middle of an amazing streak when Saturday’s game began. Earlier in the season, he had pitched 26 consecutive innings without giving up an earned run. Now he was in the midst of a streak where he had pitched three consecutive games in which he struck out at least 11 in each game and had not walked a batter in any of those games. Saturday the streak ended when he finally walked a batter in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning. During this incredible 3 game stretch he pitched 23 innings, struck out 38 and had not walked a batter. He is the only pitcher in the recorded history of Major League Baseball to have performed such a feat. This is really exciting stuff for us. Chris pitched very well on Saturday, but ended with no decision, although the Rays eventually won the game. Look for Chris in the All Star game in July.

We had a great time, and I’m already looking forward to upcoming trips with others in the family and expect that there will hopefully be a next time when father and son can spend some really good quality time together.

Steve Temple [stephen.temple@grifols.com](mailto:stephen.temple@grifols.com)