

The Adventures of Team Butterball, Part II

April 20th – April 23rd 2017

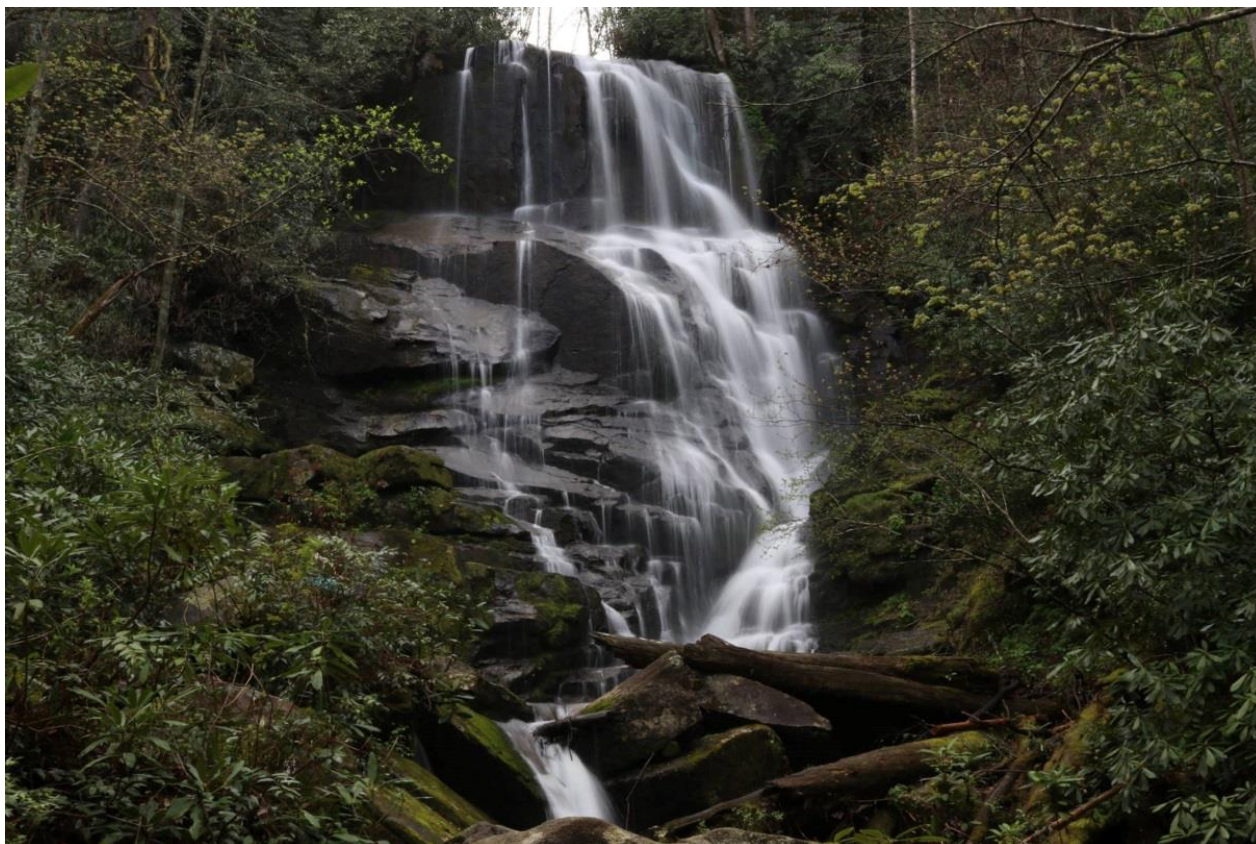
It's been six years now that this group has gotten together for a spring waterfall exploration trip and this one was perhaps the most meaningful to me. As the years have passed, I have been so impressed at the strength of the bonds of friendship exhibited by this core group. I don't believe that they are exclusive in their associations, but this annual trip has been centered around a pretty fixed group who have welcomed my wife and I, as well as others of our children and their spouses as they have been able, into their circle of friendship. After hiking with us on Friday morning, Rich Stevenson posted several photos of the beautiful waterfall we saw together and opened his comments with the following statement: *"I finally got to meet Steve Temple and family today!"* Although only half of the group he and Cindy hiked with this day was actual part of the Temple family, I think his comment speaks volumes regarding the relationships that have developed over the past six years through these excursions.

Aside from the spectacle of the waterfalls we saw over the course of the weekend, there were two main events that for me, and I believe the rest of Team Butterball, made this a particularly unique weekend. I was bitten by the waterfall bug a good many years ago and the two prime influences that helped nurture my "illness", were the amazing website of Rich Stevenson (<http://www.ncwaterfalls.com/>) and the wonderfully informative and entertaining books of Kevin Adams (the masterful 3rd edition of *North Carolina Waterfalls* was published in 2016; Kevin also has a very helpful website: http://www.kadamsphoto.com/north_carolina_waterfalls/). There were certainly others out there making contributions and sharing information, but these two guys, along with Bernie Boyer doing his behind the scenes exploratory work, are to me the big three that started, stoked the fire and lead the growing waterfaling "movement" of North Carolina. A couple of years ago, my son Zach and I had the privilege and pleasure of accompanying Bernie on a hike to the waterfall that bears his name. This weekend Team Butterball had a chance to meet both Rich and Kevin.

After traveling most of the day Thursday, with stops for lunch and visits to McGalliard Falls near Valdese and Eastatoe Falls near Rosman (see below), our little group of four finally arrived at the lovely cabin we had rented in Sapphire. Shortly thereafter, the van with its eight occupants pulled in and after we sorted out room assignments we headed out for supper. Four went one way, the other eight another. All seemed to be very satisfied with their meals and returned to the cabin and prepared for a very full day on Friday. I had been in communication with Rich about getting together and Thursday evening we decided that we would meet at the trailhead to Pinnacles Falls near Rocky Bottom, South Carolina at 10:00 Friday morning. All of Team BB seemed to be excited and primed for a day of adventure.



McGalliard Falls near Valdese (photo by Sean Luter)



Eastatoe Falls near Rosman (photo by Sean Luter)

Everyone was up and ready to leave out by 9:00 and we arrived at the designated spot at 9:50. After a short wait, Rich and his wife Cindy Lemon made their grand entrance and after a round of introductions, we headed off towards our destination. Although we have corresponded for years, Rich and I had never met and it was a thrill for me and all of Team BB to meet Rich and Cindy. Cindy is an accomplished photographer and outdoorswoman with several recently published hiking guides to her credit. My impression is that she has helped Rich to expand his horizons a bit and see that there is more to life than waterfalls as he has documented through his photo galleries, their travels to various places around these United States.

Rich's website has a tremendous amount of information on it and in recent years he has focused much attention to producing videos of many of the waterfalls he has visited. He has a gifted eye and brings to the viewer's eyes angles and details that we may not have noticed or focused our eyes upon as we have taken in the larger/wider view. His videos can be viewed at the links below and they are all wonderful, but I would specifically recommend his video of Sliding Rock on youtube.

<https://vimeo.com/waterfallrich/videos/page:1/sort:newest>

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=waterfallrich

Rich actually posted the first photos of Pinnacle Falls that I ever saw back in 2006, but had not approached the falls as we did on this day through all public land. A couple of years ago, Andy Kunkle and Jack Thyen, members of Team Waterfall, had published trip reports after using this approach (more or less), so on Friday we followed their revised route (they came out on an easier and shorter route than they went in) that Zach and I had followed back in 2015.



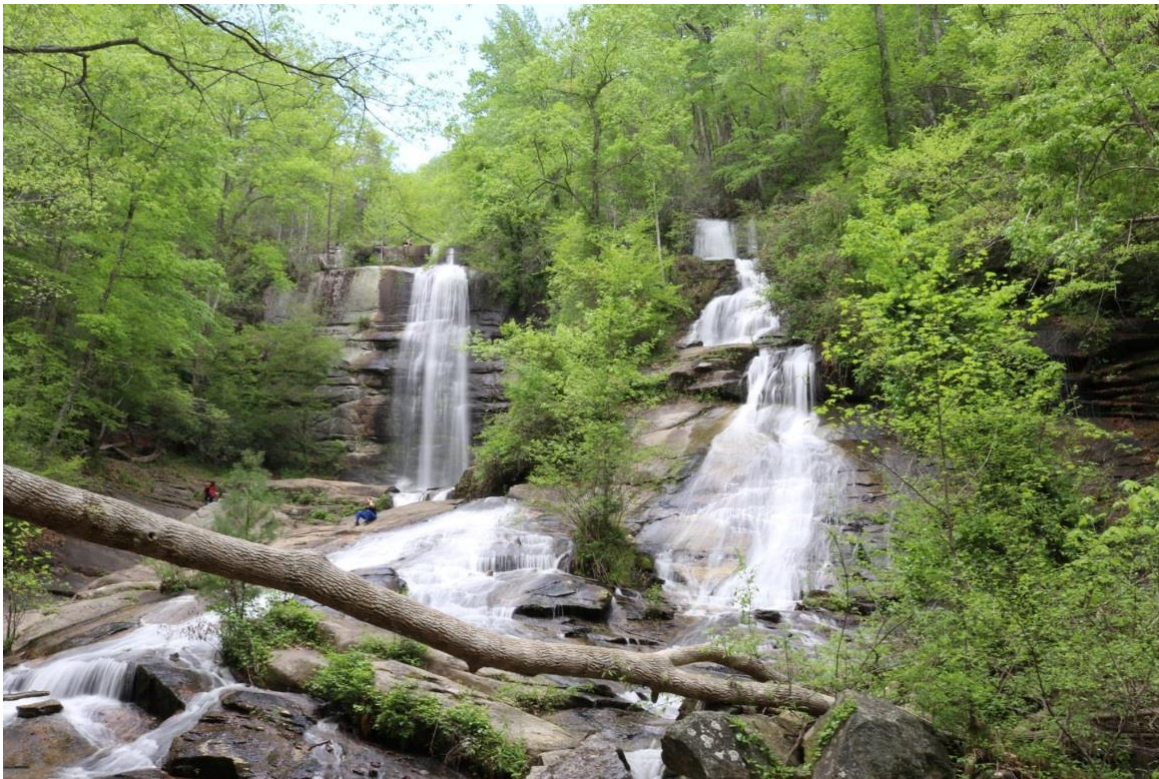
Cindy Lemon (right side) with the Lady Butterballers at Pinnacle Falls (photo by Beth Stewart)



Team Butterball w/ honorary members Rich Stevenson and Cindy Lemon on the far left (photo by Rich Stevenson)

As can be seen from the photos above, Upper Pinnacle Falls is truly a magnificent sight. There is a lower falls just downstream, but it is not as attractive and it is much more difficult to access. Perhaps another time. After enjoying this view for a good while, we made our way back to the vehicles and after a round of hugs and handshakes, parted ways with many fond memories in our hearts and hopes that someday we might meet again. Rich and Cindy pulled out the lunch they had packed and dug into some delicious looking wraps, while Team BB headed ultimately to Pickens, SC to see what we might find in the Pickens County county seat.

After lunch at the Coyote Coffee Café across from the old Pickens County Courthouse, we headed back north up US Hwy 178 towards North Carolina. Before reaching the state line, we turned left at Bob's Place onto Cleo Chapman Road and worked our way to the parking area for Twin Falls (otherwise known as Reedy Cove Falls). There is a short trail to the observation deck overlooking this spectacular double waterfall. Mimi and I had been here before, but it was the first time for the rest of the group. Upstate South Carolina does not have the number of waterfalls found in western North Carolina, but it does have a good number that are truly memorable.



Beautiful Twin Falls on Reedy Cove Creek (photo by Sean Luter)

There was still time left in the day to check one or two additional South Carolina waterfalls. We made our way back south to Hwy 11 and headed west to SC 130N and then west over to Hwy 107 and headed back south to Burrells Ford Road. This road runs westward to the Chatooga River where the trailheads are located for Spoonauger Falls and King Creek Falls. We had pretty much determined by the time we got there, that we would limit ourselves to one final hike for the day and after a bit of discussion, we decided based on the photos in the guidebook (*Waterfall Hikes of Upstate South Carolina* by Thomas E. King) we decided that King Creek would be our target. I think this turned out to be a good decision. Not to knock Spoonauger Falls, but King Creek Falls is a real beauty as can be seen below.



King Creek Falls in South Carolina (photo by Beth Stewart)

After cruising back up Hwy 107 to Cashiers following our final hike of the day, we again split up for supper and then met back at the cabin. Arrangements had been made with Kevin for him to meet us at our cabin at 9:00 on Saturday morning. We would then proceed to check out Rock House Falls on Burlingame Creek, which was just a short distance back down Upper Whitewater Road from our cabin. This was one waterfall that Kevin had not visited up to this point because it is on private property in the Burlingame community. As our guest, he felt welcome to check it out and everyone was pumped to get a chance to hike with KA.

Two additional TB members had arrived late Friday night and even with the additional headcount, everyone was ready when Kevin arrived. After taking a few minutes to introduce him to Team Butterball, we moved on to the trailhead for the falls. The trail forks before crossing Burlingame Creek. The right fork leads to the creek at the very top of this very tall waterfall. It is an impressive view and provides an interesting perspective.



View from top of Rock House Falls (Photo by Crystal Smith)

The left fork takes the hiker to the creek crossing above the falls and then the trail winds its way down to the “Rock House” (hence the name of the falls) which is adjacent to the upper portion of the falls.



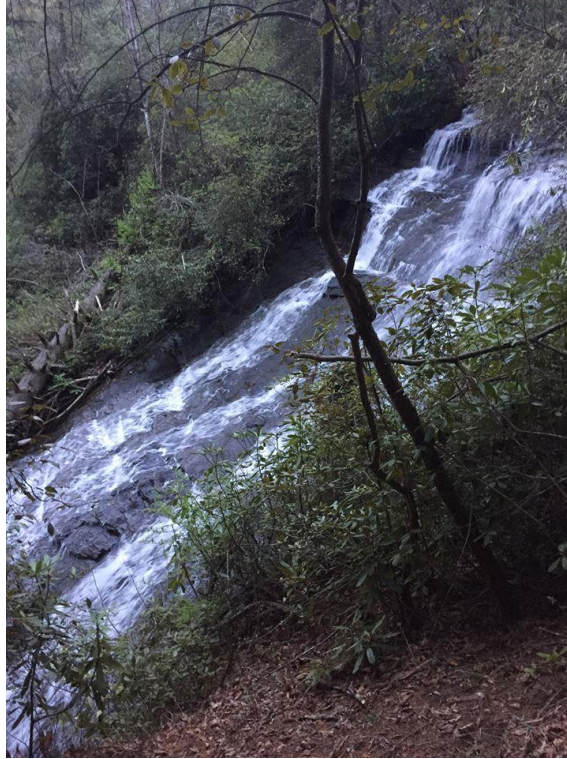
Members of TB crossing Burlingame Creek (Photo by Beth Stewart)



The TB men posing under the massive “rock house” overhang (Photo by Crystal Smith)

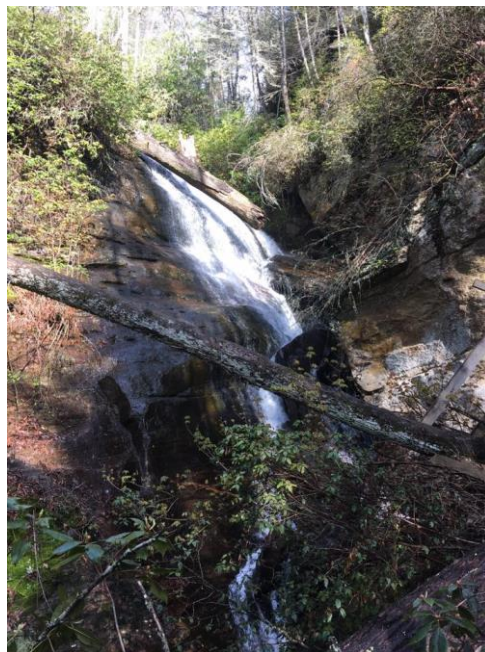


Team Butterball w/ honorary member Kevin Adams (Photo by Sean Luter)



Upper drop of Rock House Falls (Photo by Steve Temple)

From this point the trail rises up for a short distance and then begins to wind its way down to the base of the falls. Based on my previous investigation of this waterfall, I knew that the viewing area at the base of the falls was limited and would require some shifting about of bodies as we jockeyed for a decent view of the lower falls. Arriving at that point, we found that one large tree and another smaller one had fallen across the creek, the larger one having crushed the railing at the small viewing area and obstructing an already limited and restricted view of the lower part of the falls.



Fallen trees at the lower “viewing area” for Rock House Falls (Photo by Beth Stewart)

So we made our way back up the trail to where we had parked, prepared to move on to our next destinations. Kevin had other projects to work on in the area and Team Butterball planned to head west toward Highlands. We were saying our goodbyes, when suddenly Kevin was accosted by some of his admirers. Fortunately he appeared to have escaped unscathed. All of us enjoyed tremendously the short time that we had on this day to spend with KA.



(Photo by Beth Stewart)

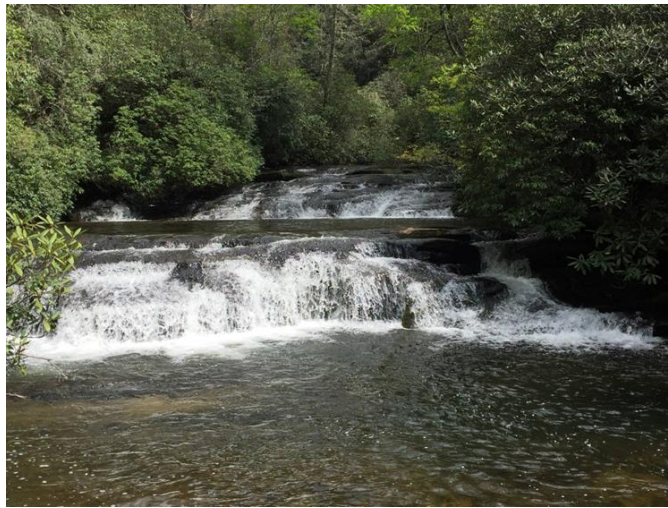
There was actually one more brief detour to take before caravanning on towards Highlands. A short distance down the road, just after crossing Horsepasture River, is Miller Falls Park. A trail from the parking lot passes through the recreation area and heads downstream along the river a short distance to a view of pretty Miller Falls. This waterfall is not very tall (~15 feet), but it is wide and scenic. The group seemed to really enjoy climbing around on the rocks below the falls, taking lots of group photos and marveling at the impressive houses along the river that enjoy what I'm sure are fabulous unobstructed views of the river and the falls.



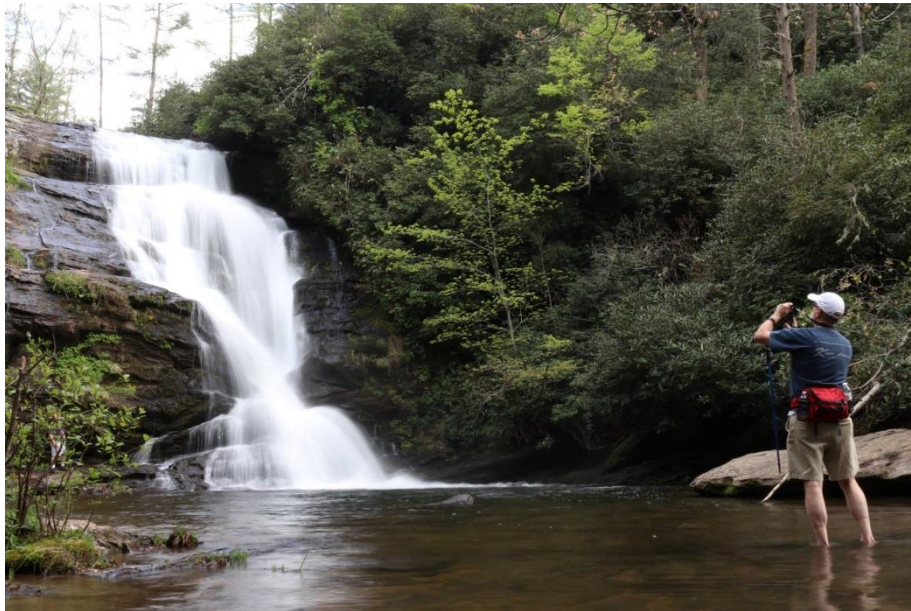
Miller Falls on Horsepasture River (Photo by Beth Stewart)

Since time had crept up on us a bit, the decision was made to head directly to Highlands, eat a tasty lunch, cruise the shops on Main Street, and then make Secret Falls the target of our main afternoon activity. They managed to get us all seated together in the Wild Thyme Café and we had a delicious meal in a cozy setting. Time was allotted for browsing the shops before moving on to our next adventure.

The trailhead for the hike to Secret Falls is just off of Walkingstick Road, which is just off of Horse Cove Road, which descends southeastward out of Highlands. This is a beautiful drive as the road passes by Chattooga Cliffs on the way towards the well know Chattooga River which acts as the border between South Carolina and Georgia. There is a very nice waterfall named Walkingstick Falls that we passed on the way to the trailhead. We stopped for a somewhat obstructed roadside view as we were heading back out, but since it is on private property we made no attempt to get any closer. The hike to Secret Falls is pretty straightforward with enough change in elevation to provide a good workout for most of the group. The falls themselves are quite beautiful and there is actually a nice set of cascades just above the falls, and a short set of falls downstream of the plunge pool where Big Creek takes a 90° turn to the left on its way down the mountain. The group really enjoyed their time here with many wading sans shoes in the pool at the base of the falls.



Attractive cascades just above Secret Falls on Big Creek (Photo by Steve Temple)



The classic beauty of Secret Falls (Photo by Sean Luter)



Members of TB enjoying the cool water at the base of Secret Falls (Photo by Steve Temple)

The time came to head back toward Cashiers and the plan had been to take Horse Cove Road down to Whiteside Cove Road where we would turn and head east back toward Hwy 107 and up to Cashiers from there. This route would carry us below the massive south facing cliffs of Whiteside Mountain and we would also pass by the Crimshawes Post Office which was at one time purported to be the smallest in the USA. Several years ago Randolph Shaffner took us on a historical tour of Whiteside Mountain. We looked down into the valley below and he pointed to where this tiny little Post Office stood. This was another fruitful day of exploration and we were ready for the Chicken Pot Casserole waiting to be prepared back at the cabin.



The old Crimshawes Post Office in Whiteside Cove (Photo by Crystal Smith)

Supper was delicious and most of the group headed outside to the fire pit after cleanup was finished. They had a good fire burning and were enjoying a time of relaxation and fellowship when the rain finally came. We knew that it was supposed to be on the way, but were a bit disappointed that it didn't hold off a little while longer. I don't think it stopped raining at all through the night and all through the day on Sunday as we headed, with one significant detour, back to our homes in the Raleigh area.



Members of TB gathered around the cozy fire pit before the rain came (Photo by Beth Stewart)

Sunday morning had everyone up and preparing to be out of the cabin by 10:00. It really didn't seem to be a rush – we probably fixed the biggest breakfast of the weekend, trying to use up as much of the remaining food as we could. With a lot of chit chat and perhaps more in depth conversation taking place in the living room area, everyone worked together to clean up the kitchen, get all the linens heaped up in front of the laundry area, and double bagging all the trash that had been generated. All this was placed in the larger containers downstairs, while heeding the oft repeated instructions not to place trash outside where the local bears would likely help themselves to whatever goodies they could find. Everything was packed up and the caravan was ready to go by 10:00.

Our final goal and destination as a group was to eat lunch at one of our very favorite culinary venues – Pisgah Inn on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Although the rain was steady all along the way, it was still a beautiful drive through the lush green forested mountains, along Davidson River and then Looking Glass Creek as we headed up to the Parkway. Not surprisingly, Looking Glass Falls was really gushing as we passed by, as was Sliding Rock – that would have been a pretty wild slide I'm sure. A couple of miles before reaching the Parkway, we hit the cloud ceiling and could see little of the spectacular scenery that one typically sees along this stretch of road. We arrived at the Inn in time for an early lunch and the weather really seemed to have impacted the number of people there. Once our group entered the restaurant, we were seated almost immediately. This has rarely if ever occurred in my experience (I would need more fingers and toes to count the times) of visiting this marvelous place and it was almost as if we had the place all to ourselves. Looking out through the south facing windows that usually provide splendid views of the Blue Ridge off in the distance, nothing could be seen. Nevertheless, Team Butterball was together and lunch was savored, followed by desserts which are typically passed around so that everyone so inclined has an opportunity to sample a wide range of sweet delights. Although we were all headed in the same direction, we essentially split up here and each of the three vehicles was free to travel at their own pace, unhindered by the plodding of their leader/guide who had been in the lead for most of the weekend.

Over the years, there have been a good number of solitary trips (usually accompanied by our faithful dog Siggy until he passed away) made to explore and enjoy many various waterfalls, almost always following the directions of Kevin, Rich or Bernie. In many instances these exploratory trips were targeted to identify suitable excursions for future trips with family and friends – such as what we did this past weekend. The falls can most certainly be enjoyed by the solitary hiker, but to me there are few things quite so satisfying as sharing something so wonderful as a waterfall with people who are near and dear to my heart. The gentlemen mentioned above, have spent countless hours scrambling, bushwacking and wading, in many cases alone or perhaps with a friend or two to help them in their searches, each pulling together volumes of information detailing what they have found. They have a passion for sharing that information so that others can see, experience and enjoy much of what they have “discovered”. What a treasure they are and have been for those of us who share their love for these beautiful natural wonders.

I recently purchased a book that details the remarkable discovery, within the past two decades, of almost 200 previously unnamed or unknown waterfalls in Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone is a huge park, roughly equivalent in area to the eight counties in southwest North Carolina (Transylvania, Jackson, Haywood, Macon, Swain, Henderson, Graham, and Polk) where the bulk of our waterfalls are found. The authors of that book have identified ~250 waterfalls in total within the park. In contrast, there are certainly well over 1000 waterfalls in roughly the same sized area in these counties of western North Carolina. This is really quite an astounding number and hundreds of these have been identified in roughly the same recent timeframe as those of Yellowstone. Others continue to be found that have not been previously documented as exploration has intensified in response to the information that has been provided by those pioneers previously referenced above. These mountains are unique with regard to the number of waterfalls found within them in this place that God has blessed so richly – so abundant are they in some places, that Transylvania County’s official moniker is “The Land of Waterfalls” <http://www.visitwaterfalls.com/>. No more apt description could possibly be found.



This weekend honorary membership to Team Butterball was solemnly conferred upon Cindy Lemon, Rich Stevenson, and Kevin Adams – each receiving an “official” certificate. (Photo by Cindy Lemon)

I was twice asked during this trip, why Team Butterball? As Team Waterfall came into being a few years ago and certain of the members of that group posted photos and reports of many of their explorations, discoveries, and various escapades, I so much appreciated their willingness to share. I knew however, that I wasn’t in condition to participate in many of the outings that seemed to be reported on an ongoing basis no matter the

season. As we continued our annual treks, I was aware that I had some definite limitations as did some of the others in our group as well. We were still able to see many grand visions and there was great enthusiasm and comradery among us, but we were probably not what you would call a lean mean fighting machine. I will say that we have done things and been to places on these trips that many others would struggle with and we can be proud of ourselves for the efforts put forth – this is no bunch of wusses. Most, but not all of us, probably carry an extra pound or two around with us everywhere we go and as I have mentioned previously, there is a deep appreciate amongst many of our members for fine cuisine, whether it be a yummy cheese dip or spicy salsa in which to dip the chips, a sumptuous entre, or a meal topped off by a luscious dessert. Team Butterball popped into my head late one evening shortly after last year's excursion and it seemed appropriate as a term of affection and endearment for a wonderful collection of loving Christian brothers and sisters who share many common passions. I was comfortable with this appellation and hoped that none of the others would take offence.

It is a great joy and privilege for me to be able to share such incredible beauty with my family and with friends who also clearly delight in seeing, hearing and, in many cases, feeling these exquisite gems.