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Susan Ann “Butch” Henley

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Susan Ann “Butch” Henley, born to Russell Holmes Sheldon and Marion J. Sherrick Sheldon, November 25, 1932 in Dunkirk, Ohio, Susie moved to Washington DC at age 18 to work for the FBI.

Seeking a horse to ride, she met her husband the late Vincent Eslett Henley at Rock Creek Riding Stables and they settled in Northern Virginia. While always working full-time with Data Mail, together they reared four children, five horses, many cats and several dogs. Their offspring are Julie Whittaker (Mitchell) of Mocksville, NC; Russell Henley (Nick) of Northern Virginia; Shelly Schade, (Phill) of Marshall, Virginia; and Timothy Hen-ley (Beth) of Fayetteville, NC. Family also includes four grandchildren and one great grandchild, Marshall Whittaker, Suzy Schade with son Gage, Molly Whittaker and Megan Whittaker.

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Susan “Butch” Henley became a Girl Scout Leader in 1961, sharing her love of the out-of- doors with Girl and Boy Scouts while train- ing their leaders in camp skills. In addition, she volunteered for the American Red Cross, teaching canoe, kayak and water safety skills. She was a long-time resident and volunteer of the Bull Run Mountain Community in Hay- market, Va. Her children reared, she pursued her dream to backpack the Appalachian Trail.

In 1978, at the age of 46, “Butch” completed the 2,180 mile AT, hiking from Georgia to Maine a feat taking 9 months to accomplish. Upon her return, she read an announcement in Backpacker Magazine about Hik-a-Nation, an effort developed by the .

<http://hikanation.com/> The 4,147 mile trek from the Pacific to the Atlantic took 13 months, April 1980 thru May 1981 to walk, started with over 100 hik- ers and finished with 35, Butch among them.

Still adventurous, but with worn out knees, in 1985, Butch took up bicycling with some trail friends and rode from Washington State to Florida. She would joke everything was fine until she fell off, then using the bike for support she walked until meeting someone to help her back onto the bike. Never idle, Butch began swimming competitively with the Virginia Master’s Swim Team of U.S. Master’s Swimming, keeping her physically and socially active through 2011.

After serving on the Board of the American Hiking Society, Butch became the Adminis- trative Director of AHS, and ended her career working for the American Discovery Trail Society in 2009. In these capacities, she of- ten visited the halls of Congress to lobby for trails throughout the USA, increasing fund- ing 10 fold over 10 years. Eventually most of the Hik-A-Nation route developed into a national trail now known as The American Discovery Trail. These efforts earned her nu- merous awards, including the establishment of one in her name by the AHS honoring dedicated trails professionals, and the ADT’s Happy Feet Award.

Life celebrations will take place across the Nation reconnecting her with loved ones along the trails of her adventures in many of the places she loved. Hikers and trail lovers may celebrate her life on June 7, National Trails Day. Donations in her honor may go to an effort of the donor’s choice regarding research and support of those with brain disease, any effort related trail development or maintenance, Scouting or Hospice and Palliative Care. Eaton’s Funeral Service of Mocksville, NC facilitates the final necessities.



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The American Discovery Trail Society- <http://www.discoverytrail.org/>

The American Hiking Society- <https://www.americanhiking.org/join-donate/donate/>

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy- <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/donate/more-ways-to-donate/tribute-gifts>

The Lewy Body Dementia Association- <http://www.lbda.org/go/donate>
Duke University's <https://www.gifts.duke.edu/daa?designations=Bryan+Alzheimer%27s+Disease+Research+Center+Hospice+and+Palliative+Care+Center> <http://www.hospicecarecenter.org>

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