

## News from the Library



On Tuesday, March 21, Mr. Clifford Smith and Mr. Ernest Rousch, both Navy veterans from the Armed Forces Retirement Home, came to speak to our fifth grade classes in a presentation entitled “Appalachian Spring.” First, Mr. Smith gave a geological overview of the Appalachian Mountains and then Mr. Rousch talked about his experiences in the Appalachians. Although Mr. Rousch’s son and grandson hiked the entire Appalachian Trail; Mr. Rousch knows portions of the Trail from a Christian camp where he worked for many summers. We were able to identify and discuss several critical supplies for hikers, including: water, food, a compass, good hiking shoes & socks, a whistle, shelter, first aid and insect repellants. While traveling on the

Appalachian Trail, most hikers encounter small towns about every two weeks where they can stock up on provisions. Many townspeople are very kind and generous and welcome the hikers as guests in their homes. Mail from home and replacement hiking shoes can often be forwarded along the way until it reaches the right hiker.

One experience that Mr. Rousch shared with us is one that campers and hikers enjoy in nature far away from bright city lights. This experience he called the “million stars in the night sky” phenomena. That is the moment when a viewer recognizes that God has placed all those magnificent, scintillating stars in the sky above and knows each and every one of them just as he knows each and every one of us. Part of the appeal of spending time in nature is that it strips away the distractions of our hectic modern life to reveal the undeniable presence of God’s majesty.

We can’t begin to thank Mr. Smith & Mr. Rousch enough for all their presentations and volunteer time this year. Their presence has been an exciting adjunct for our studies and we can’t wait to design next year’s speaking schedule. Anyone with an exciting area of interest or a passion for some subject who would like to share with our students please contact Ms. Connie in our library at [cfavret@stjamesgulford.com](mailto:cfavret@stjamesgulford.com)

We certainly want to thank Mr. Edward Farrell, a United States Marine Corp veteran from the Armed Forces Retirement Home, for visiting our library on Tuesday, April 25. Mr. Farrell, also a former 5<sup>th</sup> grade Catholic school teacher and Scoutmaster, shared exciting information with our fourth grade classes in a presentation titled “Appalachian Reprise.” Mr. Farrell hiked the entire Appalachian Trail twice; first in 1985 and the second time in 1996. He explained that the Appalachian Trail is over 2,000 miles long and passes through 14 of our American States. Hikers attempting the entire journey begin on April 1<sup>st</sup> each year so that they may complete it by October 16. The Appalachian Trail is the longest “hiking-only” footpath in the world and about 3 million people hike some part of it each year.



Mr. Farrell said that there are many unique customs and a specialized vocabulary surrounding the Appalachian Trail. One custom is that each hiker that completes the Appalachian Trail receives a nickname and Mr. Farrell’s is “Lazy Bones.” Our students learned what they need to take along should they ever hike the Appalachian Trail and what to expect along the way. Beginning with a typical backpack, weighing between 50 and 65 pounds, hikers carry about 10 days of food and stop at “Trail towns” along the way to replenish their supplies. Mr. Farrell told us that “GORP” is one of the most important foods to travel with. GORP stands for “good old peanuts & raisins.” He showed us a part of a Trail tarp which is used to make an “Adirondack Shelter” or “lean to” for sleeping. He said hikers can encounter deer, porcupines, snakes and many more of God’s creatures. Mr. Farrell explained that “Trail Magic” is a completely unexpected event that happens while walking in nature and that “Trail Angels” refer to townspeople along the way that like to care for “their” hikers. These town folk often generously provide meals and places to stay when the challenges of living out-of-doors becomes difficult. Hikers also shoulder responsibility for other hikers that travel ahead of them. If a hiker becomes injured or lost or has a need for some supply, the hiker coming up behind them is expected to stop and assist. Wouldn’t life be grand if we all adopted the same courtesy and had the privilege of caring for those that come before us?