



## The Big Bear

Have you ever wondered where the Mischa Mokwa Adventure Trail came from? I have hiked this trail many times under many conditions and when you hike it you definitely get some time to think. Usually when I get back home I drop my thoughts but getting ready for this month's hike, I dug deeper. From the Dictionary of Wisconsin History I found that the trail name means great bear. What an appropriate name for the trail as it is a bear to hike.

### **Term: Misha Mokwa [origin of place name]**

**Definition:** Means- great bear- The word is used to designate a bear of extraordinary size- the patriarch, as it were, of all bears. (v.) Muck-wah= bear- mi-chi-muck-wah= big bear (w.)

[Source: Card file at the WHS Library reference desk]

But Wisconsin history only told me so much so I dug deeper still. Why would a trail in Kentucky and Virginia have a link to Wisconsin? I found my answer in the Middlesboro Daily News in an article by Bill Martin from February 26, 1965. Bill tells the story of Art Smith, Scoutmaster of Explorer Post 32 in Middlesboro, Kentucky. It appears the trail had always been there but there was no interest in maintaining or developing it until 1959 when the park opened. In 1965 the job of restoring the trail was given to the Jobs Corps. Rangers Gordon Clifton and Lloyd Abelson were associate advisors to Explorer Post 32 and Park Superintendent William Luckett was a committeeman of the post. Scoutmaster Smith was looking for a project to interest young boys in scouting and a way to provide funds for training these future leaders. By establishing an Official Boy Scout Adventure Trail and developing a standard to earn a patch, funds could be raised. At that time patches costs \$0.75 and medals sold for \$2.50. Wholesale cost was \$0.53 for patches and \$2.06 for medals. Today's patch is around \$8.00. Profits went to an educational trust fund. In that summer of 1965 Mike Cummings was a 15-year old patrol leader in Troop 32 and was the first Middlesboro Boy Scout to receive funds. He used the funds to attend a two week junior leadership training course at the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, NM. The trip cost \$155.

A little bit more about the trail. The news article showed a map and described it as a 21 mile route beginning in the campground and progresses to the Table Rock, Goose Nest, Indian Rock, Hensley's Settlement, Martin's Fork, Chadwell's Gap, Sand Cave, White Rocks and ending at Ewing, VA. They considered the big advantage for the trail over other trails was that it did not cross a highway.

The name Mischa Mokwa is carried over from the old Middlesboro Mischa Mokwa Order of the Arrow Lodge in the 1950s. The bear is the symbol of national parks; the shield is the shape of the ranger's badge. The pinnacle is also on the patch. Today we proudly wear that patch over our right shirt pocket.

In 1965 there were a few rules to follow. Here are the **Ten Rules for the Trail:**

- Rules of the National Park must be observed
- Each unit must be accompanied by adult leaders
- Follow all campground rules
- All units in uniform
- Hikers must be a registered member of the explorers or boy scouts
- All units should carry first aid and snake bit kits
- Do not leave the trail once you have started
- Carry all your food if you plan overnight
- Water can be obtained from springs at Martin's Fork, you should have purifying tablets
- Be courteous, kind, and clean

Hikers must sign in at Table Rock, Goose Nest, Indian Rock, Martin's Fork, Chadwell's Gap, Sand Cave, White Rocks, and register at the museum before receiving trail emblems. Beginning in 1966 the trail will be open from May 10 through October 31.

Of course the trail is now open year round and we have hiked in late November; but I do not want to tackle a January hike. By the way, opening day for the "Great Bear" was June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1965. They expected 1,000 scouts to attend. This month when we hike the trail, we will think of those that came before us.

See you on the trail,

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