

# Stories from the open trail

Lighthearted memoirs from an Appalachian hike entertains and provides an insight into the many joys and challenges of the trail

By James Isaac

For some, the Appalachian Trail – a scenic hiking trail in the eastern U.S. that stretches from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine, spanning 14 states – might conjure up images of Lewis Medlock leading an ill-equipped group of city-slickers into the backwards backwoods of America and arguably the most bizarre and torturous time of their lives.

For others, less inclined to the sway of popular media and its many incarnations, the A.T. represents everything that America has stood for through centuries – rugged beauty, strength and unhindered freedom.

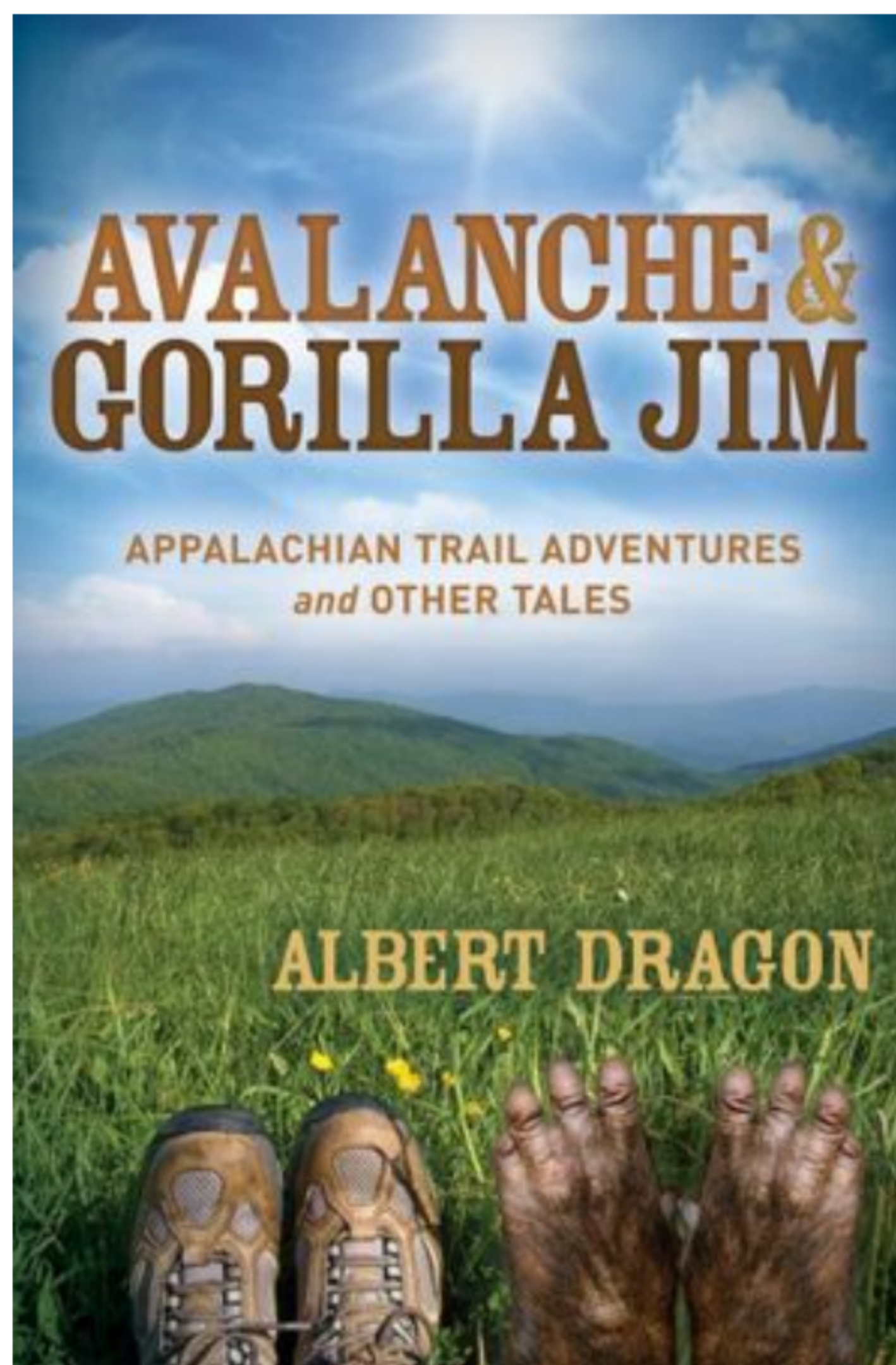
And for some, like semi-retired Philadelphia lawyer and author, Albert Dragon, the A.T. also signified a lifelong dream – to hike the trail from start to finish.

## Tales and adventures

If you've ever wondered what it might be like to hike the A.T., or any other trail through vast wilderness, Dragon's book titled 'Avalanche & Gorilla Jim: Appalachian Trail Adventures and Other Tales' might be worth adding to your list of reads.

The book takes the reader along on the journey with Dragon (Avalanche) and his friend and U.S. Army Veteran Carl James Saxton (Gorilla Jim) as they navigate the Trail, enjoying some of the most breathtaking views in the country, and enduring the many of the challenges faced along the way, like the heat of the day, the chill of the evening, bugs, a shortage of water, poison ivy and bears.

Dragon, who hiked the Trail in increments, at different times during a six-year period from 2002 to 2007, also entertains with tales of some of the region's most notorious murders, a time during his hike when he was rescued from a snowstorm in Tennessee, encounters with rattlesnakes, and more.



Dragon who was inspired to hike the A.T. and write the book after reading Bill Bryson's classic 'A Walk in the Woods', also tells many tales of kindness – acts by locals, complete strangers to Dragon and Saxton in the backwoods of America, that helped the pair remain healthy and able-bodied as they made their way through the 15-state hike.

The book is lighthearted, meant to be enjoyed as a humorous and honest memoir, rather than a hiking guide, and may just be perfect for a relaxing read during some down time on your next camping trip.

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***This year Al Dragon celebrates 50 years of being a Philadelphia lawyer. He handled catastrophic injury cases with his own firm of A Dragon Associates, and with the firms of Litvin, Blumberg, Matusow and Young, and Kline & Spector. Al is presently of counsel to the McEldrew Law firm. When he is not in the backwoods, Al lives in Cherry Hill and Brigantine, New Jersey with his wife Barbara and Winston, their Standard Poodle mix dog. The author's website is <http://albertdragon.com/>***

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