

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

10-9-2018

GWU Photojournalism Alumna Pursues Dream of Hiking Appalachian Trail

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

GWU Photojournalism Alumna Pursues Dream of Hiking Appalachian Trail

 webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/eiryn-reynolds-hikes-appalachian-trail-gardner-webb-newscenter/

Office of University
Communications

October 9, 2018

Eiryn Reynolds '17 Faced Challenges and Persevered to Finish Her Goal

After graduating from Gardner-Webb University in 2017, Eiryn Reynolds worked and saved up money for an

Eiryn Reynolds

adventure she had dreamed about for years. A photojournalism major, Reynolds wanted to hike the 2,190.9 miles of the Appalachian Trail before committing to a full-time job.

Being on the trail would also give her a chance to practice her photography skills. “This entire trip was truly a photographer’s dream,” Reynolds shared. “I chose photojournalism, because I have always been extremely passionate about the outdoors and traveling. Photojournalism was the perfect way to combine these two loves.”

She also found that having a photographer’s perspective helped her take notice of things on the trail missed by others. “There would be moments I would be taken aback by a simple scene because I saw it in a photographic perspective,” Reynolds explained.

Despite all the gorgeous views she and her hiking partner experienced, there were also numerous challenges. “In every town we came through, all of the locals would tell us that we had the worst weather they had seen in years,” Reynolds described. “We hiked through record lows, record highs, and record amounts of rainfall.”

About three months into the hike, they began to feel defeated and ready to quit. They shared their struggles with a hiker and followed his advice to take time off the trail and drop some pack weight. The two returned four days later, energized and ready to pick up where they left off. They hiked an average of 17 to 20 miles a day, completing the 2,190.9-mile journey in seven months.

The final ascent to Mt. Katahdin in Maine was the best day on the trail for Reynolds. “The previous night, we had camped out with a group of hikers, all from North Carolina, that we had become very close to. We all woke up early to start our ascent, and you could feel the excitement from each person,” she remembered.

Katahdin

As they climbed, they were joined by other hikers. Usually, the faster hikers pass, but on this day, they all stayed in a line holding the pace of the person in front. “As we got to the infamous Katahdin sign, we passed one-by-one so everyone had a chance to touch the sign before the true celebration happened,” Reynolds said. “It was an unspoken moment between everyone that we were going to finish this together. Thinking about that incredible experience still makes me tear up.”

Since returning home to Wilkesboro, N.C., Reynolds works as a freelance photographer. She has pondered the lessons from spending several months in near solitude. “There are so many things I learned about myself while on trail, but the most important thing I learned is that I am capable of so much more than I imagined I could be,” she assessed. “I have a confidence that I didn’t previously have. I would have originally been nervous and timid, but now I have the mindset of ‘I was able to accomplish the Appalachian Trail, I can do this and I can adapt and learn.’”