THE POPULARITY OF BLACKETT'S RIDGE TRAIL

Along came a route, called Blackett Ridge by Pete Cowgill and Eber Glendening in their book Santa Catalina Mountains, which was written in 1975. This route was created around 1937 by Don Everett, faculty member of the Southern Arizona School for Boys, and his students. It was named after student, Hill Blackett, Jr. Originally a rock cairn marked the right turn off the Phoneline Trail; we now have a U.S. Forest Service trail marker reading Blackett's Ridge Trail.

Over the years came random SAHC hikes, planned by various guides and enjoyed by various enthusiastic and energetic hikers. By the early 1990s Blackett's Ridge still remained merely a route. During the 90's Jeff Brucker led early morning workout hikes on various mountain trails, which periodically included Blackett's.

The birth of the Tuesday morning workout hike, Blackett's Ridge Morning Motivator, was delivered on May 23, 2000 by Carolyn Reynolds-Stewart leading Ron Stirling and Claudia Weaver. Word spread quickly. The next week, 10 hikers were gallantly summitting Blackett's and the ritual began.

Wake-up at Blackett's Ridge

During 2000 Carolyn and Petra Gronenberg shared the guiding responsibilities leading a regular crew of between 12 to 20 hikers. In late spring 2001 Ralf Deason joined the leader family, as did Paul Cook.

Blackett's Sunrise

In 2002 Ralf organized a rotating schedule which included Claudia, Paul, Donald McGraw, and Tim Kavaney. Mighty leader Ralf passed the baton to Claudia and resigned as Blackett's guide in the fall of 2006, temporarily as it would turn out. Gary Mason was recruited as a rotating guide joining Claudia, Donald and Paul. In 2007, when Paul Cook called it quits, Ralf came to the rescue and rejoined the rotation, where it stands today – available for the faithful and the casually interested.

The Tuesday morning Blackett's is designed as a workout and encourages a competitive spirit. Personal best times are a regular topic of conversation. Many hikers have used it as training for other strenuous hikes: Roger Carter as he prepared to hike Kilimanjaro; Jeff Brucker as he trained for 24 hour orienteering events; various competitors built stamina and speed as they prepared for the President's Day race up Mt. Wrightson.

Along with the competitiveness, come other important by-products – like health and fitness and a proud sense of achievement. After all, how many Tucsonans (outside the SAHC, of course) can say that they can climb 1700' to the top of Blackett's Ridge in under an hour? Or climb to the top, period?

But Blackett's is not just for the wild and aggressive hikers. Erika Hartz leads an early Monday hike, Blackett's Monday Morning, which encourages more socializing and a more comfortable pace based on each individual hiker's daily goal.

Hikers travel up the Blackett's Ridge Trail every day of the week at various times as their schedule permits. The greatness of Blackett's includes its closeness to town – the drive is minimum and after an invigorating morning hike, the rest of the day awaits you; its beauty – the view of Tucson, Sabino Canyon, Bear Canyon from 4400' is inspiring; its variety – distant snow-topped mountains in the winter, flowers in the spring, fuzzy ocotillo and green galore during the monsoon, and always numerous critters including, but not limited to, bunnies, deer, snakes, and many, many friendly hikers.

Doug Kruetz has increased the popularity of Blackett's with his numerous glowing articles in the Arizona Daily Star. Canyon Ranch regularly leads hikes, too. Hope to see you all there some time soon!

Claudia Weaver

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