

## **Duffy, the Mountain-Climbing Airedale**

By Joyce Miller

*In 2003, eight people qualified for the Appalachian Mountain Club's White Mountains 4000 Footer Club, bringing the total members since 1957 to 7,360 members. Figures for 2004 are not yet available, but we know one man and one dog that made the list. That dog is an Airedale who will be inducted into this prestigious club next March at the club's annual meeting and dinner.*



*Duffy lives in Maine with Ed Boon. Ed has been climbing mountains since he was 13 or 14 years old. He has climbed mountains in the United States and in Europe, climbing mountains of 10,000 feet in the Alps. He has climbed with a half-cocker, a West Highland Terrier, and a miniature poodle. But he had always wanted an Airedale*

When Ed and Karen moved to Maine, they contacted New England Airedale Rescue. Duffy was about four years old when Ed adopted him, and he had never been out of his back yard. On his first hike, he was bewildered by having to cross a stream. But, as Ed says, "He's an Airedale: he figured it out."

To qualify as a member of the White Mountains 4000 Footer Club, a hiker (human or dog) must climb 48 mountains on foot to the summit and down. Ed is a pastor in Maine, so he only had Saturdays to devote to climbing; therefore, it took Ed and Duffy two and a half years to climb all 48. The mountains ranged from Mt. Tecumseh (4,003 feet), to Mt. Washington (6,288 feet), one of the most dangerous mountains in North America.

Ed and Duffy have climbed Mt. Washington six times, using six different trails. Mt. Washington has some of the most unpredictable weather in the United States. Snow can fall in any month; precipitation averages between seven and ten inches a month, the average annual temperature at the summit is around 26 degrees F, and hurricane force winds occur about every third day. The world's highest recorded wind speed, 231 MPH, was recorded on the summit of Mt. Washington. Because temperatures at the base and at the summit differ so drastically, hypothermia is a serious risk, and improperly prepared people can die within minutes, even in the summer.

In July, Ed and Duffy tackled Mt Washington's Huntington Ravine Trail, which crosses the largest and most impressive feature on the east side of the mountain. With a 1500-foot head wall, it is the most difficult hiking trail in New Hampshire. Since 1931, 21 people have died climbing this trail, including one person in 2004.

Everyone said that no dog could climb the Huntington Ravine trail, but no one told Duffy. A guide from the Sierra Mountain Club, who happened to accompany Ed and Duffy up this trail, said, "That's the gutsiest dog I've ever seen." Duffy sailed over 60 degree rock slabs that are

tough for people, and climbed up between huge boulders, pulling his way up with his back against one side and his feet on the other.

On Mt. Willey (4,300 feet), Duffy and Ed encountered one of the steepest climbs in the White Mountains, a climb that takes the hiker up about 1,600 feet in less than a mile. The trail is so steep in places that ladders have been built. Duffy had never climbed a ladder, but he gamely climbed ladders and diagonal steps across the face of the mountain.

This past summer, Ed and Duffy climbed 26 of the forty-eight 4,000-footer mountains. They started in early May while snow was on the ground and finished on July 17, when they climbed Mt. Isolation, a hike of 14.6 miles that includes a lot of difficult stream crossings, muddy trails that hikers slip and slide on, and no views until you get to the summit.



Duffy is such an accomplished mountain climber that he knows better than to follow Ed everywhere. For example, while climbing Mt. Lincoln, Ed slipped and fell down a waterfall, a 70 degree fall. Fortunately, Ed missed the boulders at the bottom and had a relatively soft landing. Duffy peered down at him. As Ed tells it, “I think he thought that I was playing a joke on him. He knew better than to follow me; he came down the trail and met me at the bottom.”

**More Information:** If you would like to know more about mountain climbing with your Airedale, you can do an Internet search on “mountain hiking clubs.”

**If you do take your dog hiking on mountain trails, please remember:** Mountain climbing is a serious sport, and many people would like to ban dogs completely from the trails so it is vital that those who hike with dogs be extra vigilant about trail etiquette. Please:

- Keep your dog properly hydrated. Always carry water and something to use as a water dish: Ed carries a soft Frisbee for Duffy to use as a water dish, and he carries Duffy’s water in a canteen. Duffy carries no equipment.
- Don’t let your dog drink from any water sources along the trail: many streams are infected with Giardia.
- Take breaks to rest and drink water to prevent your dog from overheating.
- Keep dogs that tend to roam out of sight on a leash on public trails, and keep all dogs on leash in the presence of other dogs.
- Clean up and remove any fecal matter made by your dog on the trail.