Paul Petzoldt’s Perspective: The Final 20 Years

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Abstract

Paul Petzoldt, who died in 1999, was one of the early pioneers in outdoor education who saw the future need for trained outdoor leaders. Petzoldt honed his ability to teach outdoor leadership education throughout a lifetime of guiding, teaching and writing. In an effort to foster the outdoor profession’s rich tradition, portions of unpublished manuscripts, journals, notes and letters written by Petzoldt served as sources for this article. These unpublished records were written during the last twenty years of his life and focus on the process of training outdoor leaders to conduct educational expeditions. The authors chose three interconnected, recurring themes out of a larger body of work that address refinements in Petzoldt’s philosophy and methods made over the last twenty years of his life. These refinements include: 1) crucial components in the first 24 hours of an educational expedition; 2) the “grasshopper teaching” method; and, 3) judgment and decision making. (Keywords: Paul Petzoldt, outdoor leadership, teaching methods, judgement, decision making)