

## The Blue Ridge Parkway: 75 years of scenic beauty

### These Hills...

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Editor in Chief

This year commemorates the 75th anniversary of "America's favorite drive," the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Parkway began as part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which sought to stimulate the economy and provide jobs to those unemployed during the Great Depression.

According to the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, construction of the first 12.5 mile stretch of the Parkway began on Sept. 11, 1935 at Cumberland Knob, near the North Carolina, Virginia border. Construction of the Parkway was slow. Acquiring the land for road right of ways took time, and because the road was part of the New Deal stimulus, hand-tools were used as frequently as possible to put as many people to work as possible, even though using machinery would have been more time efficient.

A large portion of the man-power at work on the Parkway was utilized through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). As the road

continued to develop, the CCC established four camps along the Parkway where workers would clear future road-bed, grade slopes for future scenic overlooks and undertake other various activities.

The outbreak of World War II ground construction to a halt. Funding for the Parkway was shifted away from the project and applied to the war effort, and a large portion of the work force left the project to join the military. Additionally, use of the road was very light because of war-time rationing and a ban on recreational driving. As the war ended, construction was still sporadic because most machinery had been purchased by the military and funding was still tied up in post-war aid efforts.

Around 1956, the Parkway was still only about half completed. That would soon change, however, with the start of a ten-year nationwide initiative known as Mission 66, whose goal was to dramatically expand national park amenities by 1966, the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service. Locally, Mission 66 funding would increase the pace of construction, and by the time the initiative came to a halt, \$16 million dollars had been devoted to the project and the Parkway was just under 8 miles short of completion.

That last segment would not be completed until 1987, when construction ended on the Linn Cove Viaduct at Grandfather Mountain, N.C. The completion of the Linn Cove Viaduct opened the Parkway's full 469 mile span and allowed users to travel all the way from Shenandoah National Park to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Many BC students enjoy visiting the Parkway, whether to hike, to drive along the ridgeline, or just sit and soak up the scenery. "My favorite spot is the Wagon Road Gap pull-off and the



The Linn Cove Viaduct, finalized in 1987, opened the full 469 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway, allowing travelers to drive from Shenandoah National Park all the way to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park.

trail there," junior Carleton Ramsey said. "It's a great view, but you have to hike a little ways. I think the Parkway itself is an incredible feat and demonstrates what mankind can accomplish."

Sophomore Sarah Alexander prefers the East Fork overlook for the beauty of its view. "Everything's pretty much dying up there right now," she said, "but about a week ago it was really beautiful." And senior Daniel Kreykes likes the Shining Rock / Black Balsam area. "You can see forever and watch storms blow in," he said.

The Parkway is an amazing place to take in beautiful views, watch the seasons change or just go for a drive. We are very fortunate to live in such close proximity to the Parkway and all are encouraged to visit it sometime soon.



### THIS HALLOWEEN'S HOTTEST ELECTION COSTUMES



Cartoon by Karam Boeshaar