

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

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Throughout our lives we have many acquaintances and friends. When we attend church, we also find acquaintances and friends. I realize that a true friend is very hard to find and is of more value than silver and gold. What is a friend? My dictionary defines a friend as a person that one knows, likes and trusts. Another definition is a favored companion.

In church friendship should extend beyond the four walls of the building. It should not be limited to a short conversation on Sunday morning. A companion is someone with whom you travel. To know and trust a person takes very personal conversations often sharing our desires, our needs and our faults. A friend comforts when there are times of trials and does not walk away after saying, "I'll pray for you." A friend shows love.

Many people prefer to be around successful people. If we are to be like Jesus, our friendship must extend to the people in need. Jesus came to minister to the brokenhearted, the sick, the lame, the lost and all those who were in need. Thousands gathered to hear Jesus speak but on that day when Jesus was nailed to a tree most of his friends abandoned Him. The Holy Spirit now comforts us. He will not abandon us and we must not abandon those who are hurting physically, emotionally and spiritually.

This year there are five people whose friendship I find very vital to me. First is the leader of the intercessory prayer team at Harvest Worship Center, Cindy Keller. We have prayed together for America and the places in which our team has walked. She also has prayed alone with me in the times of trials that Nadine and I have and are still going through.

Steve Herrell has been a blessing to me. Since he joined the walk in West Virginia, his words of encouragement were needed to persuade me to keep walking. Although I have known Steve for a very short time, I have complete trust in him. I recently phoned him for prayer.

The next person is someone, whom I met at work. Of all people in that room she was the person that I talked to the least. When Jennifer Hatton was laid off, I told her that I would pray for her and her son. I still do. When I send a newsletter by e-mail, the first reply is always from Jennifer. She keeps encouraging me and forwarding some of my newsletters to her friends and acquaintances.

The last two people are Andy and Lisa Evanock. Lisa, who worked for Valley Forge Christian College while Andy, her husband, attended the college. Lisa prayed with me on August 11, 2002, when I asked God to verify that He wanted me to start the walk across America. Later on May 3, 2003, Lisa and her children, Joshua, Stephen and Caitlin, joined the walk. She talked about her burden for the youth at our church. This year Andy and Lisa had the Solid Rock Youth walk with me at Annapolis. Andy and Lisa blessed me by walking with me a total of four times. They have just moved to Florida. Andy, who has the heart for those in need and the lost, will one day be a successful pastor. God bless them.

During the last several months, it appeared that someone placed a curse on my family, closest friends and myself and the One Nation Under God-Walk Across America came to a screeching halt. Slowly fear crept into my life. For the last year I have been looking towards the day when I would walk across Dolly Sods Wilderness Area and descend into Canaan (pronounced Keh-NANE) Valley. In the Old Testament, God allowed Moses to see Canaan from the mountain of Nebo, but was not allowed to go into Canaan. A voice inside my head kept saying that I would not survive the walk across Dolly Sods into Canaan Valley. Another voice kept saying that I did not have the finances for another trip into West Virginia. Most people have fears. They range from the fear of flying to the fear of being alone. Some people fear failure so they never attempt anything that is difficult.

2Tim 1:7 The Lord has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.

On July 25th I decided to walk alone the next weekend and sleep in my car at Dolly Sods if no one would help. The next night a person, whom I recently met, gave me a donation for the walk. I did not even know the person's last name. I then phoned Terry Harman. He had something else scheduled for those days. Steve Herrell was my next call. He said that he would help on Friday and drive his vehicle so that we could park our vehicle at each end of the day's walk. Actually Steve would help on Saturday also. *God will make a way when there seems to be no way.*

On Friday July 30th, Steve and I confronted the challenge of hiking across Dolly Sods Wilderness Area into Canaan Valley. Noted for its ferocious westerly winds, Dolly Sods can test the most experienced outdoorsman with sudden severe storms, dense fog or snow in any season. Canaan Valley receives from 150 to 200 inches of snow each year. Before starting the walk we stopped at a scenic overlook south of Red Creek Campground. A brief walk through windswept red spruce to a white sandstone boulder field provided a spectacular view of the North Fork Gap and the town of Petersburg beyond. After shooting some photos, I promptly fell among the boulders. Bruised and battered, I stood, wondering why I fell because Psalm 91:10-11 states, *For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Did God's angels abandon me?

Skipping a 2.7-mile portion of the American Discovery Trail from Bear Rocks to Red Creek Campground (Terry Harman and I will walk this part later), we began walking westward on the Blackbird Knob Trail. The Sods are at near or just above four thousand feet above sea level has plant life and climate similar to the boreal forest of northern Canada. Blueberries were plentiful along the trail, marked with only rock cairns while passing through grasslands and forests and over the two forks of the Red Creek. The waters of the Red Creek eventually flow into the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The American Discovery Trail has passed the divide separating the Gulf of Mexico and the



Atlantic Ocean. It is primarily downhill to St. Louis, Missouri.

After crossing a field of grass, Steve showed me rocks that were overturned by a bear looking for grubs, as thunder was heard in the distance. Soon a cool rain fell. Of course, my rain gear was in the car. Thirty minutes later we stood on Harman Knob, which is the highest point on the America Discovery Trail at over 4100 feet above sea level. The rain had creased and most of Canaan Valley was visible with fluffy clouds peppering the mountainsides. Soon we were descending on Forest Road 80 into the valley and its national wildlife refuge. From the forest an inquisitive doe stared at us as we strolled along the road. Whitetail deer are abundant in the valley, but they are not the only animals. Beaver, raccoons, mink, bobcats, turkeys, bear, salamanders and northern flying squirrels are inhabitants of this, the largest high elevation valley east of the Rockies. In fact, the valley is home to an estimated 290 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish. There are also 580 species of plants including the balsam fir, which is normally found in Canada. I applaud our Nation Wildlife Refuge System, our National Forest Service and the West Virginia State Park system for preserving this region, where man can visit and enjoy God's creation. This valley and the surrounding mountains is a paradise for man or beast.



That night, Steve and I slept in our vehicles at Red Creek Campground. At 6:00 AM, I awoke to see rose-colored clouds heralding a new day. Quickly after grasping my camera, I rushed to an overlook to see the sun rising over the Blue Ridge Mountains fifty miles to the east. A new day was here and I have my first mountain top experience of the day. God allowed the sun to rise on our nation again. Another day to humble ourselves and pray and to seek His face. Another day that God will hear our prayers, forgive our sins and heal our land. I feel that prayers of Christians are slowly healing our country. We must keep praying, asking for forgiveness for our nation.



We shared breakfast at the campground before driving to Canaan Valley State Park and then Blackwater Falls State Park. We would walk this section of the trail in reverse over Canaan Mountain. Starting at the Blackwater Falls Horse Stable, we were told that the trail was extremely muddy. For the next three miles, we walked uphill on the trail, which was only slightly muddy, but that was soon to change. The clouds thickened and a heavy cold rain soon fell. Steve declared, "This is only a passing shower." After taking shelter under a tree for ten minutes, we began walking again. Steve is neither a prophet nor a weatherman, since it rained the remainder of the walk. Also I am not the smartest person in the world since I left my rain gear in my car again. Steve let me use an emergency blanket for a poncho. I looked like an alien wrapped in Reynolds Wrap.

Later the trail became extremely muddy and I became extremely tired. Every step was an adventure to keep from slipping and falling. Steve encouraged me

by saying that I was just like that pink bunny on television that keeps on going and going, but I did not feel that way. As in most days when I walk a long distance, there is a time when I feel I reach my threshold. Then later, I catch my second wind. What is a second wind? It is when we no longer use our own strength but God provides His strength. It is the time when He carries us. Just as our parents were by our side and allowed us to fall when we began walking, God is always with us.

Finally we reached my car at the Canaan Valley Park Lodge, but there was one more mountain top experience ahead. Entering Pennsylvania on my way home, I was confronted by a huge traffic jam on Interstate 70 caused by construction. The sun began to set as I reached Breezewood and the PA Turnpike. In a light rain as my car started the long uphill climb eastward over Sliding Hill, a double rainbow formed on a background of golden clouds. The rainbows lasted until my car reached the top of the hill. The rainbow was a promise to Noah to never again destroy the earth by water. God's promise to us, *He that overcomes shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he will be My son. (Rev 21:7)* He shall wipe away our tears and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will be passed away; for one day we will walk on streets of gold, which are lit by the glory of God. We will see a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

During the two days of the walk, God's creation ministered to me and knowing that whenever I walk, I will meet brothers and sisters in the Lord, is a blessing. One day, we will all be united as we walk those streets of gold in heaven. If West Virginia is almost heaven, how much more wonderful will heaven be?

To see two sideshows of the walk on the Internet, go to photos.yahoo.com/jims19372

God bless,
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Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail	- 413 miles
Number of walkers	- 42 walkers
Number of people praying for the America	- 21,520 prayer warriors

On June 14th, Flag Day, the Supreme Court announced their unanimous decision that the words, under God, will remain in our Pledge of Allegiance. Praise God. Keep praying for our unborn children, the war on terrorism and against same sex marriage in our nation.

Please registered and vote in the elections in November.