

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

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I know the value of prayer. On a prayer walk, I wouldn't leave home without it. So when Pastor Rob Garrett of Praise Fellowship Church offered to have the church pray for our mission, I could not refuse. The power of prayer is essential to any ministry, even a prayer walk.

While Nadine stayed at home, I was joined by two veterans of the Walk Across America, Terry Harman of Downingtown, PA and Steve Herrell of Rawlings, MD, and a neophyte to the walk, Troy McKenize of Meyersdale, PA. Soon I was amazed how God can bring four men, each attending a different church, together in one ministry and how much alike we were. Troy had actually read about Terry and me in my December 2003 newsletter, which was distributed in his church, Green Spring Assembly of God. On December 13, 2003, Terry and I walked across the one-lane wooded toll bridge that spans the Potomac River between Oldtown, Maryland and Green Spring, West Virginia. The walk for that year ended at the town limits of Green Spring. During that winter, I prayed for the towns that lay ahead, on or near the American Discovery Trail, Green Spring, Fort Ashby, and Keyser. From Fort Ashby, I received my first prayer request by e-mail. Keyser Assembly of God sent a team of prayer-walkers to join us. Steve Herrell also attends Keyser A/G. Now Troy joined us from Green Spring.

Troy seems to be born in the wrong era. With a long gray beard, he appears to be a mountain man or a prophet from the Old Testament. He owns a flintlock rifle and also thoroughly studies the Bible. Troy is also known to tell stories. Some are true and some may be exaggerated a bit, but his first story was incredible. Troy's wife, Barbara's, maiden name is Shaner. Her great grandfather, Samuel Schnell Shaner, was a blacksmith near Pottstown, PA. I was born in Pottstown. Troy's wife and I may be related. Wherever I travel along the American Discovery Trail, I encounter brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are all related by the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary, but Troy's wife, Barb, may be related to me in a more recent lineage.

There were two portions of the American Discovery Trail, we bypassed last year. The first was a 2.7 mile walk along forest road 75 in the Dolly Sods Wilderness. The second was a nine mile trek through the forest atop Canaan Mountain down to Route 72 south of Parsons. To get to Dolly Sods we had to pass through Canaan (pronounced Kah-nane') Valley. Troy asked if we could stop in Canaan Valley so he could buy a book from a local author. It seems that wherever I travel in West Virginia, I meet the local historian. Ruth Cooper Allman is the author of *Canaan Valley and the Black Bear*. From 1766 to 1976, her chronicle is about the Coopers and other settlers to this beautifully valley. We all brought a book from her. In the preface of her book, she disclosed that her grandfather was a scout for General Robert E. Lee. Terry Harman was amazed that Harmans settled in the valley and there was a town named Harman to the south of the valley. At her home, she also told us many stories of the black bear that live in the area. Before the weekend was over, I would have my own story of a black bear.

Then we traveled to the Bear Rocks area at Dolly Sods. The view to the east was awesome with mountain ridge after mountain ridge visible. After praying we began a short trek south to Red Creek Campground. In the 1850's Dolly Sods was very much different then today. It was a mountain area with foot diameter red spruce trees so densely packed that sunlight seldom reached the forest floor, which



covered eight feet or more of forest duff. Starting with the Civil War, the landscape began to change. Fires, infestation of beetles, and finally the loggers, who came in 1885, altered the land to just tree stumps and forest duff. Then a fire that lasted for nine months burned the mountain and valley to an appalling condition. The grandeur was totally gone with nothing green and no animals for miles. This land is slowly restoring itself. The deer, black bear and bobcats now roam the mountains. An estimated 290 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish now populate Canaan Valley. For the Dolly Sods area only time will tell if the giant spruce forest will return to its former splendor.

That evening Troy returned to Pennsylvania, while Terry and I slept in tents, Steve slept in his truck at the campground. That night I heard a noise that I could not place. The next morning Steve noticed that two large rocks at our campsite were unturned during the night. Did a bear come into our site? Perhaps?

Before having breakfast, I read my Bible and strolled to an overlook near our campground. As I watched the sunrise over the mountains to the east, I prayed and had some quiet time. In our busy lives, we too often neglect to spend some quiet time with our Lord. We worship, we pray, but seldom do we take the time to listen and watch. Later we ate breakfast at Blackwater Fall Lodge before hiking west along Canaan Loop Road. Along that road we saw the first of several bear tracks. The trail was not very well marked and we nearly overlooked the first turn. For four miles we walked along an old logging or coal-mining railroad bed. Suddenly I felt very tired and sick in the stomach (too much good food) and soon fell behind the pace of Steve and Terry. Steve asked to carry my daypack. I refused (too much pride). Soon we arrived at Canaan Loop Road again and turned right. Then I made a big mistake, I trusted the map, which I had. We turned left at the first road, which crossed Red Run. Later I discovered that we should have taken the second left. After an hour or more of trudging along an overgrown road, we decided to transverse the now deep canyon in hope of finding the trail on the opposite side. By then I had humbled myself and gave Steve my daypack. We climbed down a deep embankment to the stream. While Steve and Terry crossed the stream by hopping from boulder to boulder, I waded across after praying that I would regain my strength. Then uphill we climbed to a fire-road. Finally after walking for about ninety minutes, we saw Steve's red Blazer parked alongside of Route 72. Our hike was finished at 7:35, an hour before sunset. Maps may be outdated or have mistakes but the Bible is always correct and shows you in which direction to travel.

After eating at a gas-station/general store in Davis, we separated. Steve drove home, while Terry and I drove back to our campsite at Dolly Sods. That

night I was awakened by a noise outside my tent. Heavy breathing and snorting left no doubt in my mind, that there was a black bear about ten feet from my tent. When Jesus said, “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,*” I did not think He meant that bear. It was not ready to hear my testimony and I was not ready to give it. I went back to sleep.

Next morning Terry and I attended the Sunday services at Canaan Valley Baptist Church before heading home. Along Route 219, we saw signs pointing to the smallest church in the forty-eight states. Old Lady of the Pines is a stone building, 11 feet by 16 feet with stained-glass windows, a tiny altar and six very small pews. Weddings are held there (very small weddings) in that West Virginia Church.

Finally we stopped at a rest area along the Pennsylvania Turnpike and met a family from Illinois. The mother asked for prayer for her son, a driver of an eighteen-wheeler along the interstates of our country. She also stated that they pray each time the driver starts their vehicle.

Prayer, don't leave home without it.

To learn more about the One Nation Under God –Walk Across America, go to our web site, www.walkacrossamerica.info.

God bless,
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Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail	- 497 miles
Number of walkers	- 45 walkers
Number of people praying for America	- 38,158 prayer warriors

Ruth Cooper Allman has one fear, that the federal government may take her land if a nation park is created in Canaan Valley. With a recent Supreme Court decision, many other people may have similar fears. The court ruled that property could be seized for the prospect of more tax revenue, even if the land will be attained by a private developer. Justice O'Connor, who voted against the decision, declared, “The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, including large corporations and development firms. As for the victims, the government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more.”

Does that imply that a corporation can use the power of eminent domain to seize land and buildings owned by a church to increase the tax revenue in an area? Please pray that this decision is overturned.