

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

Expectations, we all have expectations. When our children go to school, we expect that the teachers will instruct them, and our children will learn. When we go to place of employment, we expect our employers to pay us, and they expect that we work to the best of our abilities. When are admitted to hospital, we expect to feel better by the time we are released. When we go to church, we expect to hear the Word of God, and we expect that the Word will change our lives.

Before I prayer walk, I also have expectations. Since Nadine and I always pray for divine appointments, we expect divine appointments. We expect the churches that we visit to be responsive to our mission of prayer walking across America. I also expect that I will reach my goal of mileage, about 15 miles or more for a full day of walking. Sometimes our expectations fall short, and sometimes they are met to overflowing. The walk in the Hocking Hills area of Ohio was one of these times with both.

Both Nadine and I felt led by the Lord to temporarily skip about seventy miles of the American Discovery Trail and walk in the Hocking Hills area near Logan, Ohio. We also felt lead by the Lord to be there on Mother's Day which just happens to fall on our anniversary this year. The Friday before leaving for Ohio, I attended a seven-day nonstop prayer watch at Calvary Fellowship Church in Downingtown, PA. There in a prayer room, I opened a Bible to Proverbs 16:9. *A man's heart devises his way: but the Lord directs his steps.* Was this verse meant for me? Soon I was to learn that our Lord was in control of the walk, not me.

About 3:00 PM Saturday, Nadine and I arrived in Logan, Ohio, the county seat of Hocking County in southeast Ohio. Logan was named after Mingo Chief, James John Logan, who warred against the white colonists during the American Revolution after Virginia settlers murdered his mother and sister. Many Americans do not realize that the southeast portion of Ohio is situated in Appalachia. The Logan area, instead of relying on the coal mining, is now depending on tourism. The area abounds with natural wonders, a manmade lake, shops and a very unique factory that is a centerpiece to a music festival. Before heading to the place that we reserved for six nights, we stopped at the Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center in Logan. We were about to have, not one, but three divine appointments. As I was looking at shelves of brochures and maps, Jeri Smith, a worker at the Welcome Center, approached me and asked if I needed help. My answer was that I was prayer walking across America and I asked her to pray for America. She replied yes and instead of handing me brochures and maps, she began directing people to me.

Author, historian and naturalist, Leland Conner, greeted me. Born in 1930 a son of a coalminer, Leland is now very active in tourism. He told about the days long gone when his father and grandfather would work, sleep and eat in the mine, never seeing the light of day for a week at a time. When asked about the prayer needs for the area, Leland responded with employment from businesses not related to tourism. Leland then left to guide a tour group.

Next was a woman, who was holding my business card. With a very soft-spoken voice, she imparted, "My name is Lois Tolbert and my daughter is serving

our country in Iraq.” On the day before Mother’s Day, a mother was asking me to pray for her daughter in this time of war. Her simple words said volumes, and they touched Nadine’s and my heart. Presently, there are too many mothers grieving for their sons and daughters in our military. Would you please take time now and pray for Katie Bowman, Lois’ daughter? Also, pray for Lois to have the peace that surpasses all understanding. That peace can come from only our Lord, Jesus. Amen.

Then Nadine asked Jeri where the nearest Wal-Mart was, so we could purchase some groceries. Jeri gave us directions. She also told us to look for the wheelchair bound greeter, her husband, Jerry Smith. We did not find Jerry that day. That divine appointment would come later. After Wal-Mart, we headed for the cabin that we rented for six nights. It was a red railroad caboose located only 1½ miles from the America Discovery Trail near Ash Cave. It was just what I expected surrounded by woods in a secluded area and decorated with railroad memorabilia.

After unloading the car, we headed for Ash Cave, a mammoth horseshoe shaped shelter cave. A small waterfall leaps from the rim of the cave and falls 90 feet to the small stream below. The Shawnee Indians once used this recess cave as a shelter and as a meeting room. The acoustics of the cave are amazing with parts of the cave are known as whispering galleries. There are scenic places such as a tranquil forest, where God speaks softly that He is the Creator. At Ash Cave, God shouts that He is the Creator.



On Mother’s Day morning, Nadine and I attended a church service in Logan. During the service, Nadine won a hanging basket of flowers for the mother that

traveled the farthest to the service. At the end of the service, the pastor announced our mission to the church, but no one said anything to us but hello. Our expectations of the church's reaction to our walk fell short. After eating lunch, Nadine and I eat lunch, Nadine dropped me off at a place called Old Man's Cave so I could began my prayer walk. She then proceeded back to Welcome Center in Logan and gave the hanging basket of flowers to a mother, who deserved honor, Lois Tolbert.

For the six-mile journey from Old Man's cave to Ash Cave, the American Discovery Trail coincides with the Buckeye Trail, the North Country Trail and the Grandma Gatewood Trail. Grandma Gatewood is famous for hiking the Appalachian Trail end-to-end in one season, three different times, the first at age 67. In her eighties, she would lead the Annual Winter Hike along the trail named after her. I expected an easy trail. I was wrong. In the cool rain, steps carved into rock became very slippery. Along the way, I introduced myself to Donald and Cindy Tidd from Warren, Ohio. Soon there were two more people praying for America along the American Discovery Trail. As we separated, I stated, "God bless."

Donald answered, "Thank you. We don't hear that very often any more."

The gorge that trail winds through is Hocking Hills State Park's mini version of Yosemite National Park. One hundred foot shear cliffs surround the narrow valley floor. Every turn along the trail brought new delights, towering hemlocks, waterfalls and a clear meandering stream. The Grandma Gatewood Trail was much more than I expected.

Alan Crum, from Hazelwood, West Virginia, joined me for the second day's walk. Alan parked his car at Old Man's Cave and then Nadine drove us to Lake Logan State Park. Soon I learned that this was not the same Alan Crum, whom I walked with for four days last September. Last year, Alan was a Christian without church and disappointed since few Christians, whom he knew, share their faith outside the four walls of church. He called me the only true Christian whom he knew. I suggested that he should start attending church. Not only did Alan start attending church, he and wife, Monika, are now members of First Assembly of God in Harrisville, West Virginia and he teaches children's church. When asked if he knows more true Christians, he answered, "I sure do."

Time quickly went by as we walked through some very wet and marshy areas of the trail then over wooded hills. By two in the afternoon, I was very tired with the bottoms of my jeans covered with mud. I told Alan that I felt that when we reached a road, that we should flag down a car and ask for ride to Old Man's Cave. At least six miles separated us from Alan's car with a climb over the tallest cliffs in Ohio at Conkle's Hollow. Since I do not carry a cell phone, there was no way to contact Nadine. By the time the trail the reached a public road, I suggested that we abandon the trail and follow the public roads back to Old Man's Cave. As we were walking along Unger Road, a gentleman with a red pick-up truck stopped and asked if we needed a ride and informed us that a large storm was approaching. My first reaction was to say no since I never taken a ride with a stranger, but then I remembered what I had said only twenty minutes before. The Lord knew the desires of my heart and sent someone to help. Ten minutes later, we were at the parking lot of Old Man's Cave.

Alan stayed with us in the caboose for the two nights. Because of the slow pace, we walked the day before; I scaled down the length of the walk on Tuesday.

The hike from Route 664 and Walnut-Dowler Road to Lake Logan was uneventful. The following day we made up the hike that we abandoned on Monday. Rock-climbers and horses heavily traveled much of this area of the trail causing the walk to slow as it climbed and then passed through 100-foot sandstone cliffs. The trail then followed the rim of the shear cliffs. At the end of the walk, the bottoms of my jeans were again covered by mud for the fourth day straight. After getting back to the caboose, Alan returned home to West Virginia.

That evening Nadine and I went to a service at the People's Church in Logan. Pastor Rodger Fidler spoke on Jesus as the good shepherd. At the end of the service, Pastor Fidler introduced us to the congregation and prayed about our mission.

On Thursday, I decided to spend more time with Nadine, so I only walked four miles from Route 93 and Imboden Road to Route 664 and Walnut-Dowler Road. All the walking was done on back roads. A man in a red car offered me a ride and asked where I was headed. California was my answer. No, this time I did not take the offer. Later a woman offered me water after she discovered what my mission was. Soon I met Nadine just when it started to rain and we headed back to Logan for lunch.

After eating, it was on to the Columbus Washboard Company in downtown Logan, the only washboard company that remains in America. Lisa, a worker, gave Nadine and me an enlightened tour of the factory while also telling us about history of the washboard. Nowadays, a washboard is not necessarily a washboard. They are made for decorative pieces, cabinet doors and musical instruments. On Father's Day weekend, Logan holds a Washboard Music Festival. This year over 10,000 people from throughout America are expected to attend this unique event.



Who still washes with a washboard? People living in third world nations, the Amish, campers and soldiers, all use washboards. Columbus Washboard Company is now sending troop kits containing a washboard, a washtub, clothesline, clothespins and lye soap to servicemen and women deployed overseas. After the tour was done, I told Lisa about our mission. She led us to an office-worker, Tia Shaner. Now there are two more people praying for America.

There was one more stop before returning to the caboose, back to the Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center. As soon as we entered, a man in a wheelchair began talking to Nadine about the building, which the center occupies. I stood by until Nadine said, "You're Jerry."

Since his wife, Jeri, told him about us on Saturday, his conversation changed to a more important subject, his testimony. Jerry Smith was a healthy man, who worked in sales. He was also an agnostic. One day, Jerry was rushed to the hospital with two brain aneurysms, one on both right and left sides. For five months, he stayed in a deep coma. Doctors gave up all hope on his condition and he was transferred to a different hospital, where after seven days he awoke. Jesus spoke to him and he felt a warm sensation inside his body. Although paralyzed on his left

side, Jerry uses a wheelchair, and is the most joyful person I know. He knows that he would rather be in a wheelchair and headed for heaven, then have healthy life and go in the opposite direction. With 40% of his brain dead, Jerry can still talk, eat, stand and even take several small steps. He is the only American alive today, who survived two brain aneurysms. Today, he works as a greeter and in sales at Wal-Mart. In his spare time, he is a volunteer at the Welcome Center. The one thing that Jerry does is to be a full time witness for our Lord, Jesus Christ. We can all learn from Jerry, without Christ we are nothing.

We all have things that we did not expect to happen in our lives. Lois Tolbert never expected that her daughter, Katie Bowman, would be stationed in a war zone. Jerry Smith did not expect to be in a wheelchair. What should we do in these times of trials?

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8

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 - 659 miles
Number of prayer walkers - 57 prayer walkers
Number of people praying for America - 47,065 prayer warriors