

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

As the date for my time to leave for Ohio approached, I became very apprehensive. Since only two weeks of vacation a year are allotted to my wife, Nadine, she would be staying home this time. Would I be able to withstand the rigors of the trail for one week alone? What trials and tribulations lay ahead? Would there be excessive heat and humidity? Would I get blisters or bruised toes? Would I have to carry my daypack with my hands as I did the last two miles of the last prayer walk because of some lower back pain? Would I make a wrong turn and get off the trail again? I was pondering over possible tribulations and not God's word. The Word states in Philippians 4:13, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* For some reason, I forgot that verse.

On the eve of the walk, I called Patti Bello, an intercessor at Praise Fellowship, and asked for prayer. She sounded so excited when she said, "Just think, Jim, there is someone in Ohio waiting for you to pray for him." Her words encouraged me. The next day after driving and listening to praise songs for nine hours, I parked my car in front of The Father's House in Logan, Ohio. Again this church allowed me to stay there as long as I wanted. Pastor Charlie, the founding pastor of the church, met me at the door. As we chatted for about twenty minutes, I learned that he is now the pastor at a church in Ozark, Alabama, which is also named The Father's House. Then I interrupted our conversation by saying that my ministry was calling me. Pastor Charlie understood, handing me the keys to the church. Without unpacking my car, I drove to Ash Cave, my favorite place so far along the American Discovery Trail. Deciding to see the cave once more, I strolled along the walkway to the undercut palisade with its slim cascade of water. This would be one of the rare times during the week that I would not be alone on the trail. Several families paraded along the path to the cave. While I was taking photos, I approached an elderly woman with two small girls. After asking Sharon from nearby Nelsonville to pray for America, she asked me to pray for the father of the two girls. "He doesn't want anything to do with them. Why do people have children, if they don't want to take care of them?"

Later she told me that her husband, who could not walk very far, was in their Jeep in the parking lot. Off I went back to the parking lot. There was Robert Joe sitting in a white Jeep. Robert is a veteran of World War II and served on a naval destroyer that was doing convoy escort duty in the Atlantic Ocean. Robert is not the first veteran of World War II, whom I met along this journey. On a cool, damp and dreary day in April 2003, 91-year-old Edward Trilling of Annapolis became my first prayer partner along the way. He served in the army in Germany. Our veterans need our support and our prayers.

The rest of the late afternoon I walked along a road in a warm and muggy hollow slowly climbing uphill. After reaching a stopping point, I retraced my steps back to my car at the Ash Cave parking lot. Upon arriving back at The Father's House in Logan, I realized that the church did not have air-conditioning, something to which I have grown accustomed. Since the church had no windows and only fans, sleeping proved challenging.

The Sunday morning service was lead by Pastor Charlie. Afterwards Pastors Mike and Cheryl Miller and one other member of the church invited me for lunch. Afterwards I decided to prayer walk again. During that afternoon, the temperature was cooler then the previous day. But I stopped very early, so I could attend an evening service at a different church in Logan. Inside the church the pastor greeted me and talked to me but the rest of the congregation just shook my hand, said hello and turned away. I was a stranger when I came into that church and I was a stranger when I left that church. It was the total opposite of the reception, which the congregation of The Father's Church gave me. They entrusted me with the keys to their church and allowed me to stay there alone.

After praying in the sanctuary the next morning, I left for what I hoped to be a full day of prayer walking. Walking along the trail that morning took me from Hocking County into Vinton County, the poorest county in Ohio. On a ridge sat Chestnut Hill Hopewell Church. Surrounded on three sides by a cemetery, the white-framed church was in need of a fresh coat of paint. On south side of the cemetery stood a men and women's outhouse and also two port-a-potties. The church did have a window air-conditioner protruding from its side. There was an abundance of American flags waving in the breeze in the cemetery. Attached to many of the flags was the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) emblem. The Civil War touched the lives of many who served for the Union in this area over 140 years ago.

Since the cumulus clouds were rapidly growing and not wanting to get caught in a thunderstorm, I decided to skip a back road portion of the trail and walk a one-mile section to the village of Eagle Mills. This was bottomland, the first true flat land that the American Discovery Trail passes through in Ohio from the east. After passing an Amish farm, Lebanon Community Church came into view. Built in 1878, the church was very similar to Chestnut Hill Hopewell Church except it did not need to be painted. There was a cemetery, two outhouses and a window air-conditioner. After reaching Eagle Mills, I did a reversal of my steps as I started back to my car. Now the sky was darkening. Just as I reached my car, the heavens opened with a heavy rain. The rain was very needed in the area since I passed two streams that were completely dry. It was back to Logan again for my last night at The Father's House.

The next morning, I packed my car and left the church to head again to Vinton County for what would be the most challenging day of the week. I drove to the portion of the trail that I passed over the day before. It followed a non-maintained road through an area that was clear-cut by loggers. In this area, my walking startled two white-tailed deer, which bounded into the safety of the forest. The non-maintained road made a horseshoe and I returned to my car via a macadam road. Then came Albright Road, which climbed over a hill to Route 327. A maintenance crew cleaning the drainage trench along the road immediately shattered the silence of countryside. As I neared the site of the noise, an animal darted across the road while looking at the construction equipment. It appeared to be a coyote. Coyotes have extended their range eastward and have been spotted even in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C.

After passing a few houses, the road ceased and what appeared to be bridle trail started. As the trail progressed steeply up the hillside, erosion caused a six-foot u-shaped gully. Footing along the way was very treacherous. The downhill side became worst. Finally the trail ended at a gravel road that forded a shallow Pike Run. A quarter-mile farther was Route 327. Then it was back through the stream and over the hill again. This time as I walked pass the houses, a gentleman in a red pickup truck offered me a ride to my car. During the short trip, he confirmed that there are coyotes in the area.

Now it was time to find a motel near the town of Waverly. By using the Internet, I knew there was a cheap motel north of town about a mile from the trail. After finding the motel, I paid the clerk for three nights. I knew I was in trouble when she said that there are no refunds for any reason. Upon opening the door of my room, I asked myself, "Lord, what have I done?" The stench of fifty years of cigarette smoke seared my nostrils. In the corner of the room sat a genuine imitation leather chair that had seen better days. It had cracks in it that seem to be wider than the Grand Canyon. By this time, I just knew there was no chocolate mint waiting for me on the bed pillows. All the pillowcases and the sheets were miss-matched. The air-conditioner was my next challenge. As I turn the knob to high, nothing happen. Then by turning the knob to low, the air-conditioner came to life. The room also had a color television (no remote and few channels), a microwave and a small refrigerator. They all worked, but the refrigerator worked too well. The next morning, I would find all my bottles of juice and water froze solid. With my stomach grumbling, I decided to shower before heading to a restaurant in Waverly. Then I noticed two ticks that were attached to my body. Carefully I removed them. After showering and trying to dry off with a towel that wasn't quite large enough, I came face to face with a mosquito that was just as hungry as I was and the mosquito wasn't planning on eating out. Dodging the mosquito, I quickly got dressed and headed out the door. After returning from eating, I returned to the motel. They left the light on for me. The mosquito, angry and now very hungry, was waiting for me inside the doorway. I don't think this motel has a five-star rating.

The next morning, the alarm from the next room awoke me at 5:00 AM. The walls of the motel were also paper thin. Driving back to the American Discovery Trail was not a joy either. A dense fog formed in the Scioto River valley bringing visibility to nearly zero. Very carefully and slowly I drove my car on a windy country road that had no shoulders. As two headlights approached, they suddenly disappeared and then reappeared as the vehicle driving with its headlights on, passed the car coming towards me. That vehicle came very close to having a head-on crash with me. Thank you, Jesus, for your protection.

The walk that day was in Tar Hollow State Park and State Forest. The park and forest is named after the pine tar that was made by the early settlers from the pitch pines that grow along the ridges. The pitch pine survives in very poor soil conditions. Because of its thick bark, which is often blacked due to fire, the pitch pine can endure most forest fires while the other species of trees are destroyed. Because of the tribulation of many forest fires, the pitch pine is the dominant tree in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. The walk ended that day at the secluded and very beautiful Dogwood Picnic Area on South Ridge Road.

That evening, I attended a service at New Covenant Church of Christ in Christian Union in Waverly. After the service at the church, I talked to Retired Lieutenant Colonel Gerald R. Weaver, who served as a Chaplain in the United States Army during the Korean War. He invited me to dinner but I declined since I had already eaten.

The next day, with the temperatures soaring into the low nineties, I cut the prayer walk short because of lower back pain. During the trip home, I began to think about our men and women who are in our armed forces today. When I complained about having no air-conditioning and losing sleep, they are in Iraq and Afghanistan trying to sleep in extreme conditions. When I complained about pain in feet or legs, some of our soldiers are returning to America with missing limbs. When I complain about walking in shorts and a tee shirt in ninety-degree heat, our soldiers are out in the temperatures over one hundred degrees wearing full body armor. When I complained about the conditions of the motel in which I stayed, I did not have to be concerned about a mortar attack. When I drive or walk, there are no suicide bombers waiting for me. Lord, forgive me for not taking the time to pray as much as I should for our troops who are in harm's way. When it comes to the simple trials and tribulations of every day life, God forgive me when I do not think of Your son, Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross for my salvation. Lord, forgive us, Americans, for not praying as often as we should. Forgive us. Forgive us.



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

God bless,
Jim Shaner
jims19372@yahoo.com

One Nation Under God –Walk Across America
P.O. Box 72692
Thorndale, PA 19372-0692

Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail - 772 miles
Number of prayer walkers - 59 prayer walkers
Number of people praying for America - 53,006 prayer warriors