

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

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Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

On October 5, 2002, I took my first step of faith on the American Discovery Trail at the Atlantic Ocean in Delaware to begin my ministry, the One Nation Under God – Walk Across America. On May 6, 2005, Debbie Schachner took her first step of faith on the American Discovery Trail at the Pacific Ocean in California to begin her ministry, Walking with Faith. On August 30 and August 31 of this year, we joined forces and walked together in the Canaan Valley/Dolly Sods area of West Virginia.



At first, my primary goal was prayer for America. Now my emphasis is prayer for Americans, one person at a time if required. Debbie's main goal is encourage people to do more with what we have. She wants to motivate people to search inside themselves to find their talents and passions, then to take action by applying those gifts to the needs they find in the community.

Debbie's secondary goal was to raise funds for the construction of a library in Timau, Kenya. Her goal of \$47,000 for phase one of the library was achieved on May 18 of this year. During 2003, Debbie volunteered for a mission trip to Kenya. She began to teach students to read and write English. The official languages of Kenya are both English and Swahili, since Kenya was once a British colony. Debbie's compassion for the poor and uneducated people of Kenya has not diminished. Next year, she will return to Timau as a volunteer with the AWE Foundation (Action for Water and Education) to begin the construction of the library. Once the library is constructed, the townspeople will provide the shelving and furniture. Book Aid (collaborating with Kenya National Library Services) will provide up to 20,000 books and the librarian and the staff.

Since we were both walking the American Discovery Trail to advance the kingdom of God, in July 2006, I emailed Debbie stating that I would like to meet her on the trail sometime. The next day, I received an answer; she felt the same way. 13 months later during the morning of August 30, 2007, we came face to face for the first time. The place was the dining room of the Canaan Valley State Park Lodge. God's favor on Debbie was very evident, since she was given a room at the lodge for free the night before. Before we left the dining room, we were both given a cup of orange juice for our journey.

That began a very interesting day. Although her American Discovery Trail map showed the trail following roadways from the valley floor to Dolly Sods,

undoubtedly Debbie placed her faith in my directions. Freeland Road to Blackbird Knob Trail is alternate hiking route for ADT. Before we left the park, we stopped at the nature center, where a park ranger gave both of us two hiking patches. There the park ranger told Debbie about a black bear in the area that lost its fear of man. It apparently attacked the backpacks of several hikers after hikers had removed them, but none of the hikers were hurt.

As I walked back for my car, Debbie proceeded to Freeland Road. Later I parked my car at a trailhead along Freeland Road and walked back to Debbie. In a few minutes, we arrived back at my car and then walked a short boardwalk trail into a bog area. Debbie explained to me that it reminded her of Maine. She should know. Debbie (a.k.a. Sweet Tooth) hiked the Appalachian Trail several years ago. Located at the end of the boardwalk is a small pond. Debbie pointed to an unusual sight. One could see water bubbling into the pond from beneath. That underground spring is the source of that pond and one of the sources of the Blackwater River.

Freeland Road slowly meanders up the mountainside. While we took a lunch break, Debbie spoke about the people who told her that she should not walk alone across America. (You're a woman. It's too dangerous.) In this area, they told her about the black bears and rattlesnakes that inhabit the Dolly Sods wilderness area. Fear of the unknown does not faze Debbie; she embraces it and the words, I can't, are not part of her vocabulary. We talked about Grandma Gatewood, who in sixties, began hiking and hiked the Appalachian Trail three times (twice alone) and the Oregon Trail once. As Debbie continued to talk, her faith, her love of Jesus and her compassion for the poor flowed from her lips just like that wellspring we saw in the valley below. With each word of our conversation, we kept encouraging each other to do more with our lives.

After Freeland Road abruptly ended, a hiking trail proceeded to Harman Point with an awesome view of Canaan Valley, the highest valley in the eastern part of the United States. On that point is a single park bench anchored to a concrete foundation. As we sat and enjoyed the view, I gave Debbie a detailed map of Dolly Sods showing Blackbird Knob Trail and a walky-talky to contact me if she needed help. She would walk this trail alone as I walked back to my car and drove to Red Creek Campground. Soon the sound of thunder could be heard in the distance and we could see a thunderhead forming to the north. Five minutes later as the sound of thunder increased, I walked back to my car and Debbie walked across Dolly Sods alone. Silently I prayed that the storm would miss Debbie. During the storms of life, one must be anchored to a firm foundation just as that park bench is. Debbie is anchored to a firm foundation, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

By the time I reached the Canaan Valley floor, the storm hit with a driving rain with thunder exploding around me in all directions. Soon I turned left and started the long trek around the far side of the mountain. By this time, the rain diminished to a gentle rain. Then the road divided with the left fork turning onto a dirt road posted with 20 miles per hour signs as it ascended up the mountainside. After the road reaches the top ridge, something very unusual occurs. The road is straight for eleven miles except for one slight bend. It must be the straightest road in West Virginia. After arriving at the Red Creek Campground, the rain ceased and the ground was dry. After picking a campsite, I tried calling Debbie on the walky-talky and got static as a reply. Walking westward on the Blackbird Knob

Trail, I called again and Debbie answered that she was about a half mile from campground. We soon encountered each other. While trekking back to the campground together, Debbie mentioned that the storm barely touched her. My prayers were answered.

As Debbie erected her tent, a gentleman told her about the marauding black bear and that the posted signs which asked people not to sleep in tents. Debbie politely commented that she had read the signs. Afterwards, I treated her to a meal at a restaurant down in Canaan Valley. That night Debbie slept in her tent after placing her food in the trunk of my car. Since I did not bring a tent, I slept in the back seat of my car.

Awaking early the next morning, I read my Bible first before doing anything else. While Debbie was still asleep, I strolled to an overlook to see the sunrise. There was no sunrise to see because of the cloud cover but there was a small group of people banding birds. The overlook is the site of the Allegheny Front Migratory Observatory bird banding station. Manned by dedicated volunteers, this station has been in continuous operation for 50 years during the morning hours in August and September. I shared my mission with some of the members before returning to the campground.



Back at our campsite, Debbie, now awake, was sitting at a picnic table reading her Bible. After we ate breakfast together, I anointed Debbie with oil and prayed for her before walking her back to the bird banding station. Now it was Debbie's turn to share her mission. I was surprised that some of bird watchers knew about the American Discovery Trail. One man questioned both of us about why we were walking the ADT. He was Rev. Jack Minear, pastor of a Baptist church in Fairmont, West Virginia. I appreciate a man of God, who loves nature.

Now it was time for Debbie to hit the trail again. I drove ahead to Bear Rocks, an area that is the focus of many calendar photos. As I walked southward, Debbie appeared in the distance on a crest of a hill. With her fully loaded backpack, she can walk faster than most men I know. Beginning to realize the size of the Dolly Sods wilderness, Debbie told me that it seems much larger than her map indicates. After reaching Bear Rocks, the road turns sharply and commences to fall almost 2000 feet in just 4½ miles. Just before the trail reached Jordon Run Road, I left Debbie and headed home.

Too often the older generation (including myself) harshly criticizes the younger generation. What we should do is encourage them and pray for them. Although Debbie is half my age, she taught me how we should live a Christian life. Except for the Bible, no book that I had read or any sermon could have done it better. If I were to list all of Debbie's Christian attributes, it would add at least one more page to this newsletter and Debbie would be embarrassed because she is also very humble. If faith, the size of a mustard seed, can move mountains then Debbie's faith can move continents. By the first week of November, Debbie should be dipping her toes into the Atlantic Ocean after walking about 5000 miles across America. God bless her and give her goodness and mercy all the days of her life.



Father, teach us not to criticize but to love and encourage the youth. Give the youth Godly role models. Let them not follow the ways of the world, but let them take the narrow path that leads to heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.

To learn more about the One Nation Under God –Walk Across America, go to our web site, www.walkacrossamerica.info. To learn more about Walking in Faith, go to Debbie's web site, www.walkingwithfaith.com.

**God bless,
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**Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail - 772 miles
Number of prayer walkers - 59 prayer walkers
Number of people praying for America - 53,663 prayer warriors**