

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

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Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13:1-2

On Monday, October 1 in the placid town of Richmond Dale, Ohio, I left my comfort zone and in doing so learned a valuable lesson in Christianity. Have I even invited a complete stranger into home for a meal, to allow that person to shower and stay for night? My answer is no; I have not and also in the last five years unfortunately I have not been invited into many homes of people whom I know in my own area. As I walked onto the porch of house of a stranger near the library in Richmond Dale, I knew that Nadine and I would be invited into that house. After knocking on the door, a woman appeared. I asked, "Are you Connie?"

She answered, "Yes."

Then my reply was, "I'm Jim Shaner and I am walking across America." That was all it took to be invited into the home of Connie Snyder. Connie and her husband, Mike, are trail angels for the American Discovery Trail and the Buckeye Trail. Trail angels provide food or shelter for the weary travelers, while others do maintenance on the trail. We did not need a meal or a room for the night. We already had a room at a motel in the nearby town of Waverly. All I wanted was conversation and Connie was eager to get acquainted with us.

Now retired, Connie knew about the Buckeye Trail from working in the post office in Londonderry and having hikers mailing packages to themselves in care of General Delivery. During the cold wet spring of 1997, Connie learn of a new trail, the American Discovery Trail. Pioneers of the ADT, Bill and Laurie Foot (The Happy Feet), stopped for their package. After Connie saw tired and hungry couple, she invited them home for lunch. They stayed there for next two nights. They were the first of many to receive the hospitality of the Snyder's. Then came Brian Stark, who ran across America on the ADT. During the last few years, most of the travelers on the ADT including Debbie Schachner stopped to visit Connie and Mike on their way across America. Connie and Mike took Debbie square dancing, which the Snyder's do regularly. While having tea together, Connie told us that I was the first hiker to arrive by car. Connie and Mike keep in touch with their traveling friends and many of them return to visit for more of their hospitality.

The Snyder's were the first trail angels, whom we met during our walk in October but not the last. The day before, Nadine and I attended the Sunday morning service at River Valley Community Church, which was next to our motel. After the service, Nadine was invited to the Women's Group that meets on Tuesday's evening. On Tuesday after I hiked along the picturesque and well-groomed trails of Scioto Trail State Park, Nadine went to women's study group. There a woman asked Nadine if we were coming back in the area and needed a place to stay. Next spring, we will be using a new friend's house as our base camp and there will be one new trail angel in the area.

On Wednesday, the temperature, which was a little above normal with low humidity, rose into mid-summer levels. Along Mt. Tabor Road, Nadine and I paused at Mapleberry Farm for water. The farm is the home of Gale Rickey, who is

also a trail angel. He allows hikers to camp out on his property and to restock their water supply. During the winter months, Gale is very busy tapping his trees for maple syrup, which he sells at the farm.

The next day as the temperature soared to near the record, I passed by Eden Baptist Church. Established in 1824 by African American families, the church and settlement thrived until the 1950's. At this time for economic reasons, the residents relocated to different communities. Later in the village of Nipgen, I met Lee and Mary Hamilton walking along Potts Mill Road. Now there are two more people praying for America. The prayer walk ended at the lake at Pike Lake State Park in the early afternoon.



Since the American Discovery Trail is different than most long distance trails in America, because it travels through wilderness, state and national parks along with small towns and large cities, it gives the travelers a chance to meet people where they live, where they work and where they worship. The success of this trail may not solely depend on the hikers, cyclists or horseback riders but on the people who live along the trail. The trail angels are the Good Samaritans of the trail. After Jesus said to love thy neighbor as thyself, he spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27-37). Jesus' definition of a neighbor is one who shows mercy on another. In the last five years, I have met neighbors in Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio. God bless them all.

For I was hungry and you gave me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.

Matthew 25:35 & 40

News along the American Discovery Trail

Shortly before 2:00 PM on October 19, an exultant and very wet Debbie Schachner reached the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Henlopen State Park in Delaware, the eastern terminus of the American Discovery Trail. Her mother and I walked with her the last seven miles through the first town in the first state, Lewes, Delaware into the state park. During the last ninety minutes of the walk, the storm clouds drenched us with rain along with splashes of water from passing motorists. One of Debbie's new friends, Gary from Bridgeville,





Delaware, drove to meet us and offered Debbie an umbrella, which Debbie politely refused. During the last half mile, the rain ceased and Debbie walked over a series of sand dunes and viewed the Atlantic Ocean. Slowly she walked down onto the beach, across the sand and into the surf. Two minutes later, she returned to the beach where she wrote the words, thank you Lord, in the sand with one of her walking sticks.

Soon Gary joined us on the beach and later the state coordinator of the ADT in Delaware, who handed Debbie a document from the Governor of Delaware honoring her accomplishment. Her joy radiated from her being. Very few women have walked across America and Debbie did it mostly alone, 5000 miles through mountains, deserts, towns and cities. The joy of the Lord is Debbie's strength. God bless her.

Thou will show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 16:11

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 -825 miles
Number of prayer walkers - 64 prayer walkers
Number of people praying for America - 54,102 prayer warriors