

dec '81

Greetings to the Worlds Most Important Hikers:

Thank you very much for all of the beautiful christmas and seasons greeting cards that you sent to me. It shows that we really do have an appreciation for one another under all of our trying conditions.

I never cease to marvel at the tenacity you all exhibited during the HikaNation crossing. I only wish I could have done more to show my appreciation to such a fine group of people.

I have just looked at the synonyms of the word "tenacious" which include such descriptive words as strong, cohesive, tough, sticky, retentive, stubborn and courageous; those words certainly describe some of the desirable characteristics of you all. You were just beautiful to me and I hope we continue to remain in close contact in the future.

As you probably remember, we inaugurated the commemorative HikaNation hikes last summer. The program was a success, but a financial failure. Ed Winkelman (Deschene), John Mills, Tim Geoghegan, Bill Ewart, Tony Merten and Al Forst were there to make the program a success. In addition to the hiking activities they documented the route information and we intend to use the draft copy of that information this summer.

I had a very enjoyable 1981 summer and I have to inform you that I too have been in the bottom of Dark Canyon. It was sure hot--and now I know why you all kept me waiting at Gooseberry Ranger Station, while you were cooling it in the water holes of the canyon.

By the way, I elected to change the route through eastern Colorado, so you wont have to do much road walking in the future. The new route, as researched by John Mills, extends from Silerton Co down the continental divide to Cumbers Pass Colo., than to Tres Piedras N Mex, than east to <sup>San</sup> Cristobal NM, Wheeler Peak, Red River NM, Eagle Nest, Cimarron, Maxwell, Capulin, than up a river valley into the Oklahoma panhandle at Kenton Ok and than into Kansas at Elkhart. The route through western Kansas will also have to be altered to accommodate the New Mexician addition. I have also been in touch with the state of Tennessee recreation trail people to determine whether it would be more enjoyable to alter the HikaNation route to include that beautiful state instead of so much mileage in the central portion of Kentucky.

This summer's activity is still as I planned. In cooperation with Kay Beebe, the coordinator of AHS Volunteer Vacations in the National Parks and Forests, I have elected to have a HikaNation work hike program in which the participants use the HikaNation Route Finder information, hike a certain selected portion the HikaNation route and mark it with cairns--so we can find it at some later date. So my present projected schedule is 9 thru 30 May in Nevada, 7 thru 28 June in Utah, 12 thru 31 July in Colorado, 9 thru 30 August in New Mexico, 6 thru 27 September in Arkansas, and 4 thru 25 October in Missouri. I have not yet selected the specific segments of the route to be worked. If you have any preferences, please let me know.

I need your managerial experience out on the trail, so if you have any free time this summer and want to volunteer your help, please get in contact with me real soon. Why not all of you come than we'll have at least one thousand mile party.

Please spread the word about our programs as the national publicity seems to be lacking for some unknown reason.

Also I would like to express my pleasure with the expressions of Donna and Stacy regarding the Backpacker magazine editorial. I just knew that Bill Kimsly was in for a verbal barrage for his omission of some of the hikers names. There are many other gross errors being published by lesser experienced packers--consider doing as I have personally suggested to you all, let'm have it when it is obvious they dont know what the hell they are talking about.

Well I came home from the Atlantic Ocean in May 1981, went west to Utah, and than came home in August, went to the 1981 AHS HikaNation Hike-In in October, than I started out for Australia and New Zealand in late November. Being retired from the USAF, I hitched a ride on a USAF airplane to Australia. Many of our citizens do not realize that the National Science Foundation has an active research program in Antarctic and the USAF in conjunction with the US Navy aviation service provides the air resupply to the Antarctic ice cap. I didn't get to the ice cap, but thats another future project.

I left Norton AF Base in San Bernardino Ca on the 18 of November 1981, flew to Hickham AF base in Hawaii, to Pago Pago in American Samoa, to Christ Church New Zealand, and than on to Sydney Australia. I brought a Aussie Greyhound bus pass for Australia and traveled from Sidney to Cairns, to Darwin, to Derby, to Perth, to Adelaide, to Alice Springs, to Brisbane, to Melbourne, to Hobart, to Melbourne and than returned to Sydney. The trip took 52 days.

I saw deserts, jungles, mountains, oceans, dry rivers, kangaroos, kola bears, sheep, dingos, camels, aborigines, large clean cities, dirty mining villages, outback ranch houses and some people who think they speak English. Three fourths of the geographical area in Australia is virtually useless unless you are in the mining industry. I do not really see any real need for me to rush back to Australia. Their mountainous area is in the western area of Tasmania. They are is heavily ravined, low altitude wooded mountains.

In New Zealand their mountains are beautiful with much higher sharp peaks, glaciers and deep fiords. I didn't get to do any packing, because everytime I made a decision to do so, it rained in torrents.

I used a bus/rail pass in New Zealand and found thats the only way to travel economically. The tourist industry in both countries is highly organized for the full paying traveler. I was not the routine traveler with my pass and pack I assure you.

As another new adventure for me, I used the International Youth Hostel system in both countries. For about three to six dollars per night you could keep relative clean and rested, so that was quite an experience. I took the AHS HikaNation picture slides and make several presentations concerning HikaNation 1980. When the hostels were not available I would bargain for bed and breakfast at some lesser than prime hotel and usually paid about 10 dollars per night.

Another important event for me, was that I meet John Mills down on the Pacific Crest Trail in southern California in November. I did not get to see Jerry Benson.

I must close for now, here's hoping to see you later this year along the trail--so until than it just got to be "HIKANATION FOREVER."

Monty