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For Immediate Release

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HALF A HUNDRED HARDY

HIKERS HEAD FOR OKLAHOMA

ON HISTORIC HIKANATION

More than 50 hikers will be entering Oklahoma by the end of the first week in November on their way to a historic feat -- a cross-country trek from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The project, sponsored by the makers of Postum instant grain beverage, will cover 4,500 miles.

The Postum HikaNation robust walkers are scheduled to reach the state border near South Coffeyville about Nov. 8 and figure to take approximately two weeks hiking through the state.

While they will be traveling mainly along hiking trails and county roads, they will pass through or near the following communities as they wend their way through the northeast section of the state: Nowata, Claremore, Catoosa, Wagoner, Muskogee and Stilwell.

They also will reach the midway point in the journey across America and be honored guests at the dedication of the Jean Pierre Chouteau Trail as a National Recreation Trail, on Saturday, Nov. 15. The ceremonies will take place at the Afton Landing Recreation Area, six miles west of Wagoner.

The hikers started in San Francisco in early April and are scheduled to reach Washington, D.C., in the spring of 1981.

"In between, we'll be walking through some of the most picturesque scenery on this earth," says Jim Kern, president of the American Hiking Society, which is conducting the coast-to-coast project. "We need to be protected against the ravages of time and the unthinking few who have no respect for nature."

(more)

In establishing the hike route, officials of the AHS sought to design a trail that would pass through the midsection of the nation and through states that were important in the settling of the United States back when, more than a century ago, most hikers were traveling in a westerly direction.

The hike route within Oklahoma was laid out under the direction of Bob Smith, park ranger for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Chouteau Lock and Dam 17.

The other states along the HikaNation route include California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia.

Among the members of the HikaNation group are John Stout, a 69-year-old retired aircraft machinist, and Jiamie Pyles, a year-old girl being wheeled across America in a specially designed "contraption" pushed by her parents. Others on the hike include nurses, a longshoreman, an engineer and a librarian, who have taken leaves from their jobs to discover America on foot.

Unlimited amounts of Postum are being supplied to the hikers by General Foods, which is joined by the Department of the Interior in sponsoring HikaNation. General Foods also has given the AHS a grant to cover administrative costs associated with HikaNation. Says Postum Product Manager Deborah Edwards: "We are delighted to be helping the AHS in this wholesome and worthwhile undertaking."

The hikers are eager to be joined by local hiking enthusiasts for segments of the trek and anyone wishing to hike with them can determine the precise whereabouts of the HikaNation group by calling (305) 251-0484. A regularly updated recorded message will provide all relevant information on a 24-hour-a-day basis.