

From: Gene Oliva
Carl Byoir & Associates, Inc.
380 Madison Avenue, 212-986-6100
New York, New York 10017

For Immediate Release

Contact: Rhoda Kaufman, Assistant Manager
Corporate Communications
General Foods Corporation
914-683-2404

LAWRENCE 'MONTY' MONTGOMERY

Think of the television trailmasters.

There was Ward Bond, a strong and reliable leader on Wagon Train. Then there was Eric Fleming of Rawhide, another with leadership qualities that nurtured, among others, Clint Eastwood as the young cowpoke. And there were the numerous trail bosses who led the wagon trains through Dodge City in the long-running Gunsmoke.

All the trailmasters -- at least the Hollywood versions -- combined a pinch of toughness when needed, a dash of humor and a great measure of comfort and reassurance to those who depended on their ability to guide them safely on their westward journeys.

A real-life, latter-day trailmaster is about to lead his charges to their destination this month, traveling some 4,500 miles from San Francisco to the nation's capital.

He's Lawrence "Monty" Montgomery, Postum HikaNation national coordinator and trail boss on the transcontinental trek, and he uses a combination of military discipline and grandfatherly advice to keep diverse personalities working as a group on the arduous hike.

(more)

Montgomery, a 64-year-old retired Air Force colonel, driving his van and Airstream trailer support vehicle, has guided the hikers since they left San Francisco in April of last year and has earned the affection and respect of everyone involved in the epic journey.

The support vehicle serves as headquarters for the hike and is waiting in camp each night ahead of the hikers. Each hiker is allowed one cubic foot of space in the trailer to keep a few extra clothes or food. Everything else needed for survival, they carry on their backs.

"Although I am nearby, all individuals are responsible for their own welfare," Montgomery said. "We make no great demands on them. We tell them their destination, and it's up to them to get there."

On a normal hiking day, Monty travels ahead to alert authorities that the hikers are coming. He obtains permission to cross private lands, and warns cafe and restaurant owners that more than 50 hungry hikers are headed that way. He also picks up mail and packages at designated post offices along the route.

The hikers are on the move six days a week. On their day of rest, Montgomery shuttles them into the nearest town to shop or do laundry. To make room for these trips, the hikers remove a 300-gallon water tank from the back of the van. The group often camps where there is no water supply.

(more)

A more important task for the native of Ray, Ill., is dispensing first aid, both physical and spiritual, and providing a father figure for the mostly young hikers.

"He's the person who makes this thing work," said Rex Halfpenny, a 30-year-old from Hawaii. "He knows how to handle situations where our stress level increases and morale drops."

Montgomery, the father of two, is a long-time hiker and is well known in the hiking community. He has traversed the length of the Pacific Crest Trail in California.