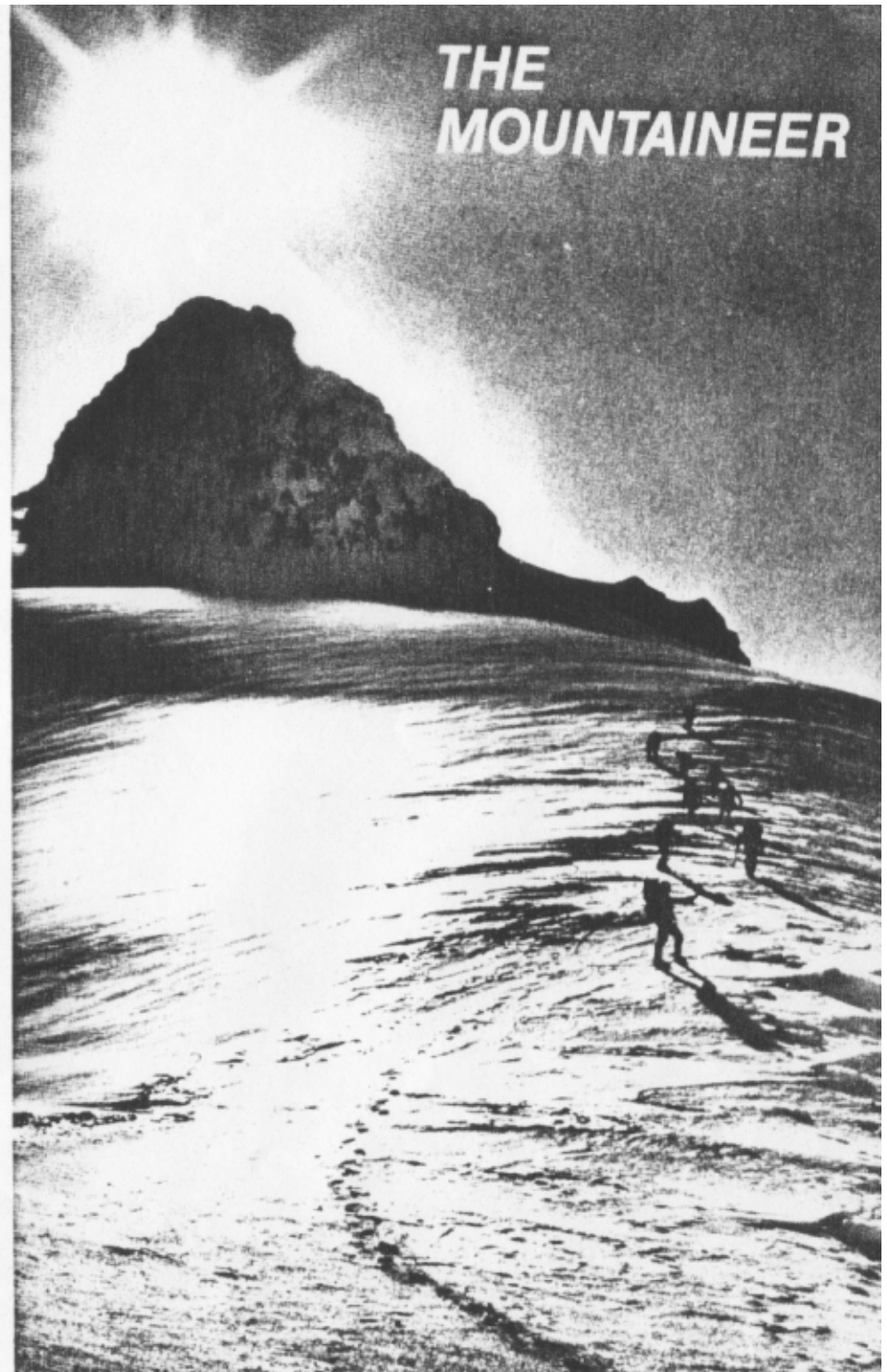


Seattle, Wash.  
12/15/83

To Lori & Joe  
Best of everything  
in your coming wedding  
John Stout



## Twenty Million Footsteps (April 12, 1980 — May 27, 1981)

John E. Stout

How did I, a 120-pound lightweight, come to walk across North America from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic, carrying all my necessities upon my back? Did the idea blossom on December 6, 1979, at a Tacoma Mountaineers backpackers' banquet when I read a brochure that contained the invitation: "HIKERS NEEDED TO HIKE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES"? Or was the ground tilled in some obscure recess of my distant past, perhaps in a Boy Scout camp in Indiana or as I labored on my farm, seeking to be self-sufficient? Did it sprout much later, after I changed to urban living, joined The Mountaineers, and began climbing? Could it have all come together when I read the purpose of the hike, as suggested in the brochure: "To encourage more hiking trails and promote low energy recreation"? Did that purpose inspire me more than its few words suggest? Or was it a quirk of mine that always wanted a definite objective in any outdoor activity in which I participated?

Whatever the reason for my involvement, I could not resist the invitation — "HIKERS NEEDED TO HIKE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES." Consequently, I walked from San Francisco, California, to Cape Henlopen, Delaware. I still find it hard to believe that I really did it — hike more than 4,000 miles, take approximately 20,000,000 footsteps.

The American Hiking Society, then an infant organization, created HIKANATION to promote its name and message and put it on the map. The society was successful and achieved its goal, and I wish to express my sincere appreciation. In any activity as extended as this, much support is needed. Thanks should be given to all the American Hiking Society members who spent several years planning the hike, while operating on a shoestring budget; to everyone who supported it during the long days of its actual "happening"; to the many friends who encouraged me to keep plugging on. And, mostly, thanks should be given to my wife, Helen. I didn't really ask her if I could go on the hike, I just overwhelmed her with the idea. Nevertheless, she provided the moral support that sustained me; without it, I would probably never have completed the walk.

Hikanation, as planned by the American Hiking Society, was to



Parade Day, National Capitol Steps, May 13, 1981

K. Jewell

be a 4,147-mile coast-to-coast walk from the Pacific Ocean to Washington, D.C. Beginning at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, on April 12, 1980, the hikers were scheduled to arrive in the nation's capital thirteen months hence. Such a walk entailed traversing thirteen states and three major mountain ranges — the Sierra Nevada, the Rocky Mountains, and the Appalachians. Later, by common consent, the hikers extended the walk from the nation's capital across part of Maryland and Delaware to Cape Henlopen, on the Atlantic Ocean.

Shortly after reading the brochure, I wrote to HIKANATION headquarters in Miami, Florida, and the memos began to come — not complete information, but a start. I did not then understand that the intention was to hike during the winter months — that seemed to be impractical. Eventually, however, I got “most of the picture” and started equipping myself. I had always been thrifty and given to “making do,” but something swept away my inhibitions with regard to spending money. Consequently, I began to outfit myself with new, lightweight equipment.

How does one “gear up” for a 13-months backpack trip? I didn't know, but I did understand how to outfit myself for a week or two, and that was a starting point. I realized I would not have everything correct at the beginning; I would just do the best I could with what I had, then adapt as the situation demanded. In order to prepare myself physically for the jaunt, I packed 45 pounds over the Burke-Gilman Trail on several occasions. Fortunately, my legs were in good shape from running.

Early in April, 1980, I flew to Oakland, California, making sure I had a seat on the left-hand side of the plane. At that time Mount St. Helens had become active but the volcano had not yet blown its top. The day was bright and sunny, and as we descended over the Bay Area I could see in a glance the territory we would be hiking across during the first week or two of HIKANATION.

I spent several pleasant days with my children and grandchildren in the Bay Area. I had some misgivings when my daughter put me on BART for downtown San Francisco; I had still more when I backpacked up the steps of the YMCA, where the hikers were to assemble, on April 11, for the first meeting. I did not know anyone in the party, thus was a bit reserved as I entered the building. But the enthusiasm was already infectious, and I felt something big and exciting in the air. I could sense it in the actions of these strangers. At a briefing session in the basement of a nearby church we started “shaping up.” Here I met Lawrence “Monty” Montgomery, the support vehicle driver, and Jim Kern, the originator of the cross-country hike. The basement was packed, mostly

with young people. They were from many states and a few foreign countries, and they had all degrees of backpacking experience — from virtually none to 2,000 continuous miles. At 68, I was the oldest member by ten years; the youngest was six-month-old Jiamie Pyle. Her parents carried her, along with their backpacks, while pushing several wheeled rigs loaded with 150 pounds of gear. The party also included a 14-year-old boy who was on leave from his school in California.

General Foods was one of the sponsors of HIKANATION, and at this meeting the company gave us our first T-shirts, which proclaimed the purpose of the hike: More trails, low energy recreation, car pooling. But this was “old stuff” to me, who had been a member of The Mountaineers for twenty years.

On Saturday, April 12, I went to Golden Gate Park for the HIKANATION kickoff. Before we started walking, we listened to speeches, and we indulged the newspaper photographers and reporters who were present to record the event. Here I first discovered that I was old, when questioned by reporters as to why I was going on this long trek. I told them it was better than sitting on a park bench



“My life was simple, akin to primitive man”

Helen Stout

feeding pigeons. We then walked to the beach behind a bagpipe band, and I was accompanied by one of my daughters and three grandchildren.

As a ceremonial gesture, we dipped our boots in the Pacific surf, then the huge crowd made its way around the northern shore of San Francisco to our first campsite — on the oily cement of a parking lot beneath a freeway ramp. The next day at 6:00 A.M. 63 of us — the “through hikers” who planned to walk all the way to Washington, D.C. — led the group on the top deck of the Oakland Bay Bridge. Two top lanes had been reserved for our use for 3½ hours; this was the first time in history they had been closed to automobile traffic. On that bright morning, 7,000 people joined us, to photograph and laugh their way to Oakland, seven miles. For the bridge portion of the hike, I was again accompanied by my oldest daughter. The day was a long one for HIKANATION — we walked seventeen miles. My pack was overloaded, at forty-five pounds, but I was too excited to notice. Although I had attempted to do so, I had not been able to reduce the weight. We made our way through Berkeley, walking on the streets, then up into the green California hills behind the city.

Around the campfire that night we learned how the organization would work. We were to have coordinators and pathfinders in each state. We were also to have a steering committee composed of five hikers, to be partially replaced every two weeks, one of whom was to act as spokesman and work with “Monty.” The committee would meet to discuss the route, or perhaps to discipline a hiker when occasion demanded such action. The state aid system worked well in California, but not so well in some of the other states.

Upon leaving Oakland, we went up over Mount Diablo and camped on the top at 3,800 feet. Here I met a high school friend who had read about HIKANATION in the paper and had come to see me. He followed us on his motorcycle to the edge of the Sierras, frequently taking my laundry home with him and returning it clean on his next visit. Some members of the party had never backpacked before, and most were hurting from overweight packs and not enough conditioning. Moreover, the California blacktop cooked everyone’s feet, including mine. I had huge blisters where none had ever been before. The leadership came in with a flatbed truck to haul some of our gear for a few weeks until we “toughened up” and sent the excess weight home. We also acquired a one-foot-square cardboard box that served as storage space for spare food. The box rode in the 29-foot Airstream trailer. The gray van that pulled the trailer carried a 300-gallon stock tank equipped with

a rubber garden hose. This was to be our mobile water supply during the trip. We called it “Monty Spring.” The van’s driver, Lawrence Montgomery, was the key man; without “Monty” the trip would never have succeeded. He furnished his own equipment and time. His vehicles got battered up but he kept them always ready. The trailer was our command post for over 400 days and nights.

“Monty” was superb in his public and personal relations, despite the pressure that was on him for more than a year. His management was by objective, and our hike was not handled like a military operation, although he was a retired Air Force officer from Illinois. He was skillful in dealing with non-military people. He loaned money, gave advice, opened blisters, and brought mail. He communicated regularly with Jim Kern, President of the American Hiking Society. Jim was in Miami keeping his business going and doing the ground work for HIKANATION. So, too, was his secretary, Nancy, who kept the “HOT LINE” up to date.

The fifty mail stops along the route were scheduled to match our progress. “Monty” kept the mobile spring full and picked up our mail at the various stops. The timing had to meet any schedules we had to maintain along the way. We were to hike trails whenever possible, secondary roads next, and avoid main highways and big cities. The intention was to walk six days and resupply and rest the seventh day, buying supplies along the way, or ordering freeze-dried food or equipment replacements from a volunteer in the party. After a few weeks, several members of the party left for various reasons. Some never returned, and new hikers were welcome to join the group at any time through our Miami “HOT LINE.”

The local coordinators arranged the campsites ahead of time, preferably on public property, but when local help was not available, “Monty” went ahead and secured permission for us to camp in public buildings and on farm fields, and found places for us to bathe. On several occasions permission was not granted, perhaps because the owners were suspicious. Consequently, we camped on railroad rights-of-way. Sometimes we had to spend the night on highway shoulders, where the wind from passing trucks flapped the tents and the drivers blew their horns. However, in most cases we were warmly welcomed. Often we were objects of curiosity — people drove by to view the strange “tent city” that had sprung up overnight in a field. At dusk the tents glowed like fireflies from candle lanterns as the restless inhabitants prepared their evening meals, wrote daily logs, or letters to send home. Then the next day we would be gone, leaving no trace. Our toilet was made in a



"Rest stop — dry off your feet and your boots"

*Helen Stout*

neighboring woods — each hiker was equipped with a plastic garden trowel to utilize in disposing of waste. All litter was carefully picked up and packed in the versatile van, which thus became a dumpster that "Monty" drove to the nearest dump.

I quickly learned about long distance hikers. They were a different breed of people than I had known and most of them were independent of trail leadership. My Mountaineer-instilled sense of safety was appalled because I had been in hostile country before and I knew that the wilderness doesn't care. I soon came to realize, however, that although I was not yet a long distance hiker I was as trailwise as anyone in the party. One fact that I knew from the beginning became indelibly fixed in my mind — that if anything was to happen to me during the hike, I was the one to make it happen. Although we were dependent upon one another and upon the vehicle support, the decisions with respect to coming and going were mine. I became aware, after some time had passed, that with this independent group one could not "close up" the party. Therefore I decided to "play it cool" and not let any mishap occur to myself. Perhaps I wanted to be more popular than safe, but I knew it wouldn't do any good to squawk because hikers weren't doing it right. So I said nothing. My two main concerns were to have enough stamina to do each day's hike and not get lost. Fortunately, when winter came, it was a comparatively mild one; had the weather been severe, we would have been in trouble.

Life during the HIKANATION trek was simple, akin in many respects to the existence of primitive man: make camp at night, out of the wind; place your pack on one side of the tent, sleeping bag by the door, toilet paper and trowel out; have candle lantern and stove ready, food for the evening meal selected; go to the van to get your mail, a half gallon of water, and white gas for the stove; check the route and campsite for the next day; visit other members of the party, then return to your tent, cook, sack out, write letters and the day's events in your log; sleep, arise early in warm weather, late in winter, cook, eat, break camp, then hike to the next campsite. Of course this performance was repeatedly endlessly. The distance traveled varied from eight to seventeen miles a day, depending upon where the "rest day" could be advantageously located. Hopefully, it was situated near a small town where stores, laundromat, and bathing facilities were available. Sometimes we bivouacked in a church, school, American Legion Hall, Armory, or ranger station.

After crossing the Sierra Nevada, we hiked through the high desert of the Great Basin in Nevada, sleeping among the sagebrush, watering at our van waterhole. The time was still early spring and the nights were often frosty. We entered Utah about the time summer arrived. Here we traversed the canyon country in the southern part of the state, including three national parks — Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Capitol Reef. One member became ill at this time and it appeared as if a major rescue attempt might be needed, but he walked out and had surgery in a nearby town. After he had recovered he rejoined us to finish the hike. At Bryce Canyon, one of our sponsors, General Foods, provided us with a huge barbecue. Because it was summer the weather was quite hot, but we avoided the heat by hiking at night.

Usually we walked on the left-hand side of a road. We also rested or catnapped on that side. When we resumed the march, we always went left. This almost led to my undoing on one occasion shortly before we reached Lake Powell. I stopped to rest, but the left-hand side of the road was too steep, so I lay down on the right-hand side and promptly fell asleep. When I awoke I shouldered my pack and started walking down the road, only to meet one of our women hikers who was coming the other way. After considerable discussion she convinced me I was hiking back to California. I lost four miles on that one.

We camped on the west side of Lake Powell, the name given to the enlarged Colorado River backed up behind the Glen Canyon Dam. We crossed the lake near Hite, Utah. Most of the party used the highway bridge, but several people were somewhat more

adventurous — they fashioned makeshift rafts out of driftwood.

After leaving Lake Powell, we spent six days broiling in the depths of Dark Canyon, a tributary gorge coming into the Colorado River from the east. However, we washed away the dust and the heat by taking dips in the numerous rock pools. After we climbed out of the canyon, the town of Monticello honored us with a big feed and celebration.

We walked into Colorado at Dove Creek in early August. This was the widest state on HIKANATION's itinerary, and sixty days had been allotted to make the crossing. At Dove Creek the American Hiking Society provided a bus to transport the unwashed hikers on a three-day sightseeing trip to the ruins in Mesa Verde National Park. Here I experienced my first HIKANATION potluck dinner. Everyone cooked a dish, and we sat at a picnic table passing the pots around by flashlight, each person taking a spoonful as the pot went by.

Colorado was greener and moister than Nevada and Utah and reminded me of the Pacific Northwest. At Rico, in the San Juan National Forest, we followed switchback trails through the forest, and the dry desert taste left my mouth. Whenever we passed through small towns, I ate in restaurants to vary the fare. I particularly enjoyed breakfast — eggs, hash browns, toast, and coffee. We waited five days at Silverton to connect with a speaker from the Department of the Interior.

About this time Helen came, and we rode the narrow gauge railroad from Durango to Silverton. She then left for a visit back to Utah while the hikers did an eleven-day backpack across the Continental Divide. The first two days were wet; we had puddles of water in the campsites. My goretex tent leaked so badly by this time I ordered another tent with a rain fly. The first night I utilized a wrecked trailer at a mine site and slept dry. The nights were cold on the divide — we were hiking close to 12,000 feet above sea level.

When we descended the Rockies into South Park, I found Helen waiting. She hiked with me through Mosca Pass in mid-September. This was near the Great Sand Dunes National Monument. Because her feet were tender, she sometimes rode with "Monty." At Walsenberg, on the western edge of the Great Plains, she left for home. The canteloupe harvest was in full swing at Rocky Ford, a town of about 5,000 in the Arkansas River Valley, so we ate our fill, then pressed on across the plains to La Junta, Las Animas, and Lamar. As the country flattened out, the water deteriorated in quality.

On October 5 we walked into Kansas at Coolidge. Ahead of us were miles of level country, extending to endless horizons. We

made good time because flat country road walking was the order of the day, but we had to improvise something to break the monotony. We called such walking "working out our time block." We walked fifty minutes, then rested for ten.

With the onset of fall, the temperature began to drop and we walked longer periods of time, which we called "standups." I did two-hour standups without resting, then sometimes three-hour ones. Our trail coordinator in Kansas was a young minister who backpacked. He came with his small children to walk bits and pieces of the route. A backpacking banker hiked with us for several periods of time. He treated me to his special granola mix because I bragged about his sample. When his wife came to pick him up for the last time she brought an envelope full of money to cash checks for the hikers. No identification was required. Most places on our route required considerable identification before they would cash money orders.

One day in early November, as I was coming home late into camp, a cold, wet wind blew across the Kansas plains. Winter was coming too soon for me, so I began looking for a better place than an open field to spend the night. I started inspecting culverts. Finally I found a dry one with a windbreak on the windward side. I spread my tarp on the dry, caked mud and hurriedly prepared and ate dinner in the growing darkness. All night long the chill, wet wind blew over the top of my dry, cozy bivouac. Next morning I hiked by my wet companions, who were still breaking camp after a miserable night out in the open.

Kansas is not all flat, especially in the extreme southeastern part of the state. Here the Kansans proudly hiked with us over their switchback trail through the golden-leaved hardwoods in Elk City Lake State Park. The trail was pleasant but I didn't linger — the days were winter short.

We passed through Coffeyville, Kansas, into Oklahoma north of Oologah Lake. Bob Smith, our Oklahoma coordinator, was an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers. He had been relieved from his regular duties in order to make our passage smooth. We were only part of a large group of trail users dedicating the new Jean Pierre Chouteau Trail. Hikers, Boy Scouts, horsemen, boaters all did their bit to bring the trail into use. Smith went all out to make the dedication ceremony a success at Afton Landing near Wagoner. The speaker's platform was the flatbed of a semi-truck. After listening to the speeches and the presentation of awards, we feasted on chili. Winter arrived the next day in the form of wet snow. One of the huge army tents collapsed on me and my gear. I recovered everything and packed it up again.



Across the Mississippi to Illinois

*Rex Halfpenny*

This zigzagging down into Oklahoma, Arkansas, then up again into Missouri and southern Illinois, had a reason. Various government officials, both federal and state, were working together to tie 600 miles of footpaths together into one unit as the Ozark Trail. We were dramatizing and promoting this as we walked through the Ozark Mountains. We moved through isolated country on national forest trails and roads.

I was ready for winter now. I had a new tent, sleeping bag, long underwear, and thin wool sweaters. One could not stay dry, however, when hiking and sweating in the rain, but I knew I could heat my tent for a short time with the stove I had. In fact, it proved to be a morale builder. The stove was the last item I packed in the morning. I warmed my hands over its blaze after rolling up the icy nylon. During freezing weather, body vapor froze on the underside of the tent's rain fly, and the hoarfrost could be shaken out like fine snow; other mornings the fly was a sheet of ice, so I rolled that up. I loved Arkansas but felt it would look better in the springtime.

We saw limestone caves in Arkansas, and passed by huge springs that bubbled out of hillsides. North Face provided us with a Thanksgiving dinner at Lake Fort Smith State Park in the community room. A natural foods banquet and overnight stay at Billie Joe Tatum's place gave us another sample of warm Arkansas

hospitality. Mrs. Tatum was a tradition in that country. She gave certificates, signed by the governor, to each hiker, which stated that he or she was an Arkansas Traveler.

In the Ozarks, we forded icy rivers in our stocking feet. I was always concerned about cutting my feet on broken glass but never did. A few times when I wore my camp shoes I felt safe. They would freeze in a plastic sack outside my pack later.

About the middle of December, we camped near Yellville, Arkansas, on the carpet of an unoccupied home, and I celebrated my sixty-ninth birthday. The weather was cold but the girls in the party fixed me a birthday cake. The next day was "Monty's" birthday, and they had a big party for him at Bull Shoals.

The day was cold when we hiked out of Bull Shoals State Park. That night some of us slept in a hay barn, and I placed my glasses in one of my boots for safekeeping, only to find, the next morning, that the lenses were covered with dirty ice. I broke the frames while warming them. Apparently this was not to be one of my best days. I missed the trail markers and lost several miles. Then some joker moved the cairns and we lost more miles. By that time it was too dark to see much. "Monty" had missed us in camp, so picked us up and hauled us to a bivouac in a commune. The next morning, after we had a big breakfast, he took us back to where he had picked us up, in order that we could resume the hike. We arrived back at the commune three hours later, and of course we had to eat another breakfast.

We crossed into Missouri shortly before Christmas, and spent three days camped in a Legion Hall in West Plains. The local folks prepared Christmas breakfast for us. Later in the day we were treated to a barbecued pork dinner. Jim Kern was with us to hike during the holidays.

I always tried to find a campsite with a windbreak. We hiked through Fremont, Missouri, on December 31, and I spent New Year's Eve sprawled across a dry ditch in the woods. The midnight revelers couldn't find me to help them celebrate the advent of 1981, so I had a good night's sleep. On some nights in Missouri the temperature plunged to ten degrees below zero. One day an eighty-year-old man joined me to walk a half-mile on the road. He said a neighboring town had been named for his grandfather. We met many friendly people in the state.

HIKANATION came up to the Mississippi River in mid-January, 1981, at Wittenberg, Missouri. The river was not bridged at this town; thus it was a case of swim or cross in a boat. Only one person wanted to swim the river, but he was unable to arrange for a support boat to follow alongside, and was unwilling to attempt it

without one. So everybody jammed the decks of an open ferry. When the steel ramp grated down upon the Illinois side, we swarmed ashore, yelling as we invaded a new state. Of course, as customary, the media zeroed in on us with reporters and TV cameras as, like a conquering army, we moved up the "beach-head" to a nip of victory champagne at our trailer base.

We passed through Grand Tower, Illinois, on January 15, where I had a catfish dinner for lunch. Six miles beyond the town I pitched my tent among the bare trees and driftwood by a Mississippi River slough. The night was cold, but I slept well with all my clothes on. The next morning I tried to crawl out of my sleeping bag but I was stuck fast by the seat of my pants. How, I wondered, could I make the trail wearing a sleeping bag? I turned and twisted, but was careful to avoid ripping out the seat of my pants. Eventually my trousers came loose and I was able to make the trail on schedule. The culprit turned out to be a huge wad of pink bubble gum that I had acquired the prior evening; somehow it wound up inside the bag, melted, thus gluing me fast.

As we crossed the narrow southern tip of Illinois, in the barren coal mining country, we struck a mutual chord with the state parks administration, which was struggling to sell its parks and new trails system to the public. The blue paint on one of the new trails was scarcely dry on the leafless trees when I was hiking alone and ran out of daylight and trail at the same time. I could see two lights in the distance. Where lights shone, I reasoned, there had to be a road. I took a compass bearing with my flashlight and made my way between the lights to the road, only to find two other hikers who were as lost as I was. With a little help from a native we found our camp in the darkness.

At Grant City State Park, in Illinois, the park administration provided thirty-seven oak seedlings, one for each of us "through hikers" to plant. However, the frozen ground was rock hard, making it impractical to plant that many trees. Accordingly, Bob, the teen-ager, helped me chisel a hole in the ground with a pick and stuff in the roots of one tree for the benefit of the TV cameras that were grinding away. The remaining trees would not be planted until spring weather thawed the ground. However, in the woods where my tent was pitched the fallen leaves insulated the ground, and the earth was soft enough that I could drive in the stakes.

We approached the Ohio River in late January. At noon I stopped with some of the party to eat lunch and decided I wanted something hot. I fueled up the stove, then warmed up my leftovers and heated water for coffee, resting my right knee upon the frozen ground for about twenty minutes, as I prepared the lunch. Later,

after I had gone a half mile down the river road, walking into town, I gradually became lame in the right knee. I spent all afternoon in a heavy snowfall dragging my foot to Cave-in-Rock, Illinois. It was dark when I ate dinner in a local cafe, and I found a bivouac in an empty store building downtown. I had a joint relaxer pill in my reserve food box. I took this and within a few days the problem vanished.

This incident taught me a lesson. All summer long I had thrown myself down on the bare ground anywhere to rest, but now nature stopped me hard with a warning that the season had changed and that my joints were not as they once were. I never rested on the bare ground again.

Winter deepened as we crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky. This was a long state and we were going to hike the full length of it. While on the trail I retreated beneath layers of sweaters. Socializing in camp was now limited, but in the warm cafes and public buildings the noisy enthusiasm broke loose and could not be repressed. Once I came in late to a cafe to eat dinner. All the HIKATION members stood up and cheered me; I was one of the gang. At night in the camps I discovered that as I slept the winter cold drained my calorie tanks dry by 1:00 A.M. I awoke, cold even though I had spiked my evening's meal with butter or popcorn oil, emulating the Eskimos with their intake of fat. I fired up my stove carefully, took it into the tent and set it on a pot lid on the insolate to heat water for cocoa. Then I slept warm until morning. At night I left an inch of water in the pot to freeze; the next morning I melted it to thaw out the water bottle caps. I bivouacked where I was sheltered from the elements whenever possible — in store buildings, abandoned houses, parsonages, and armories. When none of these were to be had, I made the most of whatever windbreak was available. One night the temperature plunged fifty degrees. The next morning I backpacked an ice-covered tent and a lump of frozen mud to thaw out on the floor of a warm motel room in Brownsville, Kentucky.

At Mammoth Cave National Park, my brother and a Boy Scout friend from fifty years ago visited me and rescued me from the weather for a few days by taking me to a motel where I was wined and dined. We had an interesting tour of the cave and attended a general party meeting afterward to introduce them to party politics.

Mail poured in on me from home and friends — so much that I frequently carried unopened letters in my pack several days, waiting for an opportunity to read them.

Sometimes we walked on roads that had narrow shoulders, with little room to spare when the huge coal trucks roared by, losing an



At Somerset, Kentucky, I acquired a hiking partner — Terry, from Arkansas. I needed one by this time. Winter seemed to drag on. I was always attempting to dry damp gear and hoping for a warm bivouac.

Deep in the wilderness of eastern Kentucky we observed the beauties of the Cumberland River were marred by many plastic jugs that had floated down from casual stream bed dumps to lodge on virgin river bars where they didn't belong.

Eventually we came to Cumberland Gap, where many pioneers passed through in the early days. We climbed the hill above the gap, and I placed my foot on the spot where Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia come together.

We followed the southwestern border of Virginia near Tennessee to Damascus, Virginia, where I saw my first Appalachian Trail marker on a pole in the town. I made my way to the hostel — a rundown house, but tight. I found a foam pad in a side room. The house was cool but the party gathered in good cheer around a blaze in the fireplace. My youngest daughter and husband visited me here after a long drive from their home in southeastern Virginia.

A shortcut trail allowed my morale to catch up with my resolve. I stayed here two extra days beyond the rest day, then started alone on the Appalachian Trail. I found the going slow after so long a rest but made my way through the snow to the first shelter. Terry met me here, and we made our way from shelter to shelter, covering the open fronts with tents to keep out the cold. During this time some of the hikers became overly optimistic about the weather and they sent their winter clothes home, but I wasn't about to part company with my "woolies" even though it was mid-March.

The hikers scattered along the Appalachian Trail to lessen the impact. I did not see some members for days. Winter seemed never to end, but then the trail wandered through large patches of may apples that had recently come up, a sign that spring was upon us. At noon I was sweating in my wool, at night I slept with all my clothes on. Spring came both slowly and rapidly on the Appalachian Trail — slowly with the gradual opening of leaf and flower buds; rapidly with the arrival of Helen in her Volvo at Hollins, Virginia. At the women's college we enjoyed rest days in their spotless visitors' quarters, and ate in the cafeteria. Helen followed the hike in the car as best she could, or else found someone to drive it, while she hiked the trail and camped in the shelters whenever possible. Harriet, my youngest daughter, visited me on the trail regularly. The Washington, D.C. arrival date had been set and I thought perhaps we were short-changed on time, so I kept pushing ahead to make my mileage. This now became easier because the

temperature was warmer and the days were longer. Also, Helen transported part of my gear in the Volvo.

Portions of the Appalachian Trail are sixty years old; other sections are new, where the trail has been relocated on new property, the old having been lost to new owners or development. Resupply was now easier because civilization was always close at hand.

On the last rest day before we reached Harper's Ferry, which is West Virginia, a large contingent of our party was bussed into Washington, D.C. to join a local walkers's group to do their annual 100-kilometer walk that ended at Harper's Ferry. This was to be finished in less than twenty-four hours. I didn't want to stretch my luck, so didn't go, but a large percentage of our group did.

At Harper's Ferry the party increased in size as new and old members came in. The excitement also increased. We had been on the trail more than a year and the long winter had ended. The trees had leafed out and many were blossoming. We still had cool spring rains. The route to the capital was sixty-two miles along the old Chesapeake & Ohio towpath. Shortly after we started down the



Summer in Colorado

Rex Halfpenny

path I was made the flag bearer and was pleased to be chosen for this duty. Helen, two of my daughters, and a five-year-old grandson were with me for the last days on the path and parade. The weather during the march into the capital was wet at times, and the trail was muddy, but on May 13, the parade day, the weather was perfect when we arrived at the base of the Washington Monument.

We milled about on the green grass, mingling with the tourists in the bright sunshine. We had to maintain a tight schedule this day, and it was difficult to keep the flag ahead of the excited hikers. I considered it "far out" to be backpacking up Pennsylvania Avenue in the nation's capital at the head of a colorful pageant which included not only bare-legged, tanned hikers but also the flags from the hikers' home states. The push was constant because the hikers moved too fast. The party stopped in front of the White House, then had an elaborate ceremony on the steps of the Capitol, where various congressmen and American Hiking Society officials spoke. The National Coast Guard Band added to the color. After the speeches, the General Foods hostess tent and a huge banquet at The Top of the Town put the finishing touches to the best day of our year-long hike. The walking was too much for my grandson; he fell asleep and finished the day sleeping under our banquet table, while I ate my dinner and his.

The hike had been scheduled to end in Washington, D.C., but the participants wished to go on and dip their feet in the Atlantic Ocean, thus making it truly a coast-to-coast walk. So on we went. Beyond Washington, D.C., it was all "downhill" to the coast. The pressure was relieved after we walked out of the capital. Most of the route was now on streets or roads. The campsites were well selected by our able Delaware coordinator. At first they were in public places, usually parks; later in big, grassy dairy farmyards. Wild strawberries were ripening along the roadways.

At this time a few people left, and the party became more introspective. The "charge ahead feeling" that had preceded our approach to Washington, D.C. was no longer present. We realized our days as a group were numbered. We had a few cool rains, but the weather was definitely warmer. The last camp was in the house yard of a large dairy, where the tents were set close together. Here we visited and ate our dinner. The next morning we walked along a road into Lewes, Delaware. After gathering at a cocktail lounge by the waterfront, we formed ourselves into a parade. Helen, Harriet, and her husband, Rob, joined us. We walked the three miles to Cape Henlopen to dedicate a short stretch of new trail that wandered through the pines and sand. We

followed a bagpipe band — just as we had done in San Francisco at the beginning of the transcontinental trek. Then we went out to the Atlantic beach, where we formed a ring by holding hands while we sang "America the Beautiful." After some horseplay in the water, we walked back to the beach, and it was all over. That night we dined on barbecued chicken and beer.

Rain fell during the night and the next morning as we broke camp for the last time. Tears mingled with the rain as we said good-bye to each other and drove away. The long slog had ended; the time had arrived to be getting on with something new — like returning home to the wonderful Pacific Northwest. We had walked from one ocean to the other — more than 4,000 miles, about 20,000,000 footsteps.



John and Helen Stout with Hikanation in Colorado, September, 1980 *Rex Halfpenny*