

HIKANATION: IN THE BEGINNING

Conception of Hikanation

Suppose you have something to sell, but you are not a salesperson. However, you know about something everyone could enjoy. Something very old, yet quite new in the sense that it has almost been forgotten. This something can be enjoyed by both sexes, young and old, and is as simple as walking.

Jim Kern has such a product, and he wants to sell the whole nation on it. I am referring to backpacking, a nonpolluting, minimal resource consuming, energy efficient source of recreation easily available to everyone male or female, preschool or retired, and ideally suited for families, groups or small parties, even the individual desiring to be alone. Hiking opens doors to exploration and adventure. Doors that have been forgotten or closed to many folks with the growing years from a carefree childhood to the problematic involved world of contemporary adulthood. In these days of energy and resource consciousness coupled with the growing desire of getting back to nature, backpacking and hiking look especially attractive as a hobby, pastime, and sport. Jim, realizing the above, gave birth to an idea, a dream like desire that sounds almost impossible. The idea was a hike of national proportions, spanning the entire continent and involving Americans from all over the country. On the other hand, who would ever want to hike across the entire U.S.A. ocean to ocean? Much to his surprise, a response came back to the effect of why not? Hikanation was born, and Jim Kern, President of the American Hiking Society, became its father.

Backpacking has come along way in the past couple of decades. Nylon has given the hiker a variety of lightweight, weather resistant gear. New waterproofing processes give the nylon waterproof effectiveness giving the hiker the ability to stay dry in the heaviest rain fall. Aluminum offers strong, lightweight support for pack and tent frames. Synthetic materials keep the outdoor explorer warm even when wet which is a great improvement over the old goose down filled standby. A new process of extracting the water from foods, called freeze drying, gives the wilderness kitchen the variety and tastes of home in compact, lightweight form. All these and more make for a comfortable experience when out in the elements of nature.

The pioneer a hundred or more years ago did not have these comforts and conveniences, but made his trek across unknown wilderness as a matter of necessity. Today's adventurer has the above strong, lightweight tools and the added advantage of comprehensive topographic maps. Today the idea of hiking over thousands of miles can be thought of as fun in the great outdoors. In addition, the word went out in backpacking circles aided greatly by Backpacker Magazine, a periodical devoted specifically to the sport of backpacking, the American Hiking Society and their co-sponsor the United States Department of Interiors Heritage. The conservation and Recreation Service is sponsoring Hikanation to promote hiking and backpacking as a form of recreation suited for the whole family and to emphasize the need for more hiking trails, specifically a four-season transcontinental route. There exists a few north-south routes. However, there is nothing for the east-west and west-east hiker for year around use except interstate highways.

The Preliminary Meeting

A year of preparation involving planning, traveling, mapping, telephone calls, and headaches finally all came together in San Francisco, on April 11, 1980. A meeting was publicized for "thru hikers" to attend at the Glide Memorial Methodist Church. A thru hiker is defined as a backpacker planning to hike all the way from the Golden Gate Park and the Pacific Ocean to Washington D. C. This hike is approximately 4,400 miles and takes over twelve months.

In attendance were almost fifty people. Out of these fifty, almost everyone announced themselves as thru hikers. This conglomeration of individuals, varying widely in ages from all over the country, male and female with backgrounds as diverse as

their home towns have a common interest in backpacking which is to walk from the Golden Gate to the Washington Monument in Washington D.C. donating their time which spans four seasons and carrying all their provisions and life support on their backs. They are a roomfull of strangers destined to become friends, neighbors, best friends, and even lovers. A microcosm (a system analogous to a much larger system in the constitution) of United States citizens soon to become a new community filling a new niche in the American Social System. People have crossed the nation before in groups and in solitude, in races and in necessity, but never before has such a group been made up of such a diverse mixture of individuals and backgrounds. People from the west coast to the east coast, northerners, southerners, and Canada, Ireland, and Hawaii. Personal motivation inspired by almost as many reasons as the twenty-five different states they came from. All joined in an effort to publicize and promote the idea of backpacking.

Finances are always a prominent concern for every effort and this expedition is no exception. Each hiker is expected to support him or herself which includes all food, equipment, and other incurred expenses. The hike fee of one dollar per day, not to exceed thirty dollars, is charged to every hiker joining the Hikanation adventure. This fee is justified by the support vehicle which will follow the hikers across the country providing water, fuel, resupply of necessities, and mail. However, this money is nominal and does not even dent the minimal estimated eighty thousand dollar budget. Therefore, there is a need for additional sponsors. A sponsor is defined as any person or organization which donates a minimum of ten thousand dollars to the effort. At this time, two organizations have become sponsors; The Dusspaugh-Dalton Foundation which provided funding for the opening weekend departure celebration (which included a very large insurance bill to cover the first time in history to walk across the Bay Bridge), and General Foods Postum. Not only did Postum provide funding, but also free "T" shirts to the thru hikers displaying a message of "Postum salutes Hikanation," plus all the Postum the hikers can drink. Other suitable sponsors are still being sought after. One of the most frequently asked questions is the budget of the thru hikers. The average budget is three thousand dollars, the low is one thousand dollars, and the high is five thousand dollars. Yes, that sounds like a lot of money, but then consider and compare the expense to running a household for the same period of time.

Next to finances in logistical importance is government. How does such a diverse group regulate themselves for such an extended time period? A committee of five was decided upon to advise the hikers as they crossed the country. This committee would be re-elected every two weeks by group vote, with no individual serving more than two consecutive terms, but in order to keep continuity in the committee, two of the five would serve on the following two week term. This committee is supported by a nominating committee also of five, made up of those who did not win the election to the steering committee. This hopefully would be sufficient to keep order and harmony within the hiker community. Jim Kern appointed the first two committees and emphasized that Hikanation wanted little or nothing to do with regimentation. This means that codes of law would not be hung over our heads in order that we the hikers may keep as much individuality as possible, but still keeping in mind that wilderness adventurers generally like to be alone or at least escape the confines of modern society. However, at the same time, the value of the group as a whole and the necessity of being a cohesive and concerned group desiring to keep and maintain the goals of Hikanation was expressed. Him made the point that in any large group conflicts will develop, personalities will clash, and the extended strain of the hike and environment will have its toll on individual temperament. A sincere need for concern of fellow hikers was expressed and emphasized. Without this concern and help of one to another, the success of the hike cannot be

assured. The happy and excited group in the warmth of that building that night had no idea of the reality behind his words.

A young medical team from the University of California at Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science decided a group of hikers walking across the country carrying moderate to heavy loads was an ideal and select group to monitor. Dave Buller, author and developer of the Health Activities Project (H.A.P.) was on hand with his staff to take measurements of various respiratory elements, and he requested the hikers to continue to monitor themselves periodically across the nation. The elements of concern were breath rate, volume at rest, and after exercise pulse rate, and pulse recovery state after exercise. The testing and measuring apparatus would follow us across the country in the resupply vehicle and be accessible to the hikers to maintain their records.

The resupply vehicle is a privately owned and operated Ford Van with a twenty-nine foot Airstream trailer belonging to Monty Montgomery, a retired Air Force Colonel who volunteered his time, energy, and vehicle to the Hikanation expedition, and who is the Trip Coordinator. In the van is a custom built 294 gallon water tank to keep the hikers in constant supply of the life substance. The Airstream serves as an office and home for Monty as well as supply and information center and home base for the fifty to sixty backpackers. It is the vital link between wilderness and civilization, a life support luxury no pioneer ever dreamed about.

The meeting ended at 11:00 p.m. that Friday night with the hikers going off in their own directions for the last time in the next year to come. Many out of towners stayed at the San Francisco YMCA allowing individuals to get acquainted with one another before the hike experience. It was their last chance to sleep in a bed, take a shower, use a flush toilet or watch T.V. in the comfort and privacy of a home environment.

Departure Celebration and Hike Shake Down

Hikers and well wishers met at the Polo Grounds of Golden Gate Park about 9:00 a.m. The backpackers were busy organizing themselves and preparing to begin the four thousand mile trek. The news media was there in force along with the cameras of almost every other individual there to record the eventful first steps. Mike McReynolds and his departure celebration committee were responsible for the planning and execution of the days events and the events of the following day. The hikers and a crowd of about five hundred listened to Jim Kerns send off, followed by the words of Randy Schweickert, Apollo 9 Astronaut who hiked with the hikers that Saturday. The California State Planner who did a terrific job of laying a route through San Francisco, across the Bay Bridge through the U.C.B. Campus, and into the California Countryside, Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, noted Nobel Prize Winner who discovered platinum, summarized the hike route. Also on hand was Bill Kemsley, editor of Backpacker Magazine, the number one promoter of the hike. The April 12th and 13th event was covered by every newspaper, radio, and television station in the Bay Area for at least two days. Positive media coverage is a number one concern and goal of Hikanation. Unfortunately, the hikers saw little or nothing of the news coverage themselves.

All the thru hikers were gathered together for a group portrait. A brief head count showed sixty hikers ready to commit themselves for the next twelve to fourteen months. Their ages ran from twelve to sixty-eight years old plus a seven month old baby girl whose parents Dennis "Gower" Pyles and Gayle Rainbow, who had to alter their hike plans to accomodate their new family addition, now plan to cart across the country with them. It is doubtful that such a feat has ever before been accomplished by contemporary man or the original "go west" pioneers in their covered wagons. The aboriginal American "Indian" probably never wanted to do such a thing either. After a burst of photographs and a few send off words of encouragement, the announcement came

to pack up and hike.

At 11:00 a.m., right on schedule, Jeannie Harmon, [REDACTED] and the Black Raven Pipe Band in full dress kilts led the hikers out of the Park west to the Pacific Ocean where the thru hikers stepped into the salt water for a token dip before turning east toward Washington D.C. and the Atlantic Ocean. The hikers stopped at Baker Beach for lunch before passing the Golden Gate Bridge and hiking through the crowded, busy streets of San Francisco and the famous mouth watering temptations of Fisherman's Warf. The first day's hike came to an end at the Fremont Street off ramp of the Bay Bridge, eleven miles into the transcontinental hike. That night camp was tentless as the hikers parked their backpacks beneath the off ramp and spread their mummy style sleeping bags on the paved oily parking lot.

The cool evening passed quickly under the cement structure echoing the sounds of traffic. Most of us could hardly wait to get out of the city and into the wilderness, where dirt is dirt instead of auto grease. Backpackers will in a short time feel right at home in the weeds and soil. It just is not the same on pavement with concrete overhead instead of stars, street lamps instead of moonlight, and combustion engines instead of crickets.

So 4:30 a.m. came around quickly, and everyone was up and ready for the big historical day of crossing the Oakland Bay Bridge for the first time on foot since its opening in 1936. A catering truck was on hand with hot coffee and pre-fab food. Not quite home cooking, but it was not instant oatmeal and instant coffee either. The backpackers were organizing themselves as the crowds began to filter in to pay their two dollars to join the hikers in the bridge crossing. More and more people turned out to join and support the hikers. The final attendance count was approximately seven thousand walkers. Orange hued daylight casting bold, long shadows over the city at 6:00 a.m., the cameras began to roll, and the thru hikers led the way up the ramp to the applause of their supporters, and seven thousand hikers became the first people to cross the seven mile bridge on foot.

Two lanes of traffic were closed off to motor vehicles on the top deck of the bridge for pedestrian use only. Thousands of people soon covered the span of the bridge like thousands of ants on a trail to a picnic table. The pace was quick, even too fast for the serious backpackers carrying fifty, sixty, and seventy pounds on their backs. Day hikers pushed the backpackers along at an incredible rate because of their enthusiasm. To stop for a photo meant losing your place in the flow or being trampled. The city looked beautiful from the height of the upper deck, as did the water below shimmering in the morning light. Everyone was glowing with energy and sported beaming smiles as the internal rush of "look what we are doing" ran through our systems. The Bay Bridge would become the fastest seven miles of the entire California hike. Most of the thru hikers were across the distance in 1.5 hours, or a pace of over 4.6 miles per hour. A hiking speed much too fast for a long distance backpacker carrying provisions for a year. Although the mileage was long and the pace fast, all had a wonderful time. The excitement level was high, and there were conversations everywhere about the trip and what the future had in store for the adventurous thru hikers.

Most of the seven thousand participants were local residents of the Bay Area, folks who live and work there and have as a matter of routine traversed the bridge countless times. They seized this opportunity to walk the expanse at least once carrying a lunch in their day packs and joining the hikers for a Sunday adventure to be part of a historical event. Their support is what truly made this event spectacular and helped the morale of the thru hikers tremendously. Their comments along the way were along the lines of "You are doing a terrific thing" and "I wish I could join you." To most of us on the thru hike, these supporters are with us all the way.

Of course, there is also the negative aspect of individuals. People that do not understand and would not if they were told.

The typical comment is simply "Your crazy." One individual even told me I was "throwing away a year of my life." On the other hand, not understanding is the so called supporter who is only self motivated. At the first rest break after over seven nonstop miles of fast paced hiking, one day hikers stood up and exclaimed "What's the hold up? Why is everyone sitting around? Let's go!" No one moved, and no one answered him. We can only hope that as the hike proceeds, people learn to comprehend and gain compassion through understanding just what we are trying to accomplish. That it is work, and that its basis lies in a good time, enjoyed in the great outdoors.

The weather was unseasonably warm and clear for the Bay Area. Lunch was at Aquatic Park where the Berkeley Mayor came out to give Hikanation its first endorsement. Then, Dr. Seaborg led the hikers up through the U.C. Berkeley Campus, on to Tildon Regional Park. A tough hike for a break in day to a long expedition. Many of the hikers suffered from blisters and aches in their legs and back muscles after that eighteen mile trek. However, it was very nice to be in the woods away from the city noise and lights. Camp was on soft grass instead of asphalt, birds and insects were the only noise in the cool moist park. Two days of hiking, and many were already reconsidering how intent they were to continue. The pain of the hike became a reality and the idea of surrender was a topic discussed that night.

California Hike Highlights

Jim Kern realized the problem. Most of us were not tough enough for the way Hikanation started out. Heavy packs were the main cause followed by foot to boot combinations that were not broken in. A simple, but sad fact that contributed to the problem was that 45% of the hikers did no preparation hiking prior to this adventure. Jim's temporary remedy was to rent a van for a few days to allow hikers to lighten or drop their loads getting the additional pressure of poor aching feet.

For the next few days, many packs were simply left in camp for the support crew to bring along to the next camp. The rest of the hikers who could manage, only lightened their loads. The latter, including myself, did not wish to hike without our gear as this was a backpacking experience. However, I did unload weight such as my winter clothing which eased the burden. When arriving at camp, it was an advantage to have your essentials with you so that you could set up without having to wait for your gear to arrive. The disadvantage was the weight and the slower pace. Those without packs could zip ahead. The slower hikers became known as "turtles" while the faster ones were titled "hot doggers."

During that first week we had about eighty hikers, of which sixty-three announced themselves as thru hikers. The women numbered eighteen and about twenty-three states were represented at that time including Canada and Ireland.

A high point came on day four when half the group went ahead for a reception with the Mayor of Contra Costa while the other half took a wrong turn. I was in the latter group. When we did reach Springhill Elementary School, the reception was over and the first half was hiking off in the distance. The sun was hot, and the children came up the hill to greet us with popcicles and water. Their admiration was a tremendous inspiration to us all. We even signed autographs for them. It was perhaps the first moment I really felt great inside about what we are doing. It is really for the children that we are hiking anyway, so that they have a trail they can use, and their children's children have a trail too. The heart warming welcome overcame all the pain and discomfort reinstalling the motivation to go all the way. The sense of awe, adventure, and exploration so common in children is a natural and precious gem. A gem we had to grab to hold in our hearts cherishing it throughout the journey and hopefully forever. Such a gem will surely keep one young no matter what number of years pass by.

On day five, the hike route took us up to the top of

Mt. Diablo. It was a hot day and a steep climb to the summit at a 3,849 foot elevation exhausting everyone. Mt. Diablo is the highest point west of the Sierra Mountains and is such a prominent topographical feature that it is used as a point of reference on the United States Geological Survey Maps. At the summit is a concession stand which sold many items, but two in particular were in demand by the hikers. They were ice cream and patches proclaiming "I made it to the top." The peak was clouded with insects, and the view was clouded with smog. The beauty of where we were that day came at night when the air cleared and cooled, and the lights lit up below. A great time for the time exposure cameras.

The next morning, most of us relinquished our packs at the request of the Steering Committee for the tactical descent of Mt. Diablo. We stopped for a rest break at an old dirt road cut off, hidden in poison oak and next to a clean, running stream. Ranger Bob Doyle, our path finder through the area, related the history of the site to us. Back in the days of prohibition, a large moonshine operation was hidden there. The secluded still was very successful and supplied the moonshine to most of the speak-easys in San Francisco. The owner of the operation made so much money, he was able to purchase most of the mountain for the reason of preservation.

Part of the day was spent by hikers boxing once essential gear, and now excess baggage weight into cartons to be mailed home from the Clayton Post Office. The hike continued after lunch and the Mayor's endorsement over Rolling Hills to Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. Our first week on the trail had ended at the site of our first and well deserved layover holiday after hiking seventy-eight miles through California.

A tough first week it was, from living room armchairs and gasoline engines to hard rocks and sore feet. Feet were a big topic of discussion around camp, a scale of one through ten was used. The nines and tens walked effortlessly about camp, usually giving aid to the ones to threes who could not or would not move. Blisters were the culprit, often on the toes and heels, but they managed to pop up everywhere else at one time or another. Other problems were bad knees, ankles, arches, and just plain sore muscles. Everyone was quickly becoming experts at foot care and products to prescribe for different pain areas. Names like mole skin, mole foam, adhesive foam, and lambs wool were commonly heard in camp, as well as hike conversations. Many individuals had to completely replace their footwear. Hiking boots are no cheap piece of equipment, yet vital for traction and ankle support, especially with an additional fifty pounds on the feet.

1960. No one likes pain. Therefore, it was no surprise that we already began to lose hikers the first week out. We had an older gentleman hospitalized with hypothermia after the long, hot climb up Mt. Diablo. Members of the group began to talk among themselves. Talk of long distances, too fast of a pace, and getting into camp at night led to talk of separation from the group and quitting altogether. Social problems in the group were becoming apparent. Therefore, the steering committee held a meeting to try and iron out the problems. However, they were helpless to the situation because of camp reservations, media appointments, and a rigid schedule throughout California. The best the committee could do was to promise that Nevada would be better. The true problem was us, the hikers; we were paying our dues and toughening up. It was too bad the initial mileage was so long, but after a couple months of this rigorous daily exercise, all of us would be stronger and not even know it. We just needed to break ourselves into the event. An event not many would even attempt. Time would heal the pain.

Our number one layover was more than just needed. It was fun. It was great not to see any signs of city life, no traffic, no telephone wires, no bright lights. Only green hills, a few curious cattle, an old cattle chute, and some old mines. Several of the "fives" and above went on small hikes of exploration, while others slept and relaxed. I went on a small hike (even though I

had a few blisters and rated below five) with my camera to photograph the nylon tent city from the vantage of a large hill. The colorful tents of orange, red, yellow, blue, green, and tan in different shapes and sizes lay below me on the green grass carpet set against a clear, bright blue sky. That camp was my neighborhood and those tents were my neighbors. It was home. Tomorrow, we would all be gone and the cows would again have their green pasture to themselves. I gave the nomadic community a name "Just Passin' Thru."

While I was up on that hill, I had a terrific experience. One which I will never forget. It was the kind of experience only possible in the outdoors and made me glad to be part of this expedition. Being from Hawaii, I was wearing only rubber sandals and was very snake conscious. My eyes constantly looked for movement in the knee high grass. A motion caught my eye, and I strained to see the snake. The movement continued, and I saw it was not a snake at all, but a very young spotted fawn. The precious, fragile animal could hardly walk on his skinny, little legs. He fearlessly came right over to me and stood between my legs. I scanned the hill top for a doe or buck nearby. I saw neither, but felt their eyes none the less. I bent over to talk to the baby Mule Deer, as I usually talk with animals. The fawn proceeded to search for a nipple and licked my belly and arms. I took a couple photos of the newborn and said a prayer for it as I walked away. I decided to keep the event a secret so the baby would not be bothered by other curious hikers who may not understand how fragile the young animal was. The few moments I experienced there will be treasured forever.

That night was a special treat, Dr. Seaborg's Birthday, an event which called for hot dogs and cake around a campfire followed by a sing-along of old mining songs led by Ranger Joann Dean. The really special significance was the setting of the birthday presidency. Janet Parsons, a 19 year old thru hiker, grabbed the idea and appointed herself birthday chairperson. She gathered all the birthdays and from that day on made a point of announcing birthdays and creating celebrations. The birthdays were and continue to be great morale lifters for the whole group, and with sixty people birthdays come often for the Hikanation Family.

On day eight after our day of rest, there proved to be another special day. Gomer and Gayle, the couple who planned this trip with the added responsibility of their seven month old baby girl Jamie, already broke down their homemade cart that carries the necessities for the baby. So Gomer bought a brand new green Sears wheelbarrow to carry their baggage. Gayle pushes an old baby stroller modified with coaster wheels and a seat belt. Together, the pair pushing their wheels across the country with packs on their backs make an interesting addition to Hikanation, as well as an odd set of tracks.

We hiked through Contra Costa and into Antioch. The mayor treated everyone to soft drinks at the local VFW Hall where we lounged in chairs for the first time in a week under an air-conditioned roof. The mayor joined us as we hiked a few miles further to the foot of the Antioch Bridge where Hikanation was treated to box lunches. After having hiked from the mountain pastures through a town and an odorous industrial area, it was really pleasant to sit on a grassy lawn and enjoy a meal we didn't have to pack. Best of all, it was the courtesy of a town that supported us. The meal was not extravagant, simply a sandwich, orange, bag of chips, and a half pint of milk. However, the treat was support and a tremendous thrill to everyone of us. Certainly another highlight in the Hikanation Journal.

The second week was mostly level hiking on roads along the Sacramento River and through small towns. The only problem besides sharing the highway with automobiles and trucks was the frequency of little stores. Everyone found it very hard to pass by a store without an ice cream treat, or perhaps a cold drink, a candy bar, or a piece of fruit. We were a real delight to the small shop keepers who suddenly found themselves deluged by forty or more hungry people. The side affect on hungry hikers from

small stores was that everyone's diet was left at home. When at one time many of us were concerned and fussy about what we ate, now everything was edible including sugar and preservatives. Everyone became junk food junkies. A unique experience for us was the fact that you could walk into a small town store and know everyone shopping there. When we visited a major supermarket, everyone went wild. Each person spent about twenty-five dollars to restock for a week of hiking. A few big sellers are granola cereals, instant oatmeal, instant soups, instant rice, powdered milk, peanut butter, and fresh fruit.

Day eleven was our hike through Sacramento. We hiked up to old Sacramento and into Discovery Park where we camped on a soft green lawn. It was a nice treat after a very wet and muddy days hike, much of which was along railroad ties. Aside from the green grass carpet beneath the tent floors, it was a convenient stop by a local backpacking store which came out with a neat assortment of hiker delights. After a dayfull of food stores and an evening of purchasing more gear to carry, many of us couldn't wait to get into the back country and away from the temptations of spending our carefully budgeted money.

The average mileage for the second week was 15.33 miles per day, a lot of walking for blistered hikers. Layover number two was a welcome stop from the pace we had been keeping. Our rest day was at Negro Bar State Park near Folsom and marked the point where big towns and cities were behind us and only small country roads and towns lay ahead. This required some readjustment on our part as to weight, food, and finances. An interesting fact at that point was that the thru hikers numbered 53. We started two weeks ago with 67, we lost 14 people, an average of one hiker per day.

Aside from a time to rest tired muscles and sore feet, a layover ment mail drop, food resupply, showers, laundry, and a time to catch up on the things that needed to be done, such as waterproofing, mending, log and letter writing. It also gave us the opportunity to catch up on news of world events. This day's news was sad and alarming. We heard about a joint military effort to attempt to free the hostages in Iran. The mission failed and was aborted, but we all wondered about repercussions.

Week three got off to a bad start. The scenery was beautiful as we got into the hills that were covered with blooms of multi-colored wildflowers. However, day fifteen was the day Carl Hover was hit by a car. Fortunately, that sounds worse than it was. With all the highway hiking we had been doing, I guess the odds of one automobile related accident were possible. We always hike facing traffic so that each hiker can view oncoming vehicles. Carl was hit from behind by a small car's rear view mirror traveling in the same direction and passing a slower vehicle. The mirror shattered and Carl's hand was sliced up. He is all right and did not miss a day's hike. It could have been worse. A lesson was learned by all of us to be extra careful.

Our route was getting more and more scenic which pleased the hikers very much. Small country roads with beautiful picturesque ranch houses, sounds of birds, dogs, and chickens. We followed the American River up stream into the Sierra Mountains. In historic Placerville we collected another Mayors endorsement. The next day we traveled on the Pony Express Trail road to Mt. Donohar where the Forest Rangers opened their fire barracks to us for showers and an option to bunk. Continuing our hike along highway 50, we climbed higher and higher. Some of the old Pony Express trail was recut especially for us by rangers. This was the opportunity to return to real trails, and we relished the chance to smell the forest and feel the brown earth beneath our boots as opposed to the scent of diesel fuel and hard, hot pavement.

Support and hospitality is a major contributing factor to our morale and ultimate success in our goal. Californians were in general super folks, talking with us along the way, waving and honking on the highways. A quick way to bring a smile on a tired hikers face, is just a simple wave and a show of support.

Day nineteen at Kyburz. We camped on a meadow and were treated great by the owners of the Kyburz Lodge. They opened their doors to us to allow access to their restrooms for 24 hours. Day twenty-one. We camped at Strawberry Lodge for rest day number three. The lodge opened their restrooms and showers to us and gave discounts to those who wanted rooms. It is certainly nice to go indoors once in a while to warm up, sit in a chair, feel at home with a cup of real coffee, and socialize in friendly surroundings. We can only hope that this sort of kindness is available to us across the nation.

In Strawberry Lodge lobby, we had a general meeting and held our first elections. I was nominated and elected to the Steering Committee which I felt to be an honor, especially since it was the first election. Little did I know, how intimate I would become with the cause of Hikanation, and the problems associated with being in a leadership position. The ironic fact is that most of those problems were social and not actually hike related.

Don Lindberg, a free lance photographer, received a special deal of support for all of us through Mountain House, Oregon Freeze Dry Foods, Inc. We could order as a group and buy freeze dried food below wholesale. This was a tremendous help to many of us, not only saving us money, but opening the door to a wide variety of meals. This was especially convenient because we would soon be packing as much as ten days worth of food at a time, and the lightweight food is about the best way to carry big quantities without getting monotonous.

Another supporter on hand at Strawberry was William (Bill) Kensley Jr. of Backpacker Magazine. He came down from New York to shoot some photos and get some notes for his publication. His bimonthly magazine is one of our best sources of nation wide media coverage. Most of us found out about Hikanation through reading Backpacker.

Little Norway was our next campsite on day twenty-two, where we found ourselves at a seven thousand three hundred foot elevation and surrounded by snow in May. The history there goes back to 1858 when the Old Pony Express Trail traversed Echo summit near by. Little Norway was a trade center for hay burdened mules and their owners to layover for restocking and trade.

The following morning, we hiked over Echo Summit which featured a spectacular view of Lake Tahoe and the Nevada Mountains beyond. Everyone had their cameras out and clicking as the hikers cheered and rejoiced at the scenic sight beyond. The movie cameras of the U.S. Department of Interior was on hand for documentary footage as was John Olmstead's camera crew. John has been donating his time, energy, and money to make sure we have some movie footage as a record of our event. This event is the key which we hope will open the doors to an east-west trail system. Perhaps ultimately in a unique sort of National Park, maybe only three feet wide in places, but spanning the entire continent and open all year to everyone. Something for our children and their children's children.

We descended, had lunch, then ascended back up the other side to Luther Pass at 7,740 foot elevation, to descend again into the Hope Valley and along the Carson River. Kit Carson rode through these valleys and named them himself. We camped at Sorensons Resort, owned by Helen Hultin who opened up her place to us at no charge to set tents or bunks up with fellow hikers. The country sported tremendous scenic beauty and echoed in past history of frontier land.

On day twenty-four, we reached and camped at the Ace Hereford Ranch on the Nevada/California State line. Jean Beam was there, our new State Planner for Nevada. Dr. Seaborg was there to hike with us across the state line and officially turn over the job of State Planner from California to Nevada. A large cake was supplied by local dignitaries which the hardy hikers had no trouble consuming. This was the first camp site where we had to take stream water and purify it, as well as the first time the boys and girls had to search for separate bushes instead of labeled doors. The real hiking was about to begin

in the Nevada high desert.

Day twenty-five took us through Dressler Ranch and onto the Washore Indian Reservation Campground. The main group left at 9:10 a.m. led by Dr. Seaborg and crossed the state line into Nevada at 9:30 a.m. We hiked past Mr. Dressler on his horse, who said to us as we slowly walked by, "If I was you, I'd get a saddle horse." Mr. Dressler is in the cowboy Hall of Fame and the Dressler family are original pioneer settlers.

The official ceremony was called in camp at the East Fork of the Carson River where Dr. Seaborg, California State Planner and Jeannie Harmon, California Pathfinder handed over their jobs to Jean Beam, Nevada State Planner and Berry Rhodes Nevada Pathfinder to express the crossing of our first state lines. Twenty-five days of hiking across California, covering about two hundred seventy-five miles was something to be proud of. In elevation gain, we climbed almost twenty thousand feet in altitude for an average of about one thousand feet per day up, and about seven hundred fifty feet down per day. We hiked an average of about thirteen miles per day. Of that, over sixty percent was on roads or highways. Hikanation was a growing event. No longer just an idea or dream, but a reality. A reality lived daily by about fifty friends who together felt the pains, lived through a strenuous activity day after day, rejoiced in the glory of accomplishment and drempt of the future conquer of not just a state but a nation. A full state under our soles, our muscles a little stronger, we were no longer novices, but full fledged backpackers. We are Hikanation.

At this time, Hikanation is two-thirds across Utah and in August will be in Colorado. Hikanation encourages folks to join up with us for a day, weekend, week, or longer. To get the most up to date information call our Hiker's Hotline, 305-251-0484.