

The Westfield Republican

"First Republican Newspaper Printed in U. S. A."
Also serving the communities of Chautauqua and Mayville since 1856

Volume 190, Number 46

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022

Westfield, New York

75¢

'On top of the world'

Sherman man hikes Appalachian Trail

By DAVID PRENATT

editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

SHERMAN — A song by the Proclaimers declares: "I would walk five hundred miles And I would walk five hundred more . . ."

Sherman resident Harold Reynolds decided to walk a little further than that.

Starting on April 25, 2021 and ending on July 15, 2021, Reynolds walked 1,170 miles on the Appalachian Trail from Harper's Ferry, W.V., to Baxter State Park in Maine. He was 59 years old when he began and celebrated his 60th birthday on the hike.

Reynolds said he was inspired to take this journey by two books that he read, one as a teenager and one as an adult. The first was Newberry Award winning *My Side of the Mountain*, which tells the story of a teenager who spent a winter alone on a mountain.

"These kind of aspirations stuck in my head my whole life," Reynolds said.

The second book, *Blind Courage* is the autobiogra-

phy of Bill Irwin, the first blind person to hike the entire Appalachian Trail in a single hiking session.

"I was captivated with this blind man who had hiked the Appalachian Trail," Reynolds said.

Reynolds planned to hike the trail when he was 55 with his son, but that plan fell through.

"At 58, I decided I was going to retire and hike the trail," he said.

The journey was delayed another year, however, by the pandemic.

"In 2020, I was ready to start out on the trail," he said. "Then COVID came and they were asking people to get off the trail."

Instead, Reynolds used a year to research and plan his hike.

Timing was essential, he said. Considerations included handling the cold of the Georgia mountains at the beginning of the hike, avoiding mud season in Vermont, as well as the black fly season in Maine, he said.



Sixty-year-old Harold Reynolds completed his 81-day trek along the Appalachian Trail on Mount Katahdin in Maine. Below, Reynolds is all smiles before beginning the trek.

See TRAIL, Page A2



TRAIL, From Page 1

On a trek such as this it is critically important to plan what you will carry, Reynolds said. "My big four were a backpack, tent, sleeping pad and a sleeping bag, he said.

Beyond that, Reynolds said he took a cooking kit, one change of clothes, trail running shoes, wool socks, shorts, a T-shirt, hat, a moisture wicking long sleeve shirt, thin pants, a rain coat, a puffy down jacket a wool hat and wool gloves. Additional gear included a trekking poles, an inflatable mattress and three to five days worth of food, a cook pot/stove combo and a cannister of fuel, a headlamp, a first aid kit and simple personal hygiene items.

"All my gear came to about 22 pounds," he said. "So, I was carrying about 32 pounds with food and water."

Reynolds advises to keep the load light, but take the things that will make hiking the most comfortable.

"The lighter the load you carry, the better off you will be," Reynolds said. "But make concessions - take things that will give you comfort."

In his research, Reynolds discovered that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy offered alternative hike plans that would still be considered a complete through-hike. One is called a flip-flop, when a hiker starts in the middle and proceeds in one direction to the end, and then returns to the middle and proceeds in the opposite direction.

Reynolds said he planned to walk the northern half, then take some time off and then walk the southern half.

"If I started in April, I could start somewhere in the middle and avoid the mud in Vermont and the black flies in Maine," he said.

While Reynolds has been delayed from doing the second half of his trip, the first half went extremely well, he said.

"The first half worked out textbook for me. There were not any hard rains, it was bone dry in Vermont and I only encountered a few black flies in Maine," he said.

Reynolds journey took a total of 81 days. He hiked on 68 of these and the oth-

ers were down days to rest or wait out storms, he said. He averaged 17 miles a day, but on some days, he only hiked four to six miles and on other days he hiked more than 25 to 27 miles.

"I figured if I hiked 1,170 miles, that's an average of 2,340,000 steps in 81 days or the equivalent of 45 marathons," Reynolds said. "It was a lot of ups and downs."

To make matters more difficult, Reynolds suffered from plantar fasciitis throughout the duration of his hike. Somewhere around Cannon, Pa, he developed shin splints.

"I wanted to quit on a daily basis," he said. "But there's a saying that goes 'Never quit your hike on a good day, wait for a horrible day,' and there never was a horrible day."

Of course, there were also small injuries. Reynolds said he fell a few times and banged his head and experienced the usual hiking mishaps.

"Twisted knees and sprained ankles don't really count," he said. "You just take Tylenol and soak your feet when you can."

Other hikers provide a lot of encouragement to keep going, Reynolds said. He received a lot of support from a family of seven that he met while waiting for a food truck.

"I didn't leave them for 650 miles," he said. "We would gather at night and make a plan for the next day. They knew I was struggling and they would say 'This is where we are going to stop. Can you make it to there?' After a while, the kids started introducing me as their adopted grandad."

Reynolds said he actually heard about this family, the Trouts, from Tennessee, before he met them.

"People would say 'watch out for the Trouts - they'll take up the whole lean-to shelter because there are seven of them,'" he said.

He has kept in touch with them since the hike and said he hopes that when he completes the second half of his hike, one or more of them can come to meet him at the end so he can see them again.

Reynolds said there were very few nights when

he camped totally alone because there were usually other hikers in the tent sites or lean-to shelters, but the day was different.

"You would be alone a lot during the day and thoughts would come up," he said. "Some days you were caught between laughing and crying. The euphoria was so great."

Reynolds ended his hike the same way he had begun, by himself, as he climbed the summit of Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park, Maine. At 5,269 feet, the top of the mountain is a plateau, more than a mile wide from which you can "see forever," Reynolds said.

"I was all alone and I just started laughing and crying . . . the next two days were great. I felt on top of the world."

Reynolds offers simple advice to anyone who is thinking of embarking on such a hike.

"Make a plan, do some research," he said. "Get at it, don't give up, be brave and don't worry about being alone. The community you will meet is unlike any other you will ever find."

Chautauqua Regional Genealogical Conference

The Fenton History Center will be hosting a genealogy conference and history fair. Participants will have many opportunities to learn how to research their family trees, for both new and experienced researchers. Additionally, the Fenton will host a history fair during the conference to give the community the opportunity to learn more about local history and genealogical organizations.

Saturday, April 30, 2022

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

at Fluvanna Community Church

3363 Fluvanna Ave., Jamestown, NY 14701

GENEALOGY CLASSES

includes 4 classes plus lunch

\$50 before April 15, 2022

\$60 starting April 15, 2022

HISTORY FAIR

FREE and open to the public

REGISTER ONLINE

www.CRGConference.com

deadline is April 23, 2022

REGISTER IN-PERSON

Fenton History Center

67 Washington Street

Jamestown, NY 14701