

HikaNation – an AHS Legacy – Celebrates 35th Reunion

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HikeNation was a cross-country hike – from California to Delaware – that took place in 1980 and 1981 over a course of 13 months and more than 4,000 miles. This hike was intended to raise public awareness of hiking trails, galvanize the hiking community, and provide an energetic start to the newly-created American Hiking Society.

This year, some of the original HikaNation hikers and their families and friends will be celebrating a 35th reunion at Estes Park, CO, Sept. 18-20, 2015. Additionally, a 3-day hike-in is planned over the Continental Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park prior to festivities.



The reunion will include a panel discussion of the history of HikaNation, as well as pictures, movies, and scrapbooks of the cross-country hikers. To learn more about the 35th reunion visit the Reunion's Facebook page or HikaNation.com.

Read about this incredible event in the following excerpt from *American Hiker* magazine, Fall, 2006. Author: William Kemsley, Jr.:

We held the first AHS annual membership meeting in March 1978 at Chuck Sloan's office where the first 30 AHS official members crowded into that small space, adopted our by-laws and elected Jim Kern president. One of the new members, Glenn T. Seaborg, the noble laureate former head of the Atomic Energy Commission under Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, introduced the motion for AHS to take seriously our chatter about a hike across the nation from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic and offered to work out logistics for the hike across California. HikaNation was born on that day.

At *Backpacker* magazine, we publicized the event, inviting hikers to join in the hike wherever they could. Kern started a newsletter to keep everyone informed of the hike's progress, not just those going the distance but all those along the route interested in joining it. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and the US Interior Department's Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service gave Hika-Nation their endorsements.

The official kick off occurred in 1980 when AHS held a huge meeting in San Francisco where the 87 who had signed up for the hike across America got together for the first time. Next morning several hundred of us dipped our boots in the Pacific Ocean and began the Hika-Nation trek East toward the Atlantic Coast.

Among this throng was the remaining group of 36 of the original 87 who now began the long march in earnest, intending to go the entire distance to the Atlantic. Fifteen of them made it all the way. Several of the original

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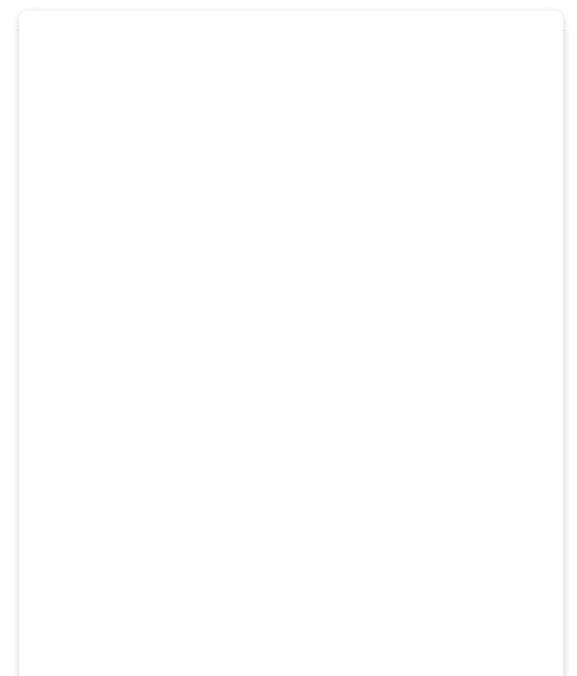
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group had to take a few days' break here and there because of sickness or personal affairs to rejoin them along the way and to be there at the end.

The oldest to hike the full distance was 69-year-old John Stout. And oldest woman was 58-year-old Marcie Guerrein. The youngest, little Jamie Pyle, actually learned to walk on the Hika-Nation route across America and she was on her own feet with the rest of the Hika-Nation group walking up the US Capitol steps to be met by a welcoming Congressional delegation, before hiking on. The group was joined there by a heavy contingent of other hikers to hoof it on to the hike's final destination Cape Henlopen, Delaware, where they dipped their boots into the Atlantic Ocean.

And a look back at some of the intrepid hikers:



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