



## Crossing The Nation One Step At A Time

No travel agent could have planned it better. The Sierras in spring, the Rockies in early fall, the Appalachians in winter and, finally, the nation's capital in May.

What's different about this itinerary, however, is that it's all been *on foot*—a colossal, 4,500-mile hike across America one step at a time, from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to the steps of the Capitol.

On Wednesday, May 13, more than 70 backpackers will walk down Pennsylvania Avenue to the west front of the Capitol, where they will be welcomed by a waiting committee of congressmen, senators and other dignitaries. There, a ceremony on the Capitol steps will mark the official completion of the 13-month-long journey.

The Capitol ceremony will cap a week of hiking and special events along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal between Harpers Ferry, W. Va., and Washington, D.C., on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. Following the arrival-day ceremonies, a number

of hikers will then continue eastward, arriving May 27 at Cape Henlopen, Del.—the end of a memorable Pacific-to-Atlantic transcontinental trek.

The Postum HikeNation odyssey, organized by the American Hiking Society and sanctioned by the U.S. Department of the Interior, was formed to call attention to the present popularity of hiking and its place in a low-energy future. General Foods Corporation, the makers of Postum instant grain beverage, has sponsored the event.

Traveling the distance has been a hardy group of backpackers, including 14-year-old Robert Burns of Benecia, Calif., and John Stout, a 69-year-old retired machinist from Seattle, Wash. Stout, who didn't start mountain-climbing until he was 50, says he "got the fever" when he read a newspaper article about the hike. He didn't take it seriously, however, until his wife demonstrated her approval by buying him a down jacket for the trip.

The hikers hail from 30 states and Canada and come from all walks of life, including a banker, photographers, a librarian, a longshoreman, a housewife, students and television director.

"These wonderful men and

# THE UPTOWN CITIZEN

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volunteers preserving our natural birthright."

While 41 members of the existing group have carried 50-pound packs more than 3,000 miles, keeping to trails and forests whenever possible, thousands of other Americans have taken part in the journey, although most walked relatively short distances, joining the march as it passed through their neighborhoods, towns and states.

In San Francisco on April 12 of last year, officials closed the upper deck of the San Francisco-Oakland Bridge to let hikers pass. Nearly 10,000 friends and reporters joined them on the bridge crossing, helping to make hiker history.

During the 13-month-long trip, Postum HikaNation backpackers cut a path from California through Nevada, Utah, Colorado and Kansas; Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri, and finally Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. And then it's on to Delaware and the Atlantic Ocean.

Listed below are some interesting facts about Postum HikaNation—how the hikers survive on the trail and how the group governs itself.

- The hikers traveled from 12 to 20 miles per day, depending on their schedule, the terrain and the weather. They camped more or less as a group each night, but traveled by day in ones or twos. In a typical week, the hikers traveled for six days, allowing one day of rest.

- On the average, each hiker spent \$354 on new equipment in preparation for the journey. In a survey, they said they expected to

spend \$287 more on the trail for additional equipment.

- It cost each hiker about \$7 a day to remain on the trail. The total cost of the year-long hike per hiker was estimated to be slightly more than \$3,000. Medical costs were estimated about seven cents per hiker per mile.

- The average weight of the hikers' backpack was 55.6 pounds, with seven days' food and water to last through a 15-mile day (two to three quarts). The men carried an average pack weight of 57 pounds, or 34.7 percent of their total body weight. The women's packs averaged 52.7 pounds, or 35.7 percent of body weight.

- The hikers carried everything necessary for survival on the trail in aluminum frame backpacks, including food, water, clothing, extra shoes, cooking utensils, portable stove, tent, bedroll and sleeping bag.

- The hikers usually ate freeze-dried foods along the trail because they tried to keep their packs as light as possible. Restaurants, however—when nearby—provided the occasional luxury of hot, better-balanced meals.

- The hikers governed themselves through a steering committee which considered suggestions and complaints on topics ranging from how many miles to hike in a day to methods for celebrating holidays. The committee also ruled on behavior, setting up a sequence that involved a warning, probation and expulsion. The committee's membership changed regularly, rotating among all members of the HikaNation group.

Much of the statistical information listed above was gathered by one of the hikers, Bruce