

March 17, 2023

## Ice Age Trail Essay

On March 15<sup>th</sup> 2023, I finished... But maybe I've just begun.

In September 2020, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, began marketing a "Mammoth Challenge Hike" for their 40<sup>th</sup> year. Hike 40 miles in one month and you get a patch. A couple of friends and I decided to take them up and begin camping again as all of our kids had left the nests and we were 60 years old and needed some new adventures. So it all began with that challenge, and 1224 miles later, we finished. I would not have finished this without my co-hiker and dear friend JoAnn Cruse. When one of us stepped back a bit the other was there to nudge the other one on. We truly were accountability partners. It helped that, for the most part, we had a similar pace and ambition and passion to complete this amazing adventure.

***The last 10 days of this hike in northern Wisconsin's incredibly deep snow, and slogging along in snowshoes, was ABSOLUTELY the most difficult thing I have EVER attempted. It made the ending of this trek even more of an amazing accomplishment.***

***THANK YOU ICE AGE TRAIL ALLIANCE and ALL THE AMAZING VOLUNTEERS FOR MAKING THIS POSSIBLE!!! This may have been my first but will not be my last hiking adventure.***

## Dorene Disch aka Scootch

We met sooooo many amazing people along the way and experienced WI in way we never ever would have!!!

**Memorable Highlights** – Lake Michigan at Point Beach, the fairyland of spring wildflowers, the friendship of my hiking buddies. Getting lost for 5 miles in the Underdown, the Mondeaux Esker Dam Lodge, and our stay at the Monastery.

### **Memorable Hikers we met along the way:**

- Polly, Heather, and Christy who we were paired in a campsite with at the Glacial Hike
- Dan & Ruth Dorrough, the section hikers from upstate New York who were a treat and finishing their final miles.
- Arlette Laan, the first woman thru hiker to do all 11 National Scenic Trails

### **Trail Angels (we could NOT have done it without you):**

Without them, SERIOUSLY, we could not and most certainly would not have completed this endeavor Bob Held, Vicki Christianson, Craig, Dave, Cheryl Gorsuch, Jim, Joe Feld (Algoma Joe), Dotty McNulty, Scott Peschke, Candace Beine, Jacky Geidel, Buzz Meyer, Fred Nash, Barb Cedar, Colleen and Jan, Pat Talbert, Bruce, Dolly, Carla, Jan, Gary, Sara, Shana, Dennis.

### **Trail Magic:**

- The Knight in Shining Farmer who pulled us out of a white-out condition snow ditch at Timberland Hills
- The snowmobile hardened 24 plus inches of snow in the Northwoods.

**Restaurants/Pubs** – Besides the daily funeral sandwiches we packed and the amazing camping fire food we made, we found these gems along the way to feed us: Benson's hideaway (Aliens), Eagles Club, Mangos A Bosses Lounge, Konops meat market, Lafond fish market, Roadhouse, Spudz, Mindshaft, The Nutshell, Raising Cane, Hideout II, Held's bar, Casa Amigos, Mondeaux Esker Lodge, Casa Mexicana, Thirsty Otter, Indianhead, Rendezvous, Granite Falls Supper Club, Whiskey Ranch, Tap Room at North Leaf.

**Microbreweries/wineries** – Central Waters, Rowlands Calumet Brewing, Whitewater brewing, Sawmill, Backcountry, Oso's, Thumbknuckle, 44<sup>th</sup> parallel winery, Anapee brewing, VonStiehl winery, Bridge-up brewing, Ooga, Switchgear, Petskull, Sabbatical, Hinder, Moonridge, Roundman, Northwoods, Balsam Lake District 1, Bent Rail, Al Ringling Brewery, Driftless Glen.

**State/County Parks** – Hartman Creek, Ottawa, Long Lake, Devils Lake, Point Beach, Council Grounds, Potawatomi, Pike Lake, Dells of the Eau Claire with showers in Antigo, Spearhead Point/Mondeaux Esker.

**Hotels/stays** – T'ween the Lakes in Montello, Holy Resurrection Monastery in St. Nazianz, Edgewater, County Inn in Luck, Best Western's in Rice Lake and Spooner.