

I've lived in Wisconsin all my life. I retired in 2020, and my daughter casually mentioned "mom, you need to hike the IAT". I said "I do?" And I've been married to it ever since! Ha! She shared with me the thousand miler wanna be page on Facebook and I became very intrigued. I followed it for a year before I finally joined up with the GOTC ,got off the couch group on Saturday, April 4, 2021. We did the Gibraltar rock segment which I had hiked before not knowing it was part of the Ice Age Trail. The 12 people on that hike were very friendly which made me think that I would like to keep hiking with them.

My son bought me the 1000 miler map and I started keeping track of my miles, that gets addicting. I didn't hike in any certain order, just when someone posted where they were hiking I'd join them. It's a great way to meet people! I first hiked with Annette Martiny on the Blackhawk segment , she was with a group of 5 of us that day. I found out she only lived a half an hour from me so we started driving together and doing hikes together. When we couldn't find a shuttle we would do the key exchange walk, where she would drop me off and drive 5 miles down the road. Then she would walk towards me and hand me her keys I would continue walking until I got to her truck, then drive back to get her. We only did this on the connecting routes. We have hiked 492 miles together, she has since finished. I also hiked a lot with Mary Johnson, even staying at her house in Chetek two different times., Mary, Annette and I have become good friends!

I met another lady on the trail, Karyn, who I found out loves dogs. I told her about my ex-husband who was dying of cancer and had 2 dogs. He needed to find one of the dogs a home, cuz he couldn't take care of both. She gave me the name of a friend who actually was looking for this type of dog(border collie). I called her and she drove all the way from Michigan to pick up the dog, it all happened in 3 days! Talk about trail magic!!

On my very first CR that I did solo, I got lost. I didn't have guthook or a map. I didn't know that CR's weren't marked like the segments. I thought I was going the right way because I saw a sign in the ditch that said R/W . The letters were yellow so I figured they meant Road Walk!! I had to call my trail angel back and she picked me up and drove the route to show me where to go, I then finished that walk. I still chuckle every time I see one of those signs!

Oh, my trail name is Forrest because whenever I would see my car at the end of the hike I would start running to it! A hiker friend Audrey chanted "run, Forrest, run! (Forrest Gump movie) haha!

I chose to end my hike at Walla Hi, because my daughter who got me started on the trail lives nearby in Sheboygan. Fourteen friends and family joined me on my final hike on Saturday, November 4, 2023.

To God be the glory! I couldn't have done it without Him , I prayed a lot on the trail, I thank God for the beauty all around us, nature is good for your soul!
Amen, and thank you!

Jean Lipke