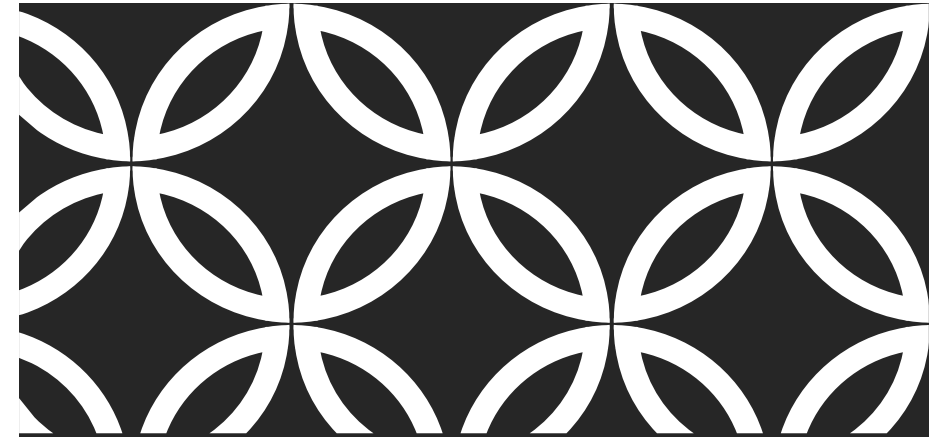




## A LOOK BACK OF OUR HIKING ON THE ICE AGE TRAIL



We ran into the trail on trips and hiked it randomly at first. It wasn't long before my wife persuaded me, in her loving way, to purchase the Trail Atlas. The plan.....was to hike the trails over 10 years to keep us in shape for retirement.



# OUR HIKE BEGAN 6/12/14 ON THE DEVIL'S LAKE SEGMENT. WE LIVED IN ILLINOIS.

It was mostly in and outs and hiking against each other. Eventually, we evolved to using bike shuttles. Note: my wife is not an avid bike rider. We tried trail angels, a few times, but realized it was more challenging to navigate the trail on our own.





Hiking the trail soon became a fun adventure for us and when I, Linda, saw a place of interest on the way to or from the trail I mentioned that I would like to stop. It wasn't long until I was trained to yell Stop! My husband became very good at finding places to turn around. The list of places that we wanted to come back to grew quickly. We hiked a little less than half of the trail from Illinois, and put the trail on hold after purchasing a house.....a fixer upper, another of my ideas. It took us 6 months to complete enough renovations to move in, and another 6 months to tame the yard. What were we thinking? I had to fuel my hiking enthusiasm through Facebook...thankful to the Thousand Miler Wannabees and the Ice Age Trail. Then several surgeries with a family member, a job change, and of course.....Covid hit, just as we started to look for somewhere to retire, a place, with a longer, warm season. My Aunt from Rome, Wisconsin, mentioned that we should look at properties near them. The light bulb went on..... and two months later, we were moving to Wisconsin. The first Mammoth Challenge had started. We were closer to the trail, but in the middle of a long distance move. I spent many hours during my travels to, and from, Illinois trying to think of way to get on the trail....but in the end, passed out instead.

The good news is....we were right on track! It was going to take at least 10 years to complete the trail. As soon as the dust settled, we purchased Guthook and the IAT Guidebook. You wouldn't recognize the guidebook now, as the pages are well read and all have been pulled from the binding. Back on the trail..... the highlights pile up:

We attempted to hike with others. We met up with members from the Wisconsin Go Hiking Club. I hiked about 5 miles, when the pain started, and at approximately 7 miles I sent my husband to rescue me. I patiently waited, under a pine in the cold, drizzling rain. It was shin splints. It was great hiking with others, but I needed to hike at my own pace.

The light bulb went on again....let's participate in a 20 mile Hike-a-thon. We've never hike anywhere close to 20 miles.....and never will again, But my daughter was in town, and wouldn't it be fun to hike some of the trail with her. We were trudging along slowly in the oppressive heat, and there it was...."Dairy Queen." I needed to go to the bathroom.....so why not just go off trail and get ice cream too! We got my husbands order and off we went. My daughter is a runner, so it was no problem to send her running to catch up, to my husband, before the ice cream melted, I on the other hand, I had to run and walk, again..... and again..... and again.... to catch up. I thought I might die, so I better enjoy my treat on the way out. While the hike didn't phase my daughter, I am glad that she did not stay with us afterwards.....we were in great pain for many days.

Seeing people on the trail was fun. Sometimes we stopped and talked their ears off and sometimes we didn't...if it seemed like they just wanted to pass. I enjoy following others adventures on social media. It helped me overcome my anxiety and fears about hiking the trail. I also love to read any tid bits of information about items along the trail....both true and untrue. In the end, there is no greater joy than seeing a person has completed the trail. Especially, those you've talked to or have passed.

And what about through hiking? It was a mystery to us. How did they do it? Was the reporting true? I passed a cabin that Emily Ford recently passed, and would have probably stayed in. I had to check. There on the little table, was a recently burned candle. That was enough, I believed. And then, as good luck would have it.....we ran into a through hiker, going our way. He was from Boston, hiked many trails, and was happy to share his secrets. If he needed something or a place to stay, he would just knock on someone's door and ask for help. He even stayed with people, in exchange for work, if he wanted a break, and he did not plan to hike the CRs.....he was not trying to be a Thousand Miler. He would just call a Trail Angel to move him. I couldn't hand over what snacks we had with us fast enough. What was that? Trail Angels.....who were these mysterious people? We had used them a few times for rides and they were very nice and provided very useful information, but this....they appear to be the success behind many through hikers. Eventually, we ran into other through hikers. They hiked the trail with little assistance. Their challenges seemed great, bugs, water, and places to stay in some areas. Mystery solved.....I am truly thankful there are Trail Angels out there caring for and watching over others!

Volunteers. The world is better because of them. I called Chapter Coordinators with questions....every response was quick and helpful. Many fears were calmed knowing there was constant maintenance. And the beauty....boardwalks, bridges, signs, blazes and rock work. So enjoyable... I can't wrap my head around how it is done, and cannot thank you enough for all the hard work!

Great people. In route to the trails or along them, there are wonderful people and volunteers. They freely share their local knowledge and history about the area. Experiences that make me want to go back again. Snowmobilers pushed our car out of the snowbank and then did it again a few minutes later. We always arrived, at the Fishing Village, during a special event. We decided to try another time. Shoot, another special event! What? Not only were we aloud to take a quick look....we were told about the family's fishing history on Lake Michigan. A welder who collects deer sheds with his son; Ohhh... the Tyson Store. I was determined to go there even though my husband had doubts it was a store. There was an artist nearby, so we stopped. He told us about the work he did for them. His wife had worked at Tyson as a Sexter and he explained that too. I still had to go to the store. You can imagine my disappoint. It was truly a factory. They would have given me an application. I need to stop. I'm not writing a book, but so many great people and experiences to tell about.

Hiking with my husband. Favorite sections? All of them. Good or bad experiences....they are all great memories: That extremely hot day when I unthinkingly drank all of the water and tried to offer black raspberries to him. He would not have it. My husband's hunger got control of him once and he ate half of my cheeseburger without realizing it. Hero husband: extended his hiking pole to assist me in getting up a slippery boardwalk or a high ravine; pushed on my bike seat to assist me up steep hills; patiently waited when I walked the bike down gravel hills; repaired flat tires and dealt with fears. I screamed while riding on gravel roads. Played music, sang terribly, and constantly asked him to make noise to warn animals that we were approaching. It's no wonder, he chose "Boombox" for my trail name.

Learning to Post to Facebook. What, you say? She doesn't know how to use Facebook? You got it. But, we ran into Rich Jacyno the last day. He told me how to post using iPhone. Low and behold; it worked! I received many responses and even replied to some of them. I'm not an expert, but I feel pretty.....good! Pretty good, about the whole experience.

For me, Greg, aka "Old Plow Horse", the trail has been a bittersweet experience! From the beginning it was exciting, planning our adventures, the adventure of the trails and the pain of the connecting routes. We hiked every step of the trail. For me hiking the trail was part of experiencing the outdoors. Coupled with my love of cycling and kayaking it was a perfect fit. We planned getaways throughout the years to hike the trail, visit small towns, find an out of the way diner, and the quest for the perfect cup of coffee. Throughout the entire journey my wife was the organizer, the planner and driving force behind hiking the trail. Me, I just hiked the trail, road my bike and was the calming influence when we hiked the remote sections. I often told my wife who is terrified of bears. "Don't worry about the bears it's the wolves the will get you"!

As the miles counted down.....only 500 miles left the go. The excitement grew. Following the Thousand Miller Wannabe Facebook page to see what other hikers are doing. Always remembering that we wanted to enjoy the hike and see what Wisconsin has to offer. No sense rushing, hiking a connecting route in the middle of July at 90 degrees, not my thing.

Once we moved to Wisconsin and retired, it was time to rack up the miles. 700 hundred then 800....completing the trail was a reality. Along the way we met several hikers who had completed the trail and were sharing the experiences. Hiking in the national forest and all the remote northern sections gave me a sense of freedom and solitude. The trail seemed like our own personal trail on days when we saw no other hikers.

Then the unthinkable...we hit 1,000 miles. I thought I was done...it's the thousand mile wannabes not the 1147 mile wannabes! I was corrected by my wife and was told to get the hiking shoes on, bear spray ready and the FarOut app charged we still had some hiking left to do.

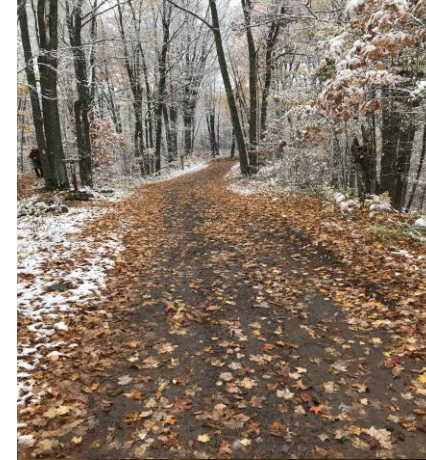
Fast forward to this year's Mammoth Challenge. We had all planned 43 miles for the challenge, and 44 miles left on the trail, The yearly IAT conference in Baraboo and the awards banquet had our names on it. As the last day of our journey approached, we decided the Northern Blue Hills to complete the trail and we were not disappointed-just beautiful. When we completed the trail, we took our pictures, posted them on Facebook and received over 250 responses from the Ice Age Trail community. Then it became bittersweet. The trail was complete and what was next? I mentioned hiking it again and I was reminded about the 40 mile connector route through Cornell.....let's do that in August I was told.



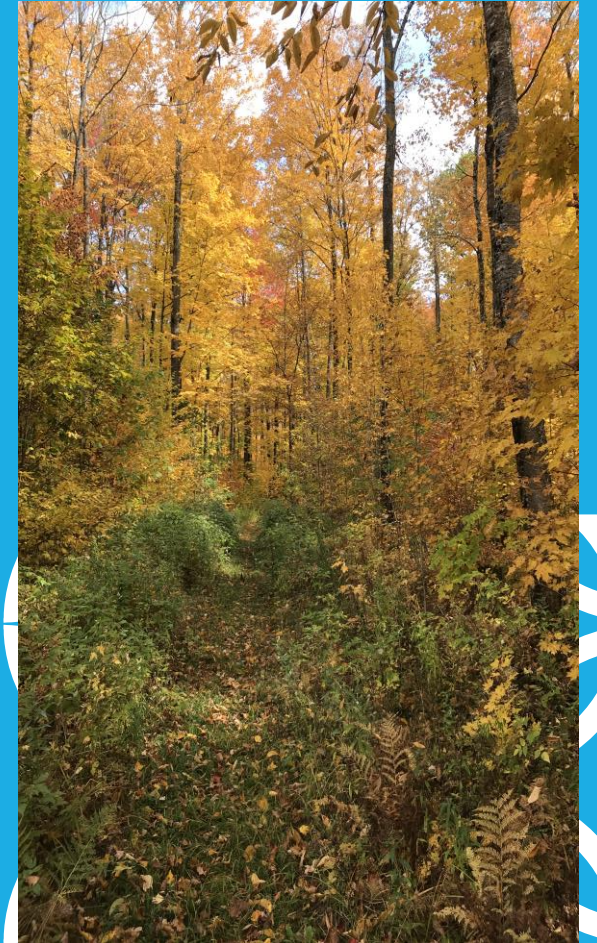
My bittersweet feelings started to erode with a new found pledge to visit parts of the trail that are new since our journey began. After all its been 10 years....Then the new plan was hatched...each of us was to create a bucket list of the three sections you would like to hike again, for me it's the Chippewa Forest area. Then we decided to give back "so its volunteering on the trail."

So in closing, we have found many years of happiness hiking the trail together, It was fun! But its not over, just a new chapter in hiking and volunteering. So if you see a chainsaw yielding volunteer it could be me. If you hear a screaming woman, it's my wife.





# AUTUMN\* FUN





# WINTER\* TIMES





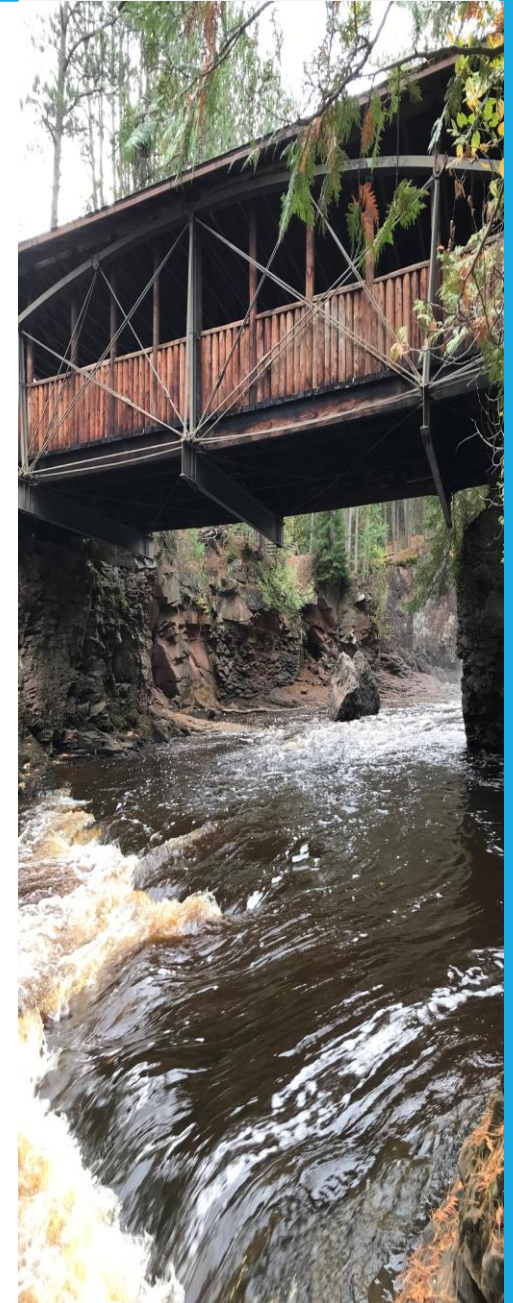


# SPRING\* EXCITEMENT



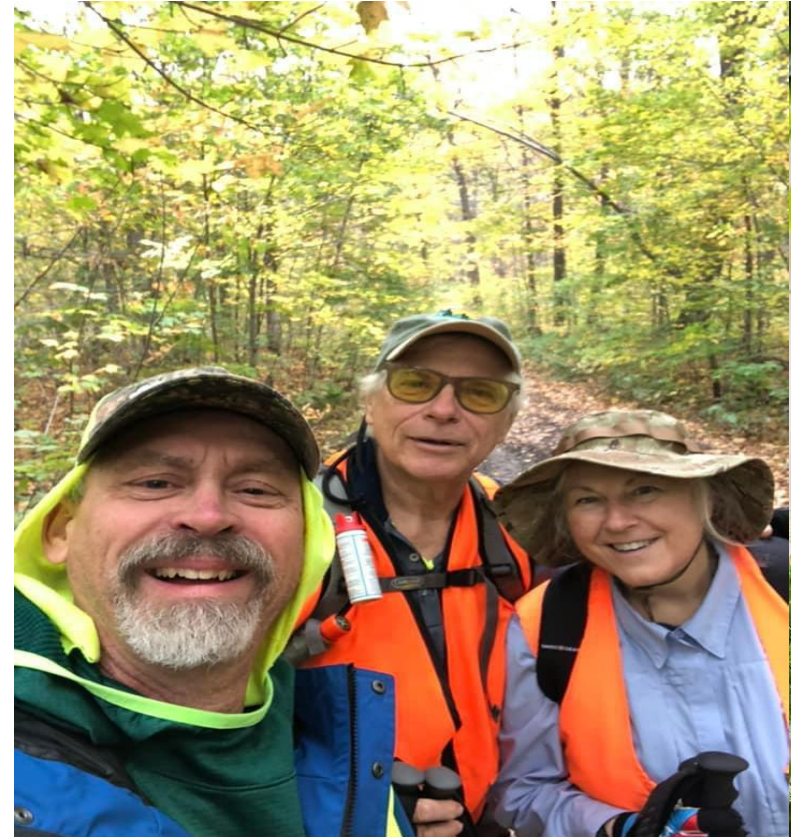


# FIELD TRIPS\*





# SPECIAL GUEST... COLLAGE NEXT PAGE



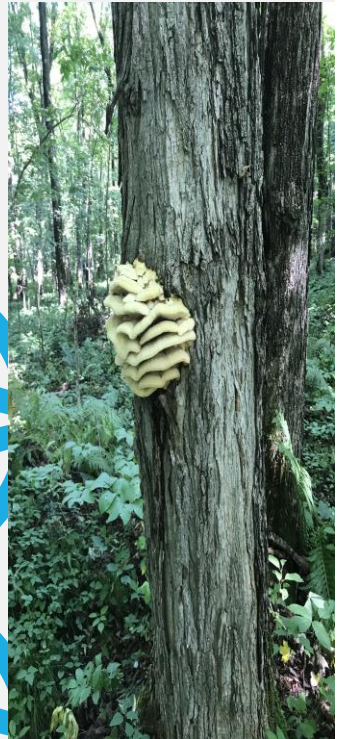








# OHHH... ...THE FUNGUS





# HONORS







**ONE JOURNEY ENDS AND  
ANOTHER BEGINS!**