

Ice Age Trail Essay.

If someone had told me 3 years ago that I would section hike the IAT, I would have asked, "What is the IAT?" I had done some hiking on North Country Trail, but was not familiar with the most beautiful long trail contained in the state where I live. I did my first section with my adult kids as I did my last (plus a 6 month old baby grandson). My daughter and son in law were more familiar with the IAT in Dane County where they live. No one I knew in the Rhinelander area had heard of it. I joined the alliance, got the guidebook ATLAS + "guthooks" app & was on my way. At first, I was only going to hike trail segments, but after reading others' comments on the "1000 miles Warshawee Facebook, I decided to try for the whole thing.

My friend and I became members of the Neenah chapter & we were assigned to help w/ trail maintenance on one section in Harrison Hills. I also worked on two roving maintenance crews & that really opened my eyes to all the work that goes into trail creation and maintenance.

I worked full time as a hospice social worker & usually hiked on the weekends. I hiked with my adult children, a couple of friends & with the GOTC hiking group a couple of times. I often hiked alone—about 3/4ths of the trail. When I hiked in the north, I rarely saw another hiker, but when I was near more populated areas, I ran into a few others. I am thankful for all the shuttles from my daughter and son in law & from IAT chapter volunteers. That was a real plus for me! I enjoyed hiking alone, often looking forward to solitude & enjoying God & His creation after a busy week of hospice work. If I did it again, I probably would seek out more companionship because it was fun meeting others. I really enjoyed most of the segments and most of the highway walking. Although I prefered to be in the woods, I hiked in all seasons & conditions. I snowshoed a couple of segments & crossed running water as well as frozen creeks.

About 15 years ago, I had a ladder slip from under me when I

McReynolds, Linda
— 9 —

was clearing house gutters. I broke a shoulder, broke my left leg and crushed my right foot. The orthopedic doctor told me that I would ~~walk~~ again, but not on uneven ground. Little did he know! I walked on various terrains + did just fine, using 1 or 2 hiking poles. I had NO trouble. I am glad that I was able to prove him wrong, right?

I mainly worked from east to west, doing segments closest to where I lived first. I saved a section on Point Beach to be my ending piece because I knew that my family could join me there. It is also a beautiful area, with some woods and some beach. We had a wonderful celebration together. They put yellow crepe paper across my final steps, had a large "Finish" sign, shook bells and took pictures. It was a success for me. That I never could have done without their encouragement and support.

I used the Thousand Miler spreadsheet to document completion of segments which helped a lot. I did the Eastern bifurcation, but also did the Baraboo segment and a little road walking on the Western Side. Now that I have completed the trail, I will go back to some of my favorites + the new trail segments.