

After surgery to repair a broken ankle in June of 2021 the Dr. gave me the go ahead to start walking, so of course the IAT looked like a great place to start to strengthen my ankle. The goal was set to finish in under a year.

I began hiking some in and outs on segments and CR's and quickly realized I would need assistance in completing my goal. I joined the IATA and purchased the guide books and maps. Facebook searches helped find groups like GOTC and thousand miler wannabes. I mustered the courage to show up on a bitter January CR hike with the GOTC group. Later an E bike and Ubers in urban areas became other tools to help me. I was officially hooked on this Ice Age Trail idea!

The best part of this journey was the solitude mixed with observing nature's beauty in all seasons.

Some of my best memories are the black bear running across the trail 30 yards in front of me on the Grassy Lake segment and catching videos of two other bears at dusk along the Firth and Harwood segments in June. Then there were the five baby raccoons peeking around a tree they were hiding in while hiking the Black Hawk segment with the Walworth/Jefferson County chapter. They have been hiking every week for over twenty years! I tagged along for my first twenty plus mile hike. Other notable memories were beaver tails slapping in the ponds of Wood Lake at dusk, deer, turkey, grouse, trumpeter swans, and snakes.....so many snakes! The first snowfall hike of October 2022 produced some gorgeous pictures and so worth the soggy socks and wet feet!

I had the pleasure of meeting a descendant of the Thompson family who happily bragged of their family's donation of the land for the East Twin River Segment. I found this small segment quite beautiful, with the Thompson tree being showcased there. Then there was the New Hope Iola Ski Hill segment in January with what felt like feet of snow underneath our feet. I vowed to never do another segment in the winter! (I am already planning a winter snowshoe hike when the snow flies)

I took many tumbles along the trail and thankfully ended up with only bumps, bruises and scrapes, but met and hiked with so many other wonderful people chasing the 1000 mile status and enjoying Wisconsin's natural beauty.

My journey ended October 22nd. 2022 at The Dells of The Eau Claire Segment with my family hiking and cheering me on.

Now it is time to give back and volunteer to keep this wonderful treasure alive for future generations to enjoy.

Thousand Miler Wannabe no more!!

Kathy Purpus