

I writing this essay to explain in my journey and experience on the IAT. I began my hike at the Eastern Terminus on the morning of June 9 2021 with the full support of the Warrior Expedition nonprofit group. They provided gear donated from amazing outdoor companies, that allowed us to experience a once in a lifetime journey. Most people start the IAT, or any long hike , just thinking about the end, my story is about the journey. For years I struggled with severe PTSD from combat trauma, and found no relief. As my hike began I found I was constantly inside my own head about every aspect of my life and how it seemed to not be working in my favor, until I began to let go and enjoy mother nature for what she has given us. I began to appreciate simple small things again like, waking up to a sunny day, or just being able to sit quietly and let the world happen. It has had a profound impact on me. I walked through some of the most beautiful cedar forest in the northern portion of near Stergeon Bay, and then a few days later, spent the whole day on the beach of Lake Michigan. The beauty that Wisconsin has to offer is absolutely second to none. I had met some amazingly wonderful people in my travels. One man in particular, Bobcat, most people call him Randy. He is from Dundee, and this man is a gem. He entertained us and even gave me a harmonica, to wich I am still not very good. I can't continue to go on with my story because it will take up so much space, and would be better suited for a short book. However in conclusion I can say with absolute certainty that thru-hiking the IAT has been a life altering event for me. It has given me the motivation to want to see more of the earth in all of its beauty. Thank you and all of the volunteers that maintain this trail for us to use.

Sean McConaghy