

My Ice Age Trail Adventure
Therese (Terri) Riedel
April 3, 2015-Sept. 21, 2021
Hiking Companion: Mary Nennig

My IAT adventure began with the idea of two friends, both country girls, going for a walk. My friend had seen a brochure about the IAT and realizing we had some trail close to our homes, our initial hike had us at the Emmons Creek Segment (Waupaca-Portage Co.). We subsequently volunteered to help on a Mobile Skills project at Hartman Creek (2015) and met two Thousand Milers from our area, Ruth Sommers (2011) and Dianne Genz (2012), both of whom offered valuable insight and enthusiasm for the trail. Knowing them, at some point, made the idea of actually hiking the entire trail a real possibility!

Beginning close to home we reasoned, would allow us to learn lessons regarding hiking in familiar territory. That proved to be solid thinking, as our first 'trail tip' was make sure one has the keys to the car parked where you will finish! Henceforth when beginning our hike, we repeated the mantra...keys, lunch, water, phone. A second 'trail tip' was the realization that it is not always easy to spot points of trail entry, even along roads, and especially when foliage is thick! 'Trail tip' number three involved paying particular attention to road signs and realizing that in some areas there may be an Akron Dr., Rd., Ln., and Ave. and they are each different- the suffix matters! Another version of this conundrum is numbered names of roads ...1-1/2 St., 29-1/8 Ave. and my favorite, 28-11/16th St. A brief vision of Harry Potter looking for Platform 9-3/4 surfaced in my brain!

When close to home, and even as we ventured farther away, we drove two cars but began wishing we could drive together for economy of gas as well as the opportunity to talk (as if we didn't have enough time on the trail!). In reaching out to the chapter coordinators, we were introduced to wonderful 'trail angels' who not only shuttled us but provided valuable information about trail conditions, points of interest, and highlights of the trail in their area. At the occasion of our finish, Carol Peterson, Indianhead Chapter, even came out to the terminus to offer congratulations and take our picture. Generally we were surprised at how few people we met as we hiked, with a few notable exceptions. In our first year out, we met Natalie K., a veteran and one of the first participants in the Warrior Expedition program. In our last hiking year, we met Sean, another participant who was nearly finished with his hike. We also met three extraordinary women who shuttled us, as well as provided accommodations,

and are now friends. Their kindness and trust is a beacon of hope in a world that is sometimes harsh and hurtful. "It's friends along the way that help us appreciate the journey" *Quotes Daily*

While appreciating the thoughtfulness and help of others, I also came to recognize within myself some fortitude that helped me climb steep hills, walk through muck, ford cold rivers, and continue to put one foot ahead of the other when I was hot, sweaty, and tired. I could not have done this without the unfailing positive energy from my friend and hiking companion, most especially when we made a major directional mistake and did not end where our car was parked!

Hiking the trail took me to areas of the state that I had never visited and perhaps more importantly, gave me a view of incredible beauty only a short distance from roads I traveled frequently..."who knew that existed?" was a frequent remark. Regardless of where a person was on the trail, one was immersed in nature and therein, in solace. My friend and I shared times of happiness and sadness in what felt like the protective 'cocoon' of the woods and prairies. We marveled at trees, flowers, fungi, bird song, babbling streams, rustle of leaves and chatter of residents of the woods. The CRs offered glimpses into the lives, culture, and quirks of others. Being part of a like-minded group of people is invigorating and fun! Being out in the natural world is a lesson in what we must work to protect!

Our IAT adventure was dedicated to friends & family we love who cheered us on & were with us in spirit, every step of the way!

The following individuals served as 'trail angels' and we are grateful for their assistance:

Tom Alberg-Washington/Ozaukee

Jerome Converse-Walworth/Jefferson

Don DeBruyn-Lakeshore

Russ Evans-Waukesha

Lloyd Goodell-Langlade

Cheryl Gorsuch-Lakeshore

John Helling-Indianhead

Dennis & Gena James-Rock

Dolly McNulty-Lakeshore

Don Olson-Northwoods

Carol Peterson-Indianhead

Jim Powers-Lakeshore

Summary by year, months hiked, counties hiked:

2015: Apr.-Dec. 154 miles in Waupaca, Portage, Waushara, Marquette, Marathon, Chippewa

2016: Apr.-Nov. 208 miles in Chippewa, Taylor, Marathon, Langlade, Marquette, Columbia, Sauk, Dane

2017: Apr.-Nov. 240 miles in Chippewa, Dane, Green, Rock, Jefferson, Walworth, Waukesha, Rusk, Lincoln, Washington, Adams

2018: Apr.-Oct. 236 miles in Door, Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Washington, Juneau, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Kewaunee

2019: Mar.-Oct. 101 miles in Langlade, Lincoln, Juneau, Sauk

2020: June-Nov. 81 miles in Manitowoc, Lincoln, Sauk, Taylor

2021: May-Sept 181 miles in Taylor, Rusk, Barron, Washburn, Burnett, Polk