

Pensioner and philosopher nears end of epic walk

By Luke Bream on September 21, 2009

80-year-old U.S. citizen Harry Lee McGinnis nicknamed Hawk set out to take on the world, a solo odyssey that began in Ireland in 1992. Walking 80,000+ miles through some 70 countries and 18 1/2 years later, Hawk is now in South America . Even though there have been a number of harrowing experiences, the walk is to be finished in the year 2010, back in Texas . Give or take a year here and there.

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The trip had its' genesis from a nine year old boy's dream of seeing and hearing the sights and sounds out of the pages of the National Geographic magazine and the adventure movies of a bygone era.

A towering figure with a muscular build and the rugged looks of actor Roger Moore, McGinnis is not your average old-age pensioner. "Moore and I are the same age, but I think he looks older," he jokes.

"I grew up in a time of adventure, with films like Marco Polo and stars like Errol Flynn," he said. They sparked a stubborn wanderlust that has seen McGinnis spend the last two decades on his feet, accompanied by a huge steel-tipped wooden staff and a 100 lb (45 kg) backpack.



His night camping could almost be anywhere. Along the side of the road, on pool tables, in church foyers, parks ,campsites, villages, the bush or a cosy bed furnished by a gracious host In the cities, Hawk returns to a more gregarious setting; dining out, sleeping in beds, playing a little tennis, movies, dancing and a little R&R. But in between the R&R breaks, it is rice and pasta time, in a one pot cooking system.

For protection, Hawk wields a six-foot walking staff, tipped with steel at both ends which he made prior to his walk around the fifty-states. Plus two balanced throwing knives, a custom made Bowie Knife (Blackie Collins) and a twelve foot bullwhip. From time to time they have had to be used.

For Hawk this dream walk is an outward and an inward pilgrimage. By nature he is a philosopher. Who believes that most people consciously or unconsciously are searching for answers to three questions: Who am I? Why am I here? And where Am I going?

The American poet, Walt Whitman in his poem, A Song Of The Open Road, wrote these words; "I am in step with my vision. As I tramp my perpetual journey". I would paraphrase and say; "I am in step with my dream, as I walk 'the path less traveled' "

You can read more about his adventures by visiting his website: www.hawkwalk.com

The following excerpts from his blog give you a flavour of this amazing pensioner and his philosophies.

If you do not have a dream in your pocket, run, don't walk, and find yourself a dream to become and be.

..as I descended, Mt. Kilamajaro. A young man on his way up asked; "how was it at the top?" My reply was "you will know only when you get there".

We each have a note to play. If one chooses not to become and be their note. Their music dies with them, never to be heard. How sad ! We are the music while it lasts. So we need to join the 'Symphony of Life'. And maybe add a new note to the arrangement.

The words that found root and became nurtured; said to the effect; "we can either allow weeds to grow in our Garden. Or we can choose and plant those seeds which gives us flowers". Choice is the name of the game. "CHOICE" what a gift!.



It is not where, You have been, Or what You have done That's important, It is where You are going? And what You will do? That's important. And When you arrive, Leave. Because life, Is not here, It is there. This one, Needs To know.

My thanks to all those people who were a part of my life in my earlier years. Those mentors, heroes and role models that helped me along the way. And to those relationships with there ups and downs and bumpy roads. Which helped me to assess and choose a way, to go through life.

My regrets are but a few, for we should "let the dead bury the dead". Now is for the living, the aware and the alive.

To all those I have met along the path that have given their friendship and hospitality, in these past eighteen years. And for all the moments in time, we have shared. All those handshakes and hugs, and words of affirmation and celebration. For the endless warmth and affection that is always out there, if one will but enter the flow of Life and embrace it. Thanks for allowing me to be a part of you and you of me. For the memories of just being there in spirit and in love. It is always nice when people bring something to the table, preferably "themselves." And should it be tomorrow, that we meet again, it would be as yesterday.

That usually I sent up my tent as soon as possible and start the preparation of food. because the people of the villages are quick to offer food, even when they themselves have so little. As one man apologized to me in a thatched hut community, saying; that he didn't have much, but he would be glad to share what he had. Which echoes the words; "Silver and gold, I have none. But what I do have, I will give". There have been those situations where they have offered me their food and their children's food, in befriending me. It is not uncommon for children within a family to take turns in skipping meals, some eating ever other day. People with so little giving so much to a stranger can be very embarrassing. How often does one find this graciousness? Anglo to anglo, not often. This is rare in the Western Hemisphere

My walk through Africa will no doubt be one of my most unforgettable experiences. What these eyes of mine have recorded, my ears heard and my spirit felt, have left their mark, their impressions, their very essence. I will never be the same for it. What a legacy, what a rare gift indeed. Many of my African moments have gone beyond the conceivable, entering into the realm of the unimaginable and the unexpected.

"Walk the Talk" By this we simply mean: be that which you speak, speak that which you are. The words of my grandfather are still with me. As he spoke to my father one day:" A mans' word is his bond, a binding commitment, an obligation to the word one speaks."Someone once wrote, Emerson I believe;" What you are, speaks so loudly. I cannot hear what you are saying."

If the truth was known; we teach and communicate more by being and doing than by a mere avalanche of words. We catch the spirit, the aliveness, the energy and excitement of the moment. The thrust of passion!" More is caught than taught". It is the intensity and energy, along with the impact and

the aliveness of the word spoken that persuades, cajoles and convinces the hearer. The spoken word, what a responsibility. What a responsibility indeed!

Life is not just a matter of thinking or feeling and above all not just existing. Life is about being aware, on a breath to breath basis. And in the aliveness of becoming, of being the very best which life is constantly offering up to us on a day to day agenda. Is it not sad that so many are just walking around to save funeral expenses. They are dead and guess what?, they don't know it.

One needs to remind oneself that a collection of words, facts or figures, whether they be spoken or written, cannot begin to catch all the nuances, the thoughts, feelings or the emotions of a person caught-up in a moment of existence, of experiencing.

To name something, does not explain it. Anymore than we are able to interpret, to capture or reduce the spirit, the very core, the "Thus-ness" of anything by classifying, categorizing or catalogueing it.

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