

CONVENTION 2011

I started my convention Volksmarching on Friday, June 17th with the Omaha Year Round walk. I went with my friend, Sandy, from the local club. Several parts of downtown were underwater but the trail itself was great-saw a lot of great sites plus met four ladies from Ohio and a gentlemen from Norway.



Figure 1: Diane Berard walking downtown Omaha, Nebraska year round event



Figure 2: Part of the flooded area-look carefully and you will see heads popping out of the water...they are from a statue that is normally completely above ground.



Figure 3: Downtown Omaha--Pioneer Courage



Figure 4: Sign about Pioneers



Figure 5: Diane with the Pioneers!



Figure 6: Downtown Omaha



Figure 7: Downtown Omaha



Figure 8: Saturday June 18, 2011--17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 1. Two walks to choose from. For both we registered at Harrah's Casino in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Harrah's employee parking lot was underwater! Trails were constantly being revised during the week because

of the flooding. Saturday it poured rain four about 4 hours in the morning. Most people walked (or should I say crawled) the walk at the Hitchcock Nature Center (Loess Hills) first. The nature center is about 15 miles from Harrah's and buses took you to the start point. The trail was rated a 4 (and no one said that it was not AT LEAST a 4!) For those of us used to living and walking at sea level it was a challenge. Ron and I only walked 5 km but it was a TOUGH 5 kms! The trails were very muddy and very steep! Loess Hills are really a unique phenomenon. The layers of loess were deposited thousands of years ago by the glaciers moving through North America. During the Ice Age, the glaciers advanced grinding underlying rock into fine powder-like sediment. This sediment was deposited on the flood plains of the Missouri River. As this dried, the winds picked up the silt and blew it eastward forming the hills.



Figure 9: Walk one-View from trail at Hitchcock Nature Center

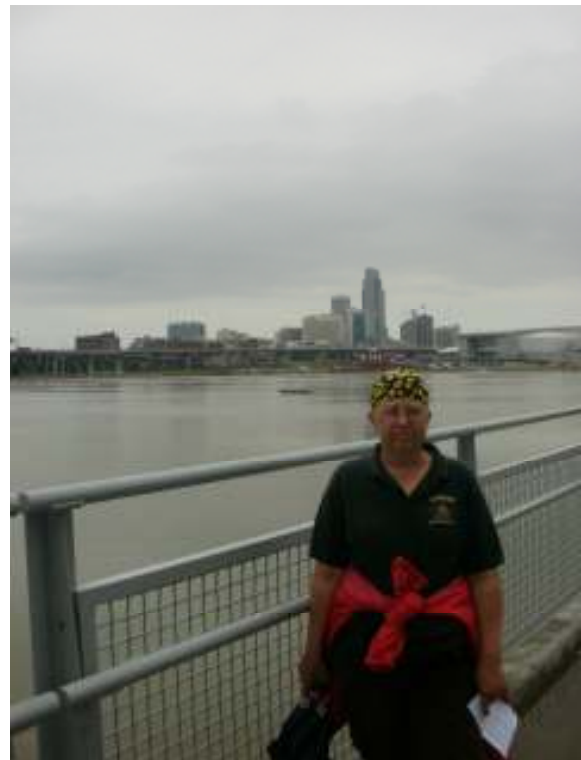


Figure 10: Walk 2-Council Bluffs, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska. The rain let up a little--luckily. A bus drove us to Friendship Park (originally walkers were going to walk from

Harrah's but the trail was flooded) and we walked across the Bob Kerrey Bridge to Omaha, Nebraska. The bridge is 3,000 feet. Construction began in the fall of 2006 and the bridge officially opened September 28, 2008. It is the longest pedestrian bridge that links two states. Two single-towers, or pylons, rise 210 feet in the air. The base of the pylons is 80 feet into the bedrock below. The bridge is a Cable Stay Bridge, meaning cables stretch down diagonally from each of the towers to the bridge deck for strength, support and flexibility, as well as visual appeal. After going across the bridge the trail went through downtown Omaha (where the College World Series was playing) and then back across the bridge to the park.



Figure 11: Diane on the Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge with one foot in Iowa and one foot in Nebraska.



Figure 12: Diane and Suzy Bell at Harrah's (the start/finish) in Council Bluffs, Iowa.



Figure 13: Sunday June 19, 2011--17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 2. Sunday's walk was at White Rock Conservancy in Coon Rapids, Iowa (about a 90 minute drive from Council Bluffs). Day was hot and humid but it didn't rain while we were walking.



Figure 14: Sign explaining White Rock Conservancy-home of the hybrid seed corn and responsible for introducing it to the Soviet Union during the Cold War.



Figure 15: Hybrid Icon (also used for the patch for this walk).



Figure 17: Club member, Peggy Bowers getting off the bus at White Rock Conservancy



Figure 16: Diane and Suzy Belle at the start/finish point



Figure 18: After the White Rock Conservancy walk we drove to Clear Lake, Iowa (about a 2 hour drive) to spend the evening before the two walks the next day. Clear Lake is a resort community but also known as the area for the plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper. Sunday evening we drove out to the crash site and memorial (on private farmland).



Figure 19: Memorial to Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper. Memorial was not on a trail but we had to stop!



Figure 20: Monday June 20, 2011--17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 3. Two walks--First was walk in Mason City, Iowa (boyhood hometown of Meredith Wilson (Music Man)). It also has several homes and a hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. It rained early in the morning but it stopped about 9 a.m. Friend Butch Spaulding in picture.



Figure 21: Stockman House: A Frank Lloyd Wright home



Figure 22: Next walk started at The Surf Ballroom and Museum in Clear Lake, Iowa (about a 20 minute drive from Mason City). There was a nice Welcome Sign!



Figure 23: Sign at the start point.



Figure 24: Club members Ron and Diane Berard at the Surf Ballroom. Walk went around Clear Lake and through the resort town.



Figure 25: Tuesday June 21, 2011--17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day4. Walk was at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa. It had rained hard most of the night so there was no surprise when we arrived at the start point to see a "Flash Flood" sign changing the trail! We were supposed to have a choice of two trails (one through the town and back and the other through the Living Farm and then part of the town). We enjoyed the trail through the Living Farm and Frontier Town.



Figure 26: Annette and Sam Tollett on the trail.



Figure 27: Club member Helen Swanson on the trail.



Figure 28: Celebration Symbol that was created as the backdrop for Pope John Paul II's visit to rural American. It was used as the base for the patch for this walk.



Figure 29: Peninsula Pathfinders' Auction Item-we helped raise money for AVA. Thanks to Annette Tollett for working with the Clarion Hotel for this donation.



Figure 30: Club member Jim Geith at Meet & Greet.



Figure 31: Wednesday June 22, 2011--17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day5. Walk was at Winterset City Park, Winterset, Iowa. Of course it rained! Club member Diane Berard with friends, Sandy and Butch Spaulding on Cutler-Donahoe Covered Bridge (Madison County).



Figure 32: Winterset Iowa is known for being the birthplace of John Wayne.



Figure 33: Club member Ron Berard and friend Butch Spaulding with statue of John Wayne.



Figure 34: Thursday, June 23, 2011-17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 6. Walk started at the beautiful Reiman Gardens in Ames, Iowa and then walked through the campus of Iowa State University. Picture is of club members Ron and Diane Berard at the start of the walk.



Figure 35: Iowa State University is known for its Bell Tower and several Grant Wood Murals.



Figure 36: Club member Peggy Bowers in the Butterfly Conservatory of the Reiman Gardens.



Figure 37: Reiman Gardens is known for having 10 larger-than-life insects on display.



Figure 38: Friday, June 24, 2011-17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 7. Walk was through downtown Des Moines to include several parks, the Governor's Mansion and several churches. Friday evening was AVA's 35th Birthday Party Dinner.



Figure 39: Club member Barbara Lippincott taking a break between walks.



Figure 40: Birthday cake for AVA's 25th Birthday Dinner



Figure 41: Club member Elaine Thompson at the dinner.



Figure 42: Saturday, June 25, 2011-17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 8. Today's walk started in Cedar Rapids, Iowa at Veteran's Memorial Stadium, home to the Cedar Rapid Kernels, a Class A affiliate of the Los Angeles Angels.



Figure 43: The walk started by walking past the Veterans Memorial.



Figure 44: The walk continued through the Czech Village (their bakery had fantastic pastries!). The Czech Plus Band played while we walked. Very entertaining! After walking through the Czech Village the walk continued downtown Cedar Rapids to include Brucemore, a park-like estate built in the 1880s, with a Queen Anne-style mansion, formal gardens, a children's garden, night garden, pond, orchard, and woodland.



Figure 45: Cedar Rapids' nickname is the "City of Five Seasons". The fifth season is a time to enjoy the other four. The symbol of the five seasons is a Tree of Five Seasons Sculpture that we walked past along the riverbank and it was depicted on the A Award for this walk.



Figure 46: Sunday, June 26, 2011-17th Biennial AVA Convention Walks-Day 9. Today's walk started in Rock Island, Illinois and continued to Davenport, Iowa. Time to go home-lots of wonderful walks and memories!