

BACKGROUND

Abstract:

- **Project:** Walking down a Dream | www.WalkingDownADream.com
- **Scope of Project:** Walking down a Dream is a photographic archive of America's landscape via a 16,500-mile path less traveled called the National Scenic Trails.
- **Targeted finish date/place of celebration:** October 2, 2008, at 10:00 AM / Celebration will be co-hosted by the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in the Baird Auditorium
- **Significance of Date:** 40th Anniversary of the enactment of National Trails System Act signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson.
- **Opportunities:**
 - To acknowledge the *Partnership for the National Trails System* for their contribution to a cooperative approach concerning access, conservation and preservation of trails
 - To honor President Johnson's environmental legacy promoting conservation with a focus on, "***not just nature alone but with the total relationship of man and the world around him***"
The National Trails System Act symbolizes this merger
- **Potential Challenge:** Having 20 days to complete his journey by hiking 380 miles of the Continental Divide Trail in the rugged Rocky Mountains
- **Pending Accomplishments of Bart Smith:**
 - Completing the largest photographic endeavor ever undertaken by an individual
 - 1st Person to hike/photograph the 16,500 miles of the National Scenic Trails

Historical Context:

The 1960's were a time of upheaval and evaluation. One area that received much evaluation was the environment. Wilderness designations, litter cleanup campaigns, and Earth Day were all manifestations of this new environmental awareness. Also created during this time was the National Trails System, which was a natural descendent of the National Park System. The intent was to create a system of trails, which would highlight the natural and cultural character of the American landscape. On October 2, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Trails System Act into law stating, "***We can and should have an abundance of trails for walking, cycling, and horseback riding in and close to our cities.***" Today, forty years later, eight trails have been designated the **National Scenic Trails**, which are defined by law as continuous extended routes of outdoor recreation within protected corridors. These trails, designed primarily for hiking, have a combined length that stretches nearly 16,500 miles through 34 states, highlighting many of America's most scenic views. In 1978, Congress

established twelve National Historic Trails. National recreation as well as side and connecting trails do not need Congressional approval to be created and are local in nature. The total number of trails under the National Trails System is more than 1,000.

Bart Smith's Background:

Bart's love of nature was nurtured by family outings. Old family photos show Bart as an infant being held by his mother in front of a canvas tent in the woods. Growing up, his father's career, as a world-renowned research pediatrician, provided opportunities to hike in England, Germany, the Alps, Hawaii, and throughout the US. Bart's Eagle Scout project was building a new trail through the woods in his hometown. In 1988, while working as the Audiovisual Coordinator at a hospital, Bart met his future wife, Bridgie, at a Nursing Electrolyte Conference. He was given his first Professional SRL camera as a going away present when quitting his "good career job" to travel around the world to hike in 1991.

Bart returned home, after nearly a year, now with 2 loves: hiking and photography. He then decided to hike and photograph the Pacific Crest Trail with the goal of having a photo coffee table book published. It took about 5 years to hone his skills because Bart is color-blind. Four days after submitting an unsolicited book proposal with no writer involved, just his slides, the owner of the publishing company called offering him a contract to publish his first book Along the Pacific Crest Trail. Based on that success, Bart decided to hike/photograph the Appalachian Trail. Then on a whim, he was able to convince Earl Shaffer (the legendary long distance hiker, who in 1948 was the 1st person to complete the Appalachian Trail in one year--his boots and pith helmet have since been donated to the Smithsonian.) to join forces for his second book, The Appalachian Trail: Calling Me Back to the Hills. It covered Earl's historic 50th Anniversary Hike of 1998, which he completed weeks shy of turning 80.

Half way through the Florida Trail, Bart decided to hike/photograph all 8 of the National Scenic Trails with the goal of finishing on 40th Anniversary of the enactment of the National Trails System Act. At the time, it seemed like a reachable goal. His third book is Along the Florida Trail. The Ice Age Trail was his next adventure, hiked during what became known as a "hundred year mosquito blood drive." U.S. House of Representative David Obey wrote the forward to Along Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail.

In January 2005, the hiking on the Natchez Trace Trail was perfect. Upon returning to complete 27 added miles there was a high heat index warning. While walking along the Parkway of flat Mississippi, he nearly suffered a heat stroke. The Potomac Heritage Trail was hiked during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Allegheny section making Bart one of the first to hike the entire trail. The next 2½ years Bart spent hiking 4,400 miles on the North Country Trail. While walking 1,000's of mid-west miles, Bart used equipment such as a jogger stroller to transport his 60-pound gear along the highway. This is called "Road Walking."

Bart found himself frequently commuting cross-country over the years from his home in the Pacific Northwest. Making the most of this opportunity, he began following the *Pony Express Historical Trail*. His fifth book, Along the Pony Express Trail, is scheduled to come out March of 2009.

Now he is on the Continental Divide Trail heading into the final days of his 16-year long quest. The only other historical achievement that compares to this is John J Audubon's desire to paint the birds of America. Both Audubon's and Bart's dreams required a willingness to be separated from loved ones for extended periods. Everyday comforts of life became rare luxuries to be savored. Both men traipsed tens of thousands of miles in the wilderness. Carrying the tools of their art upon their back, along with all their other provisions they were steadfast in the pursuit of their dream. In the end, John J Audubon and Bart Smith produced unprecedented portfolios to share with Americans and the world.

Our Philosophy

We have a Desire to Give

By utilizing our talents, we hope to raise awareness in creative ways and funding for worthy causes in a collective manner. Innately, we realize we are not personally responsible for finding financial solutions to non-profit agencies' inadequate resources. Yet on the other hand, we are willing to step forward and persist in our attempts to develop a "win, win, win" approach.

We Cultivate Life with our Dreams

Bart loves to hike and photograph. Bridgie loves to create and implement large projects. We both have a heartfelt connection to nature and people. Taking these God given talents we have always focused on self-development. Our overall aspiration is to live a lifestyle that is both comfortable and challenging. We wish to share Bart's work with the world. To enhance the natural beauty of his artwork, we have also developed a business strategy, which allows us to share a large amount of the profits with worthwhile organizations.

We Believe in Ourselves

Anything is possible, perhaps not in the original form imagined, but rather in an evolved configuration. What others might consider as failure, we see as a new opportunity to adapt. From firsthand experience, the both of us have observed many times over that miracles only happen to those who believe. Our belief in a good orderly direction, which we choose to think of as God, is the tenet that bestows our confidence.

We Focus on the Big Picture

Too often, life is like a mosaic viewed up close. Given time and distance, what we call perseverance, the wondrous scene unfolds itself. This is how a hospital audio-visual coordinator and a critical care nurse, meeting at a nursing conference joined forces. Other people's beliefs were great for them, but we chose our own reality. Together we have created a joyous marriage, marvelous photographic images from around the world, coffee table books, matted pictures, and the *Katahdin Art Project*. Most of all, we have had a lot of fun. Please feel free to join us in our journey...

Onward,
Bart & Bridgie