

# Pass It On®...

## Walking and Learning and Appreciating what we Have.

*Neil King's walk from Washington, D.C., to New York City uncovered the gems of slowing down.*

In a world that moves at the speed of the internet, the details of life's best relationships can speed by in blips, missed by the distracted eye. It's difficult to remember that walking, as a mode of transportation, was the most common way to move about only 150 years ago. While the adventurous few coursed the sea, drove wagons or rode horses, most people in human history have depended on their own two feet, moving one step at a time.

Perhaps that's why, when retired Wall Street reporter and cancer survivor Neil King wanted to rediscover the depth of the human spirit, he took a walk, a 330-mile ramble to see a small part of America's beginnings.

"I was off to do something that was very pure and basic," Neil said, "which was just to notice things and immerse myself in a walk through one spring that had kind of cleansed my eyes in some ways, or my spirit."

It seemed fitting to start a stroll into America's past at Washington, D.C.

"This is the front yard, the nation's front yard," he said. "It just seemed like the perfect place to start this walk."

Stepping off the front porch of America and strolling through her history on foot brings an intimacy you can't experience any other way. Neil crossed the Mason-Dixon Line that delineated slavery on one side and freedom on the other, which runs through the middle of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century farm. It's as if the land has taken back demarcation but remembers its history as a cautionary tale. In York, he strolled through Lebanon Cemetery, where several Underground Railroad conductors are buried, along with 32 African American troops from the Civil War, and volunteers were working to recover the memories and rescue stories. On the Susquehanna River, Neil observed a Native American petroglyph over a thousand years old. In Pennsylvania, he stopped for an afternoon to socialize with a group

of Mennonites while they played softball before gathering for choir practice.

"I met so many great people that I almost felt were put there by some higher power to interact with me," Neil said. And indeed, are we not all offspring of a power greater than us, the power of community?

Neil King navigated the New Jersey Turnpike and made his way to the tangle of pathways of New York's Central Park, the ingenious interweaving of peaceful nature and city buzz. The health benefits of walking are obvious: increased cardio capacity, deeper breaths that enliven the lungs, propelled by almost every muscle in the body. On another level, moving through the small details of lives intertwined with history and emotion gives us a sense of what we can accomplish.

"In the end," Neil said. "I think the walk, despite all the gloomy thoughts that you can have about various episodes from our history and our past, left me a lot more optimistic, in a way, about our future than had been the case when I walked out the door!"

Travel light. Enjoy the slow pace. Take time to appreciate.

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By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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