

A Walk Across America by Peter Jenkins (1979)

Peter was not doing well in college & he just destroyed his marriage. He needed to get his head straight. In the aftermath of Vietnam War, he was ready to give up on America. Someone challenged him to do his own research 1st. He & his dog, Cooper, set out on a journey to find the good people in USA. He started from Greenwich, NY on 15Oct73 [seems late in the season to start].

At 1st every muscle hurt. People would ask him why he was hiking, but he didn't know. It took 16 days to hike 475 mi [30mpd] to Wash DC, where his parents drove down for a visit. He walked in to the national Geographic Society & told them his plan. They gave him a nice camera & lenses in return for an article with photos.

There he got on the Appalachian Trail.

Most of the time they wouldn't have to carry much food since there were towns every 20-30 mi, but the Jefferson NF was desolate & lonely. He was running out of food when an old man gave him 5 red apples. He bought more food for him & his dog when he would get into a town.

Sometimes people would invite him home for the night to get a good meal & clean up. In Chatham Hill, VA he was told he had to meet Homer Davenport [recluse mtn man]. Homer said life can change in an instant [good or bad] & offered Pete to stay on his mtn, but he moved on. It got real cold in the Smokey Mtns in Jan [the same time he got the flu].

In Feb '74 he stopped in Murphy, NC to work at the lumber mill to get more money for his trip [\$85/week]. He moved in with a black family & started going to church. After 4 months he saved \$660 & moved on. From there he went to a commune in Summertown, TN. He didn't like it there & his dog got killed by a truck right before he left.

He walked in Montgomery, AL & met the governor. A man named Jenkins took him in because he must be kin. He arrived in Mobile by Mar '75 & loved it there. He went to a crusade & changed his life. He came to New Orleans in Apr '75. He rented a room at a seminary to write his article. He met Barbara & fell in love. They married in Feb '76 & in Jul '76 they headed for the Rocky Mtns.

Books by Peter Jenkins: A road unseen [85], A walk west [92], Along the edge of America [97], Looking for Alaska [02], Across China [02]