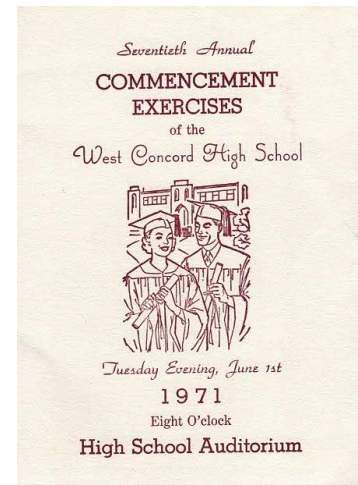


That's the Latest – October 2022

David Kunst – Earth Walker

My West Concord high school graduation was 51 years ago. My class recently held our 50th plus 1 reunion. While I opted off of the reunion committee that did not preclude the rest of the committee to put me to work organizing a picture presentation. I found out again that what takes the longest to do such a project is the time it takes to sit and reminisce about the memories each picture brings back to mind. I not only found pictures but things like the program from our graduation ceremony, a couple of wedding invitations of classmates who married in 1976, and a letter written by my classmate Jim Monical after he had been in college one month at Southwest Minnesota State in Marshall.



I not only found pictures and memorabilia from high school days but other things like the picture you see when you scroll to the bottom of this page. This was taken in October, 1974 from the vantage point of my Mercury Comet.



I was working in Waseca at my first paying job in radio at KOWO radio and living in Mankato at the time, commuting on weekends to Waseca. My Saturday morning shift was over and I was heading west on highway 14 back to Mankato when I came upon a traffic slowdown. I knew the traffic jam was coming as I had been talking about it on the radio all morning. The man who had walked around the world was on the final day of that walk returning to Waseca where this 14,452 mile hike started in June of 1970.

David Kunst, a native of Caledonia, Minnesota, along with his brother John left Waseca on the 20th of June, 1970 along with a mule named Willie Makeit. The two (three counting Willie) left with a two-fold goal. One was to complete the walk and the second goal was to raise funds for UNICEF, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. Part one of the trek went well reaching New York City. There they left Willie behind and flew to Portugal for the second part of the journey which did not go well at all. In Portugal, they obtained a second mule and headed across Europe. They met Princess Grace of Monaco and met Thor Heyerdahl in Italy.

As they started their walk across Afghanistan, an Afghan reporter incorrectly stated that the two were carrying the donations with them as they walked. In October, 1972, armed bandits shot them hoping to take all the money they were supposedly carrying. John died while David, who was shot in the chest, played dead while the bandits retreated. It took four months for David to

recover but he was determined to reach the finish line. His other brother Peter joined him for the trek to the east coast of India. Being denied access to walk through the Soviet Union, China or Burma, David flew to Australia while Peter went back to the States. David walked the breadth of the land down under and then flew from Sydney to Newport Beach, California. From there to Waseca on October 5th, 1974 he completed a journey that went through 4 continents, 13 countries, 21 pairs of hiking shoes and an estimated 20 million steps.

He had about 4000 of those steps left when I took the picture. The EarthWalker made those final steps and the journey was complete, back where it started more than 4 years earlier. YouTube has a 15 minute video called Earthwalker Presentation by David Kunst. I found it interesting since I saw him walking at mile marker 14,450.



David Kunst, the man in the middle waving at the camera, was walking east into Waseca as he neared the end of a worldwide walk. The picture was taken by Emery Kleven on October 5th, 1974.