

WALKING THE LINE

....An account of the nine-day
100-mile walk along the proposed
route of the 765 kv powerline.
The walkers are North Country
people determined to prevent
its construction... and its de-
struction of our farmlands and
peace of mind.



AUGUST 27, 1977

7:40 p.m. We'd actually got started from June Black's place in Fort Covington at about 10:30 a.m. Six of us are to walk the entire length of the route - approx. 85 miles from Ft. Covington to Edwards. Perhaps 30 or more supporters started out with us... walked the first 3 miles along the right of way -Horrible terrain. Harsh, cracked, dry clay where it was dry, deep clayey puddles up to ankles or knees in some spots, or soggy meadow lands separated by barbed wire. We had to stop to open and shut gates, passed under untopped towers, stomped into and out of ruts...think the worst section of the route is behind us.

Stella Barsa and her husband had open house for us..Served corn on the cob and a variety of sandwiches with good, fresh milk. Left our friends and started on our way at about 1:00 p.m. Followed A.J. to the Bombay/Helena road. Figure we walked about 12 1/2 miles all told. At 7:00 Jerry & Doris Mosler drove to our campsite with a supper fit for Kings or protestors -sloppy joes, coleslaw, rhubarb, fresh milk- left milk for our breakfast and were thoughtful enough to bring along a box of granola bars. Stayed with us for 1/2 an hour or so and said lunch would be waiting for us at our next stop tomorrow - probably 1/2 of our total walk...

AUGUST 28, 1977

...Slept off and on under a bright, full moon. Very windy. Allison and I yakked til' near midnight -tired but not sleepy. The boys -big & small- went off quite early.

Awake at sun-up at 7. Bros./Buffalo truck arrived at 7:30 to take our pictures again. Harold Barsa over at 7:45 to transport tents, et al, to next spot. Had to tumble the 2 Marks out of dreamland. B/B tagged along with us all yesterday.

In Helena we stopped at the edge of town and chatted with a Mr. Cray -owns a store- who feels the country is run by the Pentagon..Offered us water. Stopped on the Helena/Massena road after about a mile -found a river for the MaKs to swim in. The rest of us soaked our feet. The Emory's arrived (after spotting our flag in the field) with our lunch -delicious baked beans, fresh milk from John Lauzon and cukes and tomatoes. Ellen said she saw us on TV last night and was quite impressed. Said it would be shown again tonight. B/B showed up just about when Ellen and her husband did. We greeted him like a long-lost friend. He's keeping an eye on us so we'll reciprocate.

4:00 p.m. Arrived at the Louey's. Great reception. Cold drinks and a cup of tea for me. Mrs. Louey greeted me with "You look awful!" We both laughed.

8:30 p.m. - The St. Pierre's came over to chat with us awhile. Like most of the people we've met, they are against the PASNY group and what the luck and success of flag to cross over logs. 9:30 p.m. - Popped and ready for nighty-night. Big day tomorrow -12 miles or thereabouts through Massena- our least friendly territory. The Power substation is there. Supposed to be bringing 9 transformers into the area -One tomorrow? Mayhap we'll see one in the street if we time it right.

AUGUST 29, 1977

...Up at 6:00 -Tea at 7:30. The Loueys gave us a light breakfast -mostly tea & toast. Three woke with queasy stomachs. Ruth Deeba took Jude and Pete ahead to next spot. Passed several transformers on the road...Tea - talked with Jim, an Oswegan supporter...Stopped at George's bakery..had coffea and turnovers. Talked with a few sympathizers...Quite a few waves and smiles from autos.

12:35 a.m. - Entered Norfolk. John Tauski, West Hatfield (about 5 miles on our way) called us over for cold soda and a rest... Really sympathetic to us.

...Feel great even though my face tingles... Got to the right of way at about 1:15. A mile long, the first 200 yds. was pretty good; then we hit the carnage -swamps, dropped trees, bad traveling. Huge piles of felled logs scattered about. Had to use our sign and staff of flag to cross over logs. Went up to our knees in swamp water, ankles flagellated by and bushes. Came upon a crew working at another decent section not far from the Louisville Rd..Created us cordially and we responded in kind...Told one guy, "Smile, God loves you, even if we don't."

3:40 p.m. - Logo. The Richard Martin family called us in. Had water & toilet facilities...Anti-Line..hates to see pesticides destroying the foliage. Is going to lose 29 acres out of 240. Not much farther to go.

5:00 p.m. - Mrs. D. Arno and Kathy Wilson of Rte. 1, Norfolk, offered us cold drinks and a friendly nod.

5:15 p.m. - Still on road..Gail Furnace offered us cold drinks and toilet facility. Says it's all she can do. No benefits from these horrible lines, she says. "Our electric bill is terrible." Going to wood for heat.

Arrived at the Kerr's at 6:00 in a downpour. If it rains tonight we can sleep in the trailer.

8:20 p.m. - In the trailer for the night. Luxury! Warm and dry -bet Allison and I slept tonight! Mark Pistol's foot h hurting. If he's not up to par tomorrow, he may lay out for the day...We've really got a great group going. I love these kids - fantastic people...Yakked with Mark Pistol for a while after Mark Pistol hit the sack (the boys are sleeping in a tent). We're making plans as a group to go to Seabrook at the next confrontation.

AUGUST 30, 1977

The fourth day - So much I'll bet I've left out. Didn't sleep well, but the Massena was comfortable. Allison drooped off at 9:15 or so, queasy of stomach but not really ill. Our little "Maggie" got back from the main at 10:00. She dropped off early.

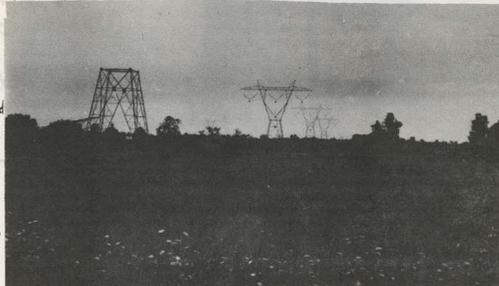
A strange thing seems to be happening to us -I read about it and was always a mite skeptical. A cameraderis has sprung up that none of us might have expected. Each of us is more concerned about the others than his or herself. We kid and tease and laugh at each other constantly and spend nearly as much time again telling each of us how great we are. When one of us is a little off -tired fast, just tired, etc. - we all pull in and favor that one's pace. I worry about the lot of them.

Finding out just how fine people are. If you want to know about where you live, walk it -a beautiful, beautiful land-myriad trees- saw a white poplar yesterday, my first one, just gorgeous. Later a weeping willow so perfect it might have been painted there. Trim lawns and lovely homes in the village of Massena-Norfolk. Tall stands of corn, lush meadows. Dogs running out to greet us -barking and tails wagging off thin bodies. And the cows. They turn their heads as though they're on sprockets, watching us as we go by. You can see the puzzled expression in their eyes. Quite a few horses, too. Mares and their young ones cantering along the fence, checking out the raggle-taggle parade, then turning back to their own business when they lose interest.

...Gonna backtrack. Mr. Louey says his place (where he's lived for nigh onto 35 years and put much work into) is not worth the price he paid for it. What with the line and his proximity to the power substation, his land has devalued enormously. He lost a crop of good hay to the dirt raised from the clearing of the line (substation). In Massena, the people have a year to clear out their trees lots before PASNY moves in...

We'll probably stop alot today because it's a long day - 13.5 miles- probably be nearer to 15 miles. We're walking a greater distance than we figured, due to crossing fields to the river, criss-crossing across the road, going out of our way for a small store or a gas station. Feel our total mileage will top a hundred miles...

11:30 a.m. Judal's diner in Raymondsville...Hot coffee for me and Mark Pie. Ice cream for the rest. Changed our minds... hamburger and fries for me -french fries for the girls. The lady, Judy Shelmidine, came out and chatted with us -introduced 3 of her 5 children (2 were away). Goes to Sue Klein's husband, Robbie, a chiroprapist. Very nice person. Her people are originally from Mass. -near Springfield. (Marsh Road, Raymondsville) Gave us a sharp cut on food prices. The diner is quite new as a business (opened in '75). She and her husband have been building it up as a business.



The first towers ~still uncertified by the P.S.C. ~ symbols of arrogance

...PASNY copter out. B/B trucks all over... 3:00 p.m. Stopped at Walt's. ..Had our picture taken by PASNY at Bros/B Storage Depot on Tisman Bridge, just before the Reimer's. Walt greeted us and brought us into the house. His wife offered cold drinks and cookies -I got tea (H!). Walt's busy working his farm. Has a big sign outside like the one in front of Charlie Bullock's.

Got into the camp area at 6:00. Mrs. Patricia Perry (Rte. 2) kept our equipment thru the day at 6:00. Mrs. Patricia Perry (Rte. 2) threat. She's against the line but her husband is not all supportive. We're camping on the Buck Jones property (Town line of Madris - 3 miles to the town)..Ron Ein stopped by. He'll walk with us tomorrow with at least one of his children.

6:20 p.m. Some names to add -Gloria Grasmuck and her boy, Dylan Canales of Potsdam. They came with Ruth this morning and will walk Friday and, possibly, Saturday (We're almost under a Taylorville line).

AUGUST 31, 1977

Woke up at 6 after having finally slept solid. Must have dropped off at about midnight. A really cool night. Curled up like a bug and didn't move once I found a warm spot. Stirred myself to get up at 6:30. Alison awoke. Both too chilled to tend to nature. The stars were sharp and clear last night after the clouds cover lifted.

10:00 a.m. - On the road to Madris, Fran Ein showed up to take our gear ahead. Had a small car, so she left two tents for Ron to pick up in the VW van. Had to get to class. Ron caught up with us at 10:30 and left Alan Casline off to walk with us. He'll catch up with us and walk later in the day. Took a short break. There's a again.

11:00 a.m. Stopped by John Richard's house. Gave us water and apples and a small flag to carry. Will visit him later personally. He's saving a nice black milk can for me.

11:25 a.m. Saw our first sign to Canton, but we're going on in through Madrid. Stopped to soak our feet in the Grasse River. Madrid Filter Plant is just across from us.

...PASNY copter is out...
Passed out some Powerline brochures to construction workers. Told them they might as well know what they were up to...Amblid a long stretch, taking occasional roadside breaks. Passed out a few more brochures en route to a farmer or two and at a vegetable stand just outside Potsdam town line. Bought sodas and fruit.

1:45 p.m. Buck's Bridge - down to soak our feet in Grasse River. Right under the bridge. Cool and really invigorating. Ron and Alan are great road companions.

4:05 p.m. Stopped for water at Leo LaSalle's farm. He and Ron talked for awhile. He's not fighting PASNY but is in sympathy with us. Says he left Brooklyn to get away from the rigamarole - and walked right back into it.

4:25 p.m. Picked up 3 youngsters - 3 girls and a boy - Dawn Dobbie (?), Lorrie Klein (?), and Gracie Beeler (?).

4:35 p.m. Joan Dobbie and Andy (2) and Japa, the pup (4 mos.). On the Morley place. Reached the road at 4:25. Made a stop while Intro's were made.

4:50 p.m. Arrived at campsite - Laurence and Irene Smith property. Hot, sweaty day but we're all charged up with the added numbers. Right of way just a few hundred feet away. Have the footing "the party" (and it was that) broke up. Pete and I be camping out at her place Friday nite...Pete presented me with a red and a blue PASNY ribbon with which to tie back my Bonnie blonde locks.

9:00 p.m. Down to Irene Smith's for hamburgs and -yeah!- tea for me. The youngsters are playing pool. Had a small glass of Burgundy - should sleep tonight. Small dill with the wine. Some wild combination. Really experiencing a whole new way of life.

9:15 p.m. Doug Jones, Kathy (Allison's little sister), and Alan Casline are here. Alan's staying with us tonight. Doug and Kathy are walking with us tomorrow. Irene's hamburgs smell wonderful. I'm full, but I won't refuse a bit more vitality. 10:20 p.m. The "party" (and it was that) broke up. Pete and Jude left at 9:40 - a couple of tired guys; Mark and Alan followed suit at about 10. The diehards, Allison and I (with Doug and Kathy) stayed on. Had more tea and muskmelons, tomatoes, home-made bread, sweet and dill pickles. The Smith's are entered on our "super-people" list. We yakked our heads off - across conversations everywhere. The two girls, Maureen and Carol Smith were quiet but attentive. Waited on us and must have wondered about these crazies who'd invaded their home. Mr. Smith even went out to tend his cows about 3/4 way through the festivities and we met him on the road back to camp. Offered us a ride but we refused. Said the walk was good for us. He drove away with a shake of his head and a chuckle at our eccentricities.

11:00 p.m. My roommate's asleep - I'm still too high on this sweet, sweet day to settle down. Just have to go on for awhile. ...My thoughts are so swift and my pen so slow...He - who needs a firm mattress and two pillows - sleeping on lumpy ground in a sleeping sack with a brown paper bag stuffed with God only knows as a pillow. My 3/4 of wine is not acting as a soporific. Ah, will, this adventure is much headier stuff. I joined a cause in which I truly believe - Stop this damned devastation by the Power People and Wallal. The "finding out that life is not what I thought in the narrow confines of my home - it's people, people sharing a common goal and giving to each other and not tallying the cost and really loving each other and listening to each other and laughing together and God, God, God! I wish it wouldn't end and perhaps it will go on in a different direction. At home I hated to get out of bed. Tomorrow - I keep remembering Shakespeare "the day shall not be up so soon as I to try the fair adventure of tomorrow." King John? Doesn't matter!... The stars are bright tonight, but not brittle-looking.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1977

6th day...Woke from a fitful night - ground too hard? At 5, took a stroll - Allison has just returned. Met Mack Pk who as asked why I was up. "Same reason as you, I guess". He seemed surprised and then said "Oh, yeah".
...Back to bed, waking up off and on. Finally got up at 8:00.



The day promises to be fair and no doubt, hot. Heading for Canton - short mileage. Art, from the Potsdam Co-op, arrived to pick up some of our gear. Mark and Mack went with him to unload and will be back.

8:45 a.m. The Dubninski's arrived and are walking with us for the day. Art will be back at noon for the rest of our stuff or someone else may be bamboozled into it. Getting muggy. Oh, Sukki, the Dubninski's dog is here as is some friendly black dog whom no one claims. Ed says there's some sort of hassel about the dog's ownership. Ed says we must need liability insurance and are having difficulty getting a license to serve beer.

10:15 a.m. Rob got back and brought Doug with him. Really humid - stiff breeze in our faces. Had the wind to our backs for a short stretch. Kind of nice. The line stretches and straggles more as our numbers increase. Singing "The North Country Farmers".

12:25 p.m. The Peace Lady came and walked a way with us. We talked for awhile. Says "If we could stop Vietnam, we can stop nukes. The line is a part of the nuke problem." When the Peace Lady left she wished us good luck and hoping our paths would cross again. Says "We're on God's side."

1:40 p.m. Off to somewhere - to the ATC campus. Spread the word about the Rally and festival and passed out brochures. Left the campus at about 3:00. The group numbers 21 - lots of little ones. Great to have the volume, but we're slowed up and there's more contention than when we were a sincere cadre. 3:30 p.m. Stopped at the Grasse River to soak feet and cool heads. Some folks are leaving us. We need to rest. Fiddledeedee. Water feels marvelous. Hot, sticky day. Dripping type of thing. One little girl is trip-prone --skinned her knee on the second or third spill. Allison turned her ankle so needs a good soaking. Heat's starting to bother us a bit. Just a mile or so to our campsite.

5:25 p.m. Mr. The brought cold punch. Really good. As we passed by the railroad, the train gave us a good blast on it's tooter. Great fun to hear it. We're staying close to the R.O.W.

-nearly covers the Taylorville line. Down to 8 bodies. Rather beat. Finally grew a blister on the top of my right foot -sandal strap the culprit.

7:00 p.m. Jack and all -Ray, Clyde, Shelley and 3 fellas from our area (Dave, Howie and Stu) brought up supper. Shawn came, too. We gabbled around potato salad, chicken, and spaghetti. While we were eating, Ruth Beabe and Gloria and Dylan arrived. Ruth's going to try to join us on the weekend. Dylan is staying tonight and walking tomorrow. His mother will join us tomorrow or Saturday.

8:00 p.m. Everyone that's going is gone. 8:30 p.m. All in our tents. Alan, the Marks, Chris, Dylan and Maggie are in the big tent; Pete and Jude in theirs and Allison and I in ours. The big tent is having a rowdy time -us broads are too pooped to join in...Awfully heavy weather tonight; lots of heat lightning. Still high on this experience but too fagged to expound as I did last night.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1977

7th day...At 11:20 it started to sprinkle and I thought -Good, it will cool off. I was heading for what I thought would be a second really good sleep of the walk. Then, at 12:10, all heaven (or hell) broke loose. The kettledrums began banging away and lightning slashes like silver swords. Rain slapped my face and my legs and feet got soaked. Allison slept right on. I'd remembered from our brief encounter with rain earlier in the week that anything touching the walls would get saturated so I pulled all my gear away and reached for hers. She stirred and so I closed the windows and doorway. When I when I asked her for help she said she was sick, remember? Had an upset stomach earlier...So I closed the window then tackled the door opening...Got sopping and, by the way, scared witless. Well, I'm terrified of electrical storms. Anyhow, once I'd battened down, I did the only thing sensible - crawled into my sleeping bag and cursed the weather and started writing. Thus ends my quest for solid sleep.

12:25 a.m. Storm seems to be moving away. Raindrops keep falling on our tent...Had heat lightning, now desultory rain lightning -An orchestration muted by distance, but still with us.

Greeting
the
growers
at
the
Canton
Farmers
Market



12:45 a.m. Train passes...very near track...sounds like it's going through a tunnel in my head. Can feel the vibration of wheels on rails in the pit of my stomach. Quite a concert of noises tonight...am begging off an encore.

8:45 a.m. Van Talmadge arrived (from Dutchess Ct.). He's walking with us. Doug brought hot coffee and donuts. Mrs. Theo came over with hot water, orange juice, toast and hot chocolate packs. Doug's gone off to keep tabs on the PSC hearings...Gone overcast again...Alan says he's not sleeping with those kids again - going to take a tent 1/2 mile away from everyone...No one really slept sensible last night, but we're pretty up. Misery really does love company. We have decided that it's not "The more the merrier".

11:30 a.m. Hit Pyrites road. Break at Lester Storie's, Pyrites Rd. Filled our canteens and let us rest. Very anti-PASNY. Knows Clyde. Counted 160 dead frogs since leaving campsite. We're talking about a hard-core group to stand at an Edward's farmer's land - pure commitment. Hope to gain 15 or 20 more...Also have made plans for a hard-core NC group to go to Seabrook on May 1st...Kids and I (Allison, Pete and Jude) making plans for a walk to California late next summer. All contingent on parents' approval. Getting muggier. Very overcast. Chris and Dylan holding up well.

12:25 p.m. Turned onto Crusher Rd. (dirt road with lots of imbedded rocks - old mine rd?). Saw a wood duck. Dylan's mother just joined us. Taking a break for the others to catch up. Started out with 11 - up to 12.

2:05 p.m. Jack's father joined us with news of what's happening in Edwards. A group will go out from the Village to greet the Southern group. Methodist minister will lead

2:20 p.m. Sally's here. Gabbled and had some laffs. Hey, Sal, I love you!

2:40 p.m. Sally's gone. They'll be back - spaghetti, too! Shawn's sick. On the road at 2:45. Refreshed and refurbished. Stopped in Hermon at Mrs. Clifton Stratrow's.

3:05 p.m. Lemonade, water and crackers and toilet facilities. Daughter-in-law was involved in Ft. Covington and Edward's Marches. She's away this time. Had a logo up, but took it in because of the weather. Her son spotted us. Really making time today. Hermon St. (Hermon-Pyrites Rd) counted our 200th frog. Left with Piltzels.

4:35 p.m. Walked a solid hour - lots of hills - really strung out. Must be 1/2 a mile ahead of the Marks, Jude & Van, Really bushed. Staying at the Shears. Our fastest walk yet. 10:15 to 3:30 for 12 1/2 miles. Had new walkers, too...Great to have an couch. Ellie has a log house. Ray would love it! Soup soon...Sounds good. Sky's trying to clear. Hope so...Good walking weather, but we don't need more rain tonight.

5:15 p.m. Cup of tea. Just took a splinter out of Pete's foot. What a production! Kids scattering to different spots. Dylan is an expounder on just about everything. Think my young ones aren't sure how to take him. He's a good kid - took the walk really well. Ellie's a nice person, easy and sweet mannered. Met Chuck in passing. Might be a nice night after all. Ellie has a small snapping turtle that the kids find fascinating. We're sitting on her porch - a big, spacious affair - luxuriating in the company of really nice people. She has an injured hen - attacked by a skunk - that she's nursing back to health... Allison and Malgosia are chewing bubble gum from this a.m. They've been popping, stringing, stretching and generally piling up dirt on their heads - more flavur, I suppose. Everytime they eat, out comes the gum. Then back it goes - like gold in a vault.

...Waiting for Doug to arrive so we can set up camp and sack down. All pooped from lack of sleep and fast-paced walk today. 8:30 p.m. We had a good supper - spaghetti again. Got dry clothes, too! Went over to the camping site and accumulated a cans of about 30. Built a campfire - our first of the jaunt. Someone, I think Chuck, brought down a jug of wine. Had some fresh-made apple cider. Doug roasted (literally) some popcorn. Set one pan aflame and had to toss it out...Wendell Jones came

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