

Alexander takes a 'Hike'

by Jack Meehan

Bob Alexander, a 1981 graduate from Concordia, went for a walk this past summer. His was no ordinary walk, though. Bob travelled from St. Paul, MN, to St. Louis, MO, all on foot to promote hunger awareness.

Bob, who now attends Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, first got his idea for his walk after the annual hunger-walk sponsored by CROP here in the Twin Cities in the fall of 1980. Volunteer work in which Alexander participated in El Paso, TX, and Juarez, Mexico, heightened his enthusiasm for this project. After doing this volunteer work, Bob said that that was his first real experience in dealing with poverty.

The journey from St. Paul to St. Louis took the Wilton, IA, native approximately six weeks to complete. Alexander left St. Paul on July 17 and finished the 640-mile trek on August 31.

The idea behind Bob Alexander's long walk was to call attention to the hunger situation that exists in many nations today. His hunger-walk was associated with CROP and Church World Services.

In order to understand Alexander's walk for the hungry, one must have a knowledge of the agencies he worked with in this project. CROP is the local organization that educates people on hunger and raises funds for Church World Services (CWS). CWS is a relief/development agency of over thirty Protestant and Orthodox denominations in America. Lutheran World Relief is a member of CWS.

Funds given to CROP and CWS are used for hunger education, emergency relief funds, refugees, agricultural development in under-developed nations, and food. For every dollar contributed to CWS, 90¢ of that goes for direct help to the needy at home and abroad. The old cliché of "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he'll eat for life" would seem very appropriate.

The hunger-awareness group here at Concordia that Alexander was closely associated with is Bread For The World. This organization exists to inform the Concordia community of hunger conditions in the world and what each person can do to help.

Although Bob left on July 17 to begin his walk, he began training approximately a month and a half in advance to condition himself. At first he started out walking two hours and then gradually worked his way to a four or five-hour walk. He also wore his backpack on these "pre-walk walks" to really get a feel of what the situation would be like.

Alexander sent off letters to Lutheran churches in towns along his route, asking if they would find a place for him to stay. All but seven responded immediately. Eventually, these seven, too, did get in touch with Bob. He was well-received at most towns and always had a place to stay.

The route which Bob followed took him along the Mississippi River, through Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri. He usually covered about twenty miles in a day, but towards the end of his journey, Alexander walked from thirty to forty miles per day. For the most part, Bob was able to follow the schedule he set for himself pretty well. However, he did have to re-route his map once or twice because of unforeseen changes.

Alexander's walk was given much media coverage when he arrived in Rochester, MN, and Dubuque, IA, and upon completion of the walk in St. Louis, MO. Radio and television stations, as well as newspapers, covered Bob's story. T-shirts were even printed in Dubuque that said, "I walked the second mile with Bob Alexander." Bob's journey was not without its aches and pains, either. Near Dubuque he had leg and back complications. As a result, Alexander had to see chiropractors several times on the way to St. Louis.

Interesting highlights of Bob Alexander's walk-for-hunger were that in Cannon Falls, MN, Bob met up with a former olympic walker. This man gave Bob various tips on long-distance walking which greatly aided him. Also Alexander arrived in Clinton, IA, in time to attend Julie Hatteberg and Bill Doubek's wedding and so was able to see friends from CSP while on his journey.

Bob said he couldn't have completed his walk-for-hunger except by the grace of Christ. He was especially inspired by the

chapel service on the day of his departure from the Twin Cities. Dr. Milton Rudnick delivered the message that day that was centered on hunger awareness. The Bethel Lutheran Church Youth Group, which Bob worked with, was also present to see him off.

The hunger issue seemed much more important to Bob after he finished his walk. His main purpose was not to make money, but rather to educate people on hunger in the world. To do this, Alexander gave various presentations at churches along his route to St. Louis.

Upon his arrival in St. Louis, Alexander headed straight for the seminary, where he had to register for classes this fall. He didn't realize, though, that there was a dress-code tradition for registration. Seminarians wear three-piece suits when they go to finalize their fall classes and Bob was wearing cut-off shorts and a T-shirt. However, seminary "officials" bent the rules and allowed Alexander to go ahead with his registration.

There has been approximately \$5000 pledged for Bob Alexander's hunger-walk. \$1760 of this came directly from the CSP community of faculty, staff, and students. A total of 224 people from Concordia made pledges to Bob and at this time, 116 people have paid their pledges. Of the \$1760 pledged, \$910.52 has already been collected. This still leaves \$850 to be turned in, hopefully, by Thanksgiving. To date, the average contribution is approximately \$7.85 per person.

Bob Alexander's walk this summer was no small accomplishment. He has the respect and admiration of everyone here at Concordia.

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