

Reminiscence

On the Road in 1949

By Walter Walker
Andover High School '49

Walter Walker accompanied Harold Crane and Skip Powers on an epic summer trip around the United States in 1949. This month we continue with excerpts from Walter's journal.

July 12: We worked out an agreement with the husband and wife owners of Mitch's Hotel and Café, so we ended up staying there for three weeks. It also meant a cold breakfast of cereal and bread. Folks back in New Hampshire knew about our stay at Grand Island, so we began getting mail, including a letter (right) from Jane Thompson, who I had been dating in my senior year at Andover High.



Mount Rushmore, South Dakota



Bear Butte, South Dakota.

Photos: Walter Walker

On the 14th, we worked 12 and a half hours and were told we would go back on the 6 AM to 7 PM shift, so we decided to stay another week.

Another long day on the 15th, but \$19.18 to show for it. Because we three were used to hard work, we got on the good side of the foreman running the operation, and he would shift us to an area where other boys could not keep up.

On Saturday we got our checks: \$67.94, which at that time seemed like a windfall to us. The 17th being Sunday, we had a day off and got caught up on sleep and letters home.

Monday thru Friday we worked

12 hour shifts. On Friday, Harold and I discovered we were coming down with some kind of a rash from the wheat dust, so decided to quit, but hated to leave that good money.

On Saturday, July 23, we got our last checks, went into Grand Island, cashed them, and headed for the Black Hills at 4:50 PM. Entered South Dakota at 1:35 AM.

On July 24 we had to stop driving around 3 AM, as we were low on gas and could not find anything open. We pulled off the road and went to sleep. We got up at 6 AM, found some gas, and entered the Black Hills at 7:30 AM. First we went through Wind Cave, then swimming, and then up Iron Mountain and Mount Rushmore and viewed the four presidents' heads. We then went into a park and hit the sack around 8:30.

On the 25th we saw the Reptile Gardens in Rapid City and also bought a second-hand tire for the car. Climbed Bear Butte nearby and went swimming in a pool at its base, then headed for Deadwood City.

On the 26th we went into Deadwood and looked over the museum. I wrote, "Best one we've seen so far." Entered Wyoming at 1:55 PM. We decided to miss North Dakota and entered Montana at 2:25 PM. "Miserable stinking roads," says my diary! We drove outside of Twin City and found a place to camp beside the Yellowstone River.

Stay tuned for bear stories!

East Andover
August 12, 1949

Dear Walt,
Well, we had the play last night. It was okay, but terrible hot. We've been swimming every night after rehearsals.

It was 120° on one of the streets outside of Franklin the day before yesterday.

Everyone is running awfully low on water.

We're going to the beach Sunday. And on a roller coaster, I hope, if I can find someone to go with me. Carolyn [Thompson, her sister] and I made about \$18 selling candy at the fair yesterday.

Anna Roberts' dog is ill, so she is taking it to the doctor at Claremont.

We've passed all of our swimming tests but are still taking life saving. Sally [Colby] goes over and watches us and flirts with the eighteen year old instructor, she doesn't take lessons.

Freddie Miller has a motor bike and boy, does he make that thing go fast. Carolyn rode it the other day, and she kept stalling it because of going so slow.

Carolyn, Sally, Judy Lou, and I waited on table last night. They had chicken à la king, salads, rolls, coffee, string beans, and little accessories and pie. It was sure hot up there, too.

Mother is washing, so I expect that I could help her.

The Market Basket at New London burnt flat yesterday. \$115,000 loss. Really quite a fire!

Sally just left. She has a crush on David [Thompson, a cousin], but I don't think there is any go.

The clothes are at last hung out.

Good Luck,

Love,
Janie



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