

LOCAL

WALK AMERICA

From Page 5

amalgamize what I was doing, which was this walk, with what needed to be done, which was to bring attention to these smaller communities," Hill said. "So I got a notebook and I just started asking people, 'If you could write a message to the next governor, what would it be?' And that was kind of the seeds for the idea."

After collecting hundreds of messages he hand-delivered the voice of the people to the governor, shortly after his inauguration. He hopes to be able to do the same for the next president.

"This year, we're looking at one of the most important presidential elections that we'll be seeing and I kind of wanted to bring them (the thoughts of the American people) to the national level," Hill said. "So the plan is to actually hand these over to the president after he's elected and hopefully before he's inaugurated."

With one leatherbound volume already filled and shipped back home, he is on his second book, asking folks to write something that is important to them, to their family or to their community. "So far I've gotten hundreds, maybe even thousands of messages. The price of fuel, the war in Iraq, the price of health-care, No Child Left Behind, it really ranges on what is important to different people across the country," he said.

Although he could have driven across America, walking provided a different outlook for Hill. "Things look a lot different at three miles an hour and I've seen some great scenery, especially out west like in Wyoming and Nevada and even on some of these roads coming up through the Carolinas," he said. "If I were driving, Grover, NC, would just be another dot on the map. I'd probably just fly right through it. But when you're



EMILY WEAVER/HERALD

BJ Hill, who is walking across America to collect messages from the American people for the next president, chats with ladies inside the Cup & Saucer Tea Room as they write in his second book. Left to right, Hill, Ruth Hamdorf, of Harlam, Iowa; Renee Chase, of Omaha, Neb.; Virginia Fritchie, of Omaha, Neb.; and Sharma Colford, of Rhode Island.

walking, you have to stop there either to get water or to use the bathroom or to have dinner or whatever. That's really how you get to talk to people and then get the messages. It would have been easier for me to drive from say Boston to New York and Chicago and just get messages that way, but I would miss all of those people who lived in between."

Hill walked across Mexico in 1996, Greyhounded around America and hitchhiked across Canada in 2000, and traveled around the Midwest in 2001, while serving in Americorps. This may be his final walk - one last hoorah before settling down.

Although much of his teaching experience stems from English, he said, "I think after this I'm going to try to get into teaching history...I'm definitely into history and I think this will give me a unique perspective on the country."

The best experience he has had on his journey so far, is finding out that he has a half-brother. A 40-year-old man, who lives about two miles down on the same street where

Hill grew up in Boston, saw him in the news. After a few emails, the two men, who shared a last name, also realized that they may share a biological father. "What he described about his father was exactly what I knew about my own father," he said.

Hill's parents divorced when he was two. They have both since passed away.

His journey, while rewarding, has definitely had its challenges. His uncle passed away while he was in Tennessee. Hill lost his cart, containing food, water and bedding, and was hassled by a deputy sheriff in Utah. He is on his fifth pair of shoes and he is walking without corporate sponsorships.

When he can find shelter, he stays the night with friends or other folks who are willing to offer a couch or a mattress. Otherwise, he sets up camp. Hill is grateful for the meals others have provided him. In between those nourishments, he chows down on convenience store food for protein.

No frills. Just a man on a mission for his fellow countrymen.

My time with Superman

One man can make a difference, two men are

"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."
-Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*



Emily Weaver
Editor

I think we are all looking for answers in life down some avenue or another. Some of us find them in literature, some in helping our fellow man, some in listening to the things around us. And others, perhaps a rare breed, go on a "walk-about" actively searching for them.

I recently have had the pleasure of meeting two "Supermen," who are taking that "road less traveled," and just like the poem by Robert Frost entails, their journeys and my brief encounters with them have "made all the difference."

I call each of these two guys "Superman" not because they are made of steel or because their courage is unyielding or even because they both don Superman shirts, but because of the impact they are having on humanity and their basic core desire to do something great, to tackle an obstacle against all odds for the betterment of the world they live in.

One took off from San Francisco on his way back home to Massachusetts to bring the voice of the American people to the next president of the United States. He had walked about 3,300 miles before I found him on the outskirts of Kings Mountain.

The other started in Boston, Mass. down a winding path to the end of the Santa Monica pier in Los Angeles, Cal. to promote equality in education. He had traversed around 1,000 miles before he stopped to rest with me.

Ironically, or maybe I should say coincidentally, just two days before the first arrived, after a long and hard day, I had cried, "Superman, help me!" It may have seemed silly at the time to the naked ear, although I knew what I meant. But to have these two men, both sporting Superman shirts, walk in and out of my life days later, I am in awe. They have both helped me in ways that neither I nor them might have imagined.

BJ Hill, who began his walk across America in San Francisco, became an instant friend. After hanging out with him, it felt almost as if I had known him forever. And for the first time in quite some time I felt that my muse had returned.

I was inspired by his selfless determination to finish an undertaking so grand and so important as giving everyday Americans a chance to speak with our nation's next president. He has walked through snow, sleet, ice, rain and high winds over the Rockies, the Blue Ridge Mountains and through the desert to accomplish his mission. Although he has been weary in his travels at times, he continues on.

"There are days that the miles just seem to drag on and on and on, but I never think about quitting. If I was walking across America just to 'see what was out there,' I probably would have given up while climbing the Sierra Nevadas. But I knew that once I collected my very first message from the Golden Gate Bridge, that I had to see this through until the end. It's just too important for a lot of people," BJ said.

In Charlotte, we met up with Skip Potts, who is walking across
See SUPERMAN, Page 7

Kings Mountain Herald

Published every Thursday

Periodicals postage at Kings Mountain, NC 28086

USPS 118-880 by Gemini Newspapers, Inc.

Postmaster, send address changes to: P. O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

Phone (704) 739-7496 • Fax (704) 739-0611

Office: 824-1 East King Street • Kings Mountain, NC 28086

E-mail: heraldnews@kingsmountainherald.com

Bill Parsons - Publisher
(bparsons@kingsmountainherald.com)

Emily Weaver - Editor
(eweaver@kingsmountainherald.com)

Gary Stewart - Sports Editor

Rebecca T. Piscopo - Staff Reporter

Nancy Miller - Advertising Coordinator

Lisa Zylbe - Composing Manager

Wendy Isbell - Office Manager

Kathy Reynolds - Circulation/Classified

Betty Johnson - Mailroom Supervisor

Helen Wells - Insertter

Mary Wood - Insertter

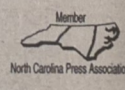
Mail Subscription Rates

Payable in Advance. All Prices include 6% NC State Sales Tax.

	1 Year	6 Months
Gaston & Cleveland County	\$28.00	\$17.50
Other NC Counties	\$29.50	\$19.25
Outside NC	\$34.50	\$21.25



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



Member
North Carolina Press Association

We reserve the right to refuse any advertisements or news that we deem inappropriate or offensive to our readership.