

## Web Blog SunWalk2008 engl. XVIII

5/13/ - 5/17/2008

Nashville, TN – Smithville, TN

5/13/2008

Nashville, TN

Almost - an encounter with Al Gore. Entering Nashville on 5/5 I visit the office of Al Gore at 2100 Westend Ave. Rachel, Gore's secretary, tells me that Al Gore is presently in Europe. He won't be back in Nashville this week. On the wall there are beautiful photos made by Tipper Gore - a glacier which crawls over dark rock; woods in bright colors, probably in New England; against-the-light photograph of Tennessean lush green foliage. There is also a big size painting of Al Gore by Peter Max. Lisa Berg, Gore's personal assistant who came with him to Basel in 2001, writes me from Washington, D. C., that she will arrive in Nashville on 5/12; and that she wants to see me.

On May 12th Lisa Berg and Roy Neel, another staff member, invite me for lunch. They regret that Al is not here - he was in London, now he is in California. He is not expected in town during the next few days. One day later Lisa sends me a mail: "Martin, we would like to take a shot to get you in to meet with Gore possibly on Weds if you will still be in town?" Some hours later she writes: „Martin, I am so sorry as we will not have him back here. I was very much hoping we would. Please know we will monitor your progress and see where we might link you up in the future on your journey. Safe travels and stay in touch.“ Who knows where we will meet?

I missed Gore; but I found Bahtiyor. The loss of my phone - there is also a good side to it: A new friend. Bahtiyor Matmuratov works at the

T-Mobile store where I buy my new phone (thank you so much, Marianne!!!). Before it is my turn I hear how he speaks Russian with a customer. Bahtiyor is tall, handsome. He has a beautiful face, dark, warm eyes, full and short black hair, sensitive hands. I immediately like him. He spends a lot of time with every customer; therefore I am waiting for a while until it's my turn. Bahtiyor comes from Uzbekistan. We meet at the hotel, in the evening before I leave Nashville. He comes with Nancy, his beautiful girl friend. She is called Nozima Mavyanova and comes also from Uzbekistan. They bring me a fresh delicious raisin bread.

Also in Nashville I could stay at the Hilton at a very low rate - thanks to Petra Ramskogler in Basel, Jenny Cruise and Ray Waters in Nashville. Craig, the director of the guest services, brings a warm and cordial touch into the noble and distinguished hotel with his big smile and his welcoming open heart. He enjoys practicing his German skills with me. He tells me that his grandmother lived in Watertown, my next destination. He knows very well the area I will walk through during the next two days.

5/14/2008

Nashville, TN - Gladeville, TN

What's the probability that two cross-country walkers meet on a small road in Tennessee on 5/14? 1:300'000'000? But we meet. Lyn Hanush waits for me next to the small road Nr. 265 and asks me which route I am walking. After 9/11/2001 Lyn walked with two other women from the state of Washington in the northwest of the country to Florida - across 15 states. Soon she wants to walk from Florida to Maine. Lyn has written a book about her adventures: "Putting a Face on America - The Great American Journey".

In her Web Blog she writes on May 14th:

"...Then we had to find a Target [shop] to get some things for Kitty's party. We put it into the GPS and followed the directions. It took us down a small street where we saw a man walking toward us pulling a small cart and waving to everyone. We all knew we had to turn around and find out what he was doing.

After turning around we found a place ahead of him where we could park. I went across the street to wait for him. I found out his name is Martin, and he's from Switzerland. He is walking from Los Angeles to Boston for Solar awareness. It was so fun talking with him, and sharing about our common journeys. We went across the street to where the others were waiting and there was more room. Then Brenda and Lois took pictures of us together. We exchanged cards and other information, and I promised to email him the pictures when I download them.

Finally we said good-bye and he headed off again. Getting back into the car we continued on to Target, which we discovered could have been reached easier on a street we had been on earlier. The GPS had told us to take this smaller street, so we had turned around to take it. I think God had His hand in that one, because we would not have met Martin if we had stayed on the other one. This was a divine appointment.

So now I've met 'Mr. Diabetes' when our paths crossed while he was walking the perimeter of the USA back in Georgia in March, and the 'Solar Man' walking from Los Angeles to Boston. That's pretty exciting."

Andy Mandell who suffers from diabetes is walking the whole perimeter of the USA. He started his 10'000 mile journey in Florida 7 years ago, and he wants to arrive in Florida again in Dec. 2008. With his walk he wants to promote awareness about diabetes, about the importance of physical activity and of a healthy diet ([www.defeatdiabetes.org](http://www.defeatdiabetes.org)). Who knows where we will meet?

Once in a while a little odyssey develops until I find the ideal camping spot for rainy nights – that is also true for today. It's getting dark. A car stops. Charlotte, a lady around 50 with a smiling face and brown hair has passed me today several times. She wants to know where I am heading. I ask her whether there is a hotel in this area, or at least a dry place for camping. No hotels here; but I may find a dry barn somewhere. I see an empty trailer home with a big covered porch. To avoid any risks I would like to ask the neighbors whether I can put my tent there. There is a Alsatian wolfdog behind a trellis-work fence which barks violently and throws itself against the fence when I approach the house. A woman appears, later her husband.

He doesn't recommend to camp there: „There are new tenants moving in soon. If they come and see a tent on the porch, it's possible that they shoot you.“ On the road again.

Behind the next bend there are two modest, tumble-down cabins. In front of one of them a dark-yellow school bus is parked. Children are playing in the front yard. A mother and a young couple are coming out of the houses. Doug is thrilled by my walk. But he has no idea where to find a dry place for my tent. And it doesn't seem possible to sleep in the empty school bus. But Doug knows an idyllic camping spot in the woods. He offers me to guide me there. I follow him. Again and again there are big puddles. I have to walk around them with James. After several trail junctions we arrive at a small clearing, a nature arena with a semicircular wall and a fire place. At first I think I can camp here; but after Doug has left I see the muddy ground. I imagine how wet the trail will be after another rainy night. Therefore I look for another chance and go on.

Back on the road I come to a wide open field with several farm houses and barns. Next to one of the farmhouses there is a big, empty barn that catches immediately my attention. I walk around the house next to it in order to ask whether I can stay there for the night. There is a car parked in front of the house – with a IRL sign. I ring the bell at the house door; but nobody seems to be there. Suddenly I hear an angry loud voice: „What the hell are you doing on this private property?“ A furious farmer walks towards me. I explain to him my walk and my search for a dry place to stay. He turns very friendly immediately. He explains that he watches over the house when the neighbors are away. He apologizes that he was so aggressive. He suggests to me to ask in the store down the road. They may have a dry shelter for me. And as a matter of fact I see a big carport next to the store building. It's used for barbeque – a stove, wood piles and tools are stored under the roof. And there is a big dry area, big enough for my tent. In the store I meet Mitchell Griffin and his daughter Chelsie. They listen attentively when I tell them my story. Mitchell calls his father Ray to make sure that he agrees. Then he tells me that I am welcome to stay and that I can put my tent under the carport. It starts raining; and soon I am in my dry tent. I hear the rain lashing down onto the tin roof. I enjoy a fruit cake and mineral water that Mitchell brought me when I put up the tent. A client in the store who also listened to my story brings me a cheese sandwich; and Charlotte arrives as well, just to be sure that I am fine. The next morning Barbara, Mitchell's mother, spoils me with a huge omelet breakfast. „It's on the house,“ she smiles at me when I want to

pay. It's still raining, but there is much sunshine in my heart after this odyssey; and after one hour the rain stops – in spite of the weather forecast which announced heavy rain during the whole day. In the late afternoon I arrive in Watertown.

5/15/2008

Watertown, TN

Sharon and Bob McComb have turned the old railway hotel that has been built in 1898 into a cozy in style bed & breakfast home. They welcome me like an old friend – they offer me a nice quiet room. Sharon spoils me with delicious vegetarian food. They wash my dirty laundry. And they give me a huge discount in support of my walk. On the big gravel square across the street Bob shows me a nature miracle that he protects with three orange plastic pillars. Between them there is a killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) nest with three little eggs. They are gray, brindled – a perfect camouflage. The wrought up bird - with its white belly, brown wings, and black ribbon pattern around head and neck – is scurrying around us. It is spreading its wing and tail feathers and is whistling aloud in order to distract us and lure us away from the nest.

Marie Papini – a young school counselor for the 5-8th grade students at Watertown Elementary School in Watertown, TN – has heard about the SUNwalk 2008 from John Luther, the owner of the East Hills Bed & Breakfast Inn in Dickson where I stayed some days before. Marie invites me for a school visit. Anita Christian, the school principal, and Cheryl Ellison, the asst. principal, welcome me before 9 o'clock. They come with me to the gym hall where around 250 students are sitting on the gallery benches waiting for me. I give a talk about my walk and about the solar transatlantic journey. Afterwards they ask many questions. The school is on its way to become a „Green School“: Environmental education will expand. Environmental management will improve the school's ecological footprint – energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, recycling, and organic gardening. I invite students and teachers to join me for the 11 mile walk to the next town, Liberty, on Saturday morning. Later Anita gives me a tour through the whole school. I have heard a lot about the bad situation in US public schools - lack of teachers, old infrastructure, and insufficient school material. Watertown is different: I sense a cheerful atmosphere – not only

because of the long vacation that will begin soon - with a lot of basic trust between students and teachers; the facilities are modern and clean, with much light and enough space. The equipment is new and of high quality. In front of the school young students and their art teacher paint colourful paintings onto the sidewalk – big flowers, the sun, the moon, the stars, animals, trees and fairytale landscapes.

5/17/2008

Watertown – Center Hill Lake, TN

When I leave my room in the morning, Lisa Satterfield from Knoxville is already there, surrounded by her film equipment. Lisa wants to follow me during the whole day. She plans to make a film about the SunWalk 2008 for the National Weather Channel, as a contribution to the future oriented series „Earth Forecast“.

Most of the parents seem to be concerned to let their children walk on the road; but Josh and Holly, Marie Papini and some teachers are ready in front of the B & B home at 10 AM. Holly, 11 years old, had to choose between a birthday party, a festival and the walk. She chose the walk. Never before she has walked such a big distance. She did the whole stretch although her feet began to hurt after several miles.

During the whole day, I see Lisa showing up somewhere along the route: behind a road bend, on top of a hill filming down, and in a village taking the watertower as background. I meet David Funk, a real estate broker, in a small restaurant during lunch time. He recommends the Center Hill Motel behind Smithville as a wonderful, unique place to stay for the night. The motel overlooks the wood covered hills and the Center Hill Lake. Around 8 o'clock in the evening I arrive there. Lisa takes some pictures of the walker in front of the setting sun. Then we eat together – the view is even more beautiful than I expected. Wood silhouette behind wood silhouette, steep slopes, and down there the blue green mirror of the silent lake, some boats. Mike, the owner of the motel, is thrilled by my walk, so thrilled, that we have a free dinner there.