

The following column appeared in the Oct. 6 2006 issue of the Fowlerville News & Views. The author walked from Williamston to Webberville, MI along the Paradise to Hell & Beyond walk by 87-year-old Clayton Klein of Fowlerville. Walking with Clayton were the author, Susan Parcheta; Klein's daughter, Debbie; Jeanne Showerman McKowen and her son, hometown actor Christopher Showerman.



**Five Walkers':** Photo at left taken by Frank McKowen west of Williamston, MI on Day #18 of Clayton Klein's walk from Paradise to Hell & Beyond. Walkers, from left, Clayton Klein, Jeanne Showerman McKowen, Debbie Klein, Chris Showerman, Susan Parcheta.



**Getting ready to walk:** Photo on right, taken by Chris Showerman. From left: Debbie Klein, Jeanne Showerman McKowen, Frank McKowen, Clayton Klein, Susan Parcheta.

## 'Come Walk With Me'

By Susan Parcheta

There's something about the fearless spirit of adventure that intrigues us. We want that spirit. And, even if we have difficulty mustering it up in ourselves, we admire those who respond to their own inner call to express it.

Such is the effect that two mid-Michigan natives have had on my personal outlook on life. They happen to be from the same hometown area, and they happen to be related.

Yet, at first glance, they seem as disparate as anyone could imagine. One is a quietly humble octogenarian. A former businessman and author, Clayton Klein has reached media attention in the past several years as he has walked the entire breadth and length of Michigan.

As a writer, I became acquainted with Clayton after the publication of his book, *Cold Summer Wind*, recounting 20 years of canoe camping and exploring in the Canadian wilderness.

The other adventurer, two generations younger, is an actor with a gregarious personality and an "all things possible" perspective. He is Christopher Showerman, star of Walt Disney's *George of the Jungle II*. I've known Chris since the movie came out in 2003 and I interviewed him for the Fowlerville News & Views.

Clayton Klein's invitation to "Come Walk With Me" -- on his journey "from Paradise (MI) to Hell (MI) and Beyond" this September -- inspired countless individuals to join him along the way. I was one of those so inspired. So was Chris Showerman and his mom Jeanne(Showerman) McKowen.

When Clayton was gearing up for his walk this summer, Jeanne was discovering their common heritage. As Clayton explained it, they are cousins...descended (to put it simply) from the same family patriarch.

I'd been working on a couple of update articles on Chris, following his acting career and where it's taking him these days. Jeanne and I had decided we'd walk with Clayton on the day he walked from Lansing to Webberville.

Both of us were doing this with the intention of accompanying Clayton on a pledge to walk for one of the charities he was raising money for this time: American Cancer Society, Michigan Hospice and Fowlerville Family Impact Center.

We also were thinking of the health benefits of walking. Jeanne, now retired from teaching music at Webberville Community Schools, keeps active with a daily exercise regime. My doctor is an advocate of walking - for the multiple health benefits it offers. I've been walking daily for that reason.

So, as I became more aware of those benefits, I was reminded this summer about Clayton's story - how one doctor prescribed walking, following back problems many years ago, which brought him back to health without surgery.

Jeanne and I thought it would be great to see how far we could walk with Clayton. We agreed to meet him at the Williamston McDonald's on Monday, Sept. 18, the day he walked from Lansing Flap Jack Shack through Williamston to Webberville. We waited with Jeanne's husband, Frank, for Clayton's arrival at his lunch stop.

Frank, who was the photographer and follow-up man for the day, scouted ahead and reported that Clayton was indeed on schedule and would be arriving shortly. We greeted him and his daughter, Debbie, who walked the full 18-mile stint with him that day. Clayton averages 20 miles a day on his walks, and Debbie had spent time training for the occasion by walking around Lake Lansing. (Clayton's son, Darrell, had walked with him in the Upper Peninsula).

As Clayton enjoyed a quick burger for lunch, he discussed some of his travels from Paradise in the Upper Peninsula, across the Mackinac Bridge and on down the middle of Michigan to his home territory.

While waiting for Clayton to arrive, Jeanne had taken a phone call from her son, Sam, who had just celebrated his birthday and was calling to thank his folks for the party the night before.

She thought nothing of it until, during lunch with Clayton, a tall, dark-haired, familiar looking man whooshed through the door, camera in hand, to grab a snapshot of his startled mom. It was soon obvious that Sam had informed Chris of their mom's whereabouts. Chris had come to see her, ready for walking.

He'd made the five-hour drive from Toronto, where he's currently acting as an understudy in the remake of the Broadway comedy, *Legends!* - starring Joan Collins and Linda Evans.

The show schedule is intense, and he had just a day to surprise his family. "Shock and awe" would be an apt description. Caught off guard, as Jeanne reported later, it took her (and this writer, as well) an entire week to believe that day's drama really happened.

Clayton and Chris share a remarkable capacity to energize everyone they meet. Walking with the two of them gave us a double dose of enthusiasm to keep going.

We made it five miles from Williamston to South M-52 at Webberville, where we bid Clayton and Debbie farewell, as they continued the short trek to their destination, Angel's Café.

That was day #18 of Clayton's walk to Hell and beyond to Ohio. He plans to walk again next summer when he'll be a vibrant 88 years old. I'm looking forward to walking more miles with him next time.

The two adventurers, by the way, will both be subjects of upcoming articles in the *News & Views*. Watch for an update on Chris Showerman's career soon and a review of Clayton's 2006 Michigan walk and plans for next year.

Meanwhile, I'll continue to be inspired by their common spirit - pushing the boundaries of all things possible, and may I add...at any age.