

He's going from Paradise to Hell & beyond: One step at a time

By Susan Parcheta

Fowlerville native Clayton Klein is once again trekking from Paradise to Hell.

Ever the adventurer at heart, the 87-year-old former businessman and author last year walked from Paradise in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan down to Hell, a journey of 357 miles.

His walking tour lined out to be at the Mackinac Bridge for the Labor Day Bridge Walk.

When asked if he walked with Governor Granholm, he said, no, because she was in a different category than the runners. He did get to meet her, however, and experienced the pleasure of being hugged for the first time by any Michigan Governor. And if he were to be hugged by a governor, she'd be the one he'd choose.

Klein said meeting Granholm was a surprise, because he hadn't realized the Governor's office had tried to contact him via email about it. He discovered the letter in his inbox upon his return back home.

He'll have another opportunity for a gubernatorial hug this year. He's set to begin walking from Paradise Sept. 1, accompanied by his son Darrell.

They'll arrive at the bridge for the Labor Day Walk and all the festivities.

From the bridge, Klein will travel south to the Ohio border, to the tune of about 20 miles a day, traversing a number of Michigan counties along the way.

He'll rack up the miles this year, going "to Hell and Beyond," for a total of 420 miles.

There's a new twist to Klein's walk this time. He's inviting people in all those counties to walk with him part of the way.

Not only does he hope they will walk with him, he's offering them the opportunity to combine that with charitable donations to one of three charities: Hospice of Michigan or the American Cancer Society - or locally, to Fowlerville Family Impact Center.

Entry/pledge forms will soon be available at area businesses. (See upcoming News & View notices for locations).

Walkers may sign up to join Klein locally at anytime until he walks through Webberville and Fowlerville.

Klein is seeking a walk coordinator locally. He needs someone who will manage the entries and answer questions about the walk, especially while he's gone.

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While the Paradise to Hell trips run the length of the state, Klein walked Michigan cross-wise the previous two years.

He's been walking most of his life and considers walking to be one of the most healthful activities. The exercise helped him recover from severe back pain, avoiding surgery and braces. That was nearly 40 years ago. Klein took up walking and has never stopped, having already logged some 50,000 miles.

Training for the walking tour begins in earnest a few weeks beforehand, as he walks several times a week from Fowlerville to Webberville and back, and finally to Williamston and back.

Klein is scheduled to arrive in Lansing Sept. 17. He'll walk from Lansing to Webberville on



Sept. 18 and from Webberville to Burkhart and Mason Road on Sept. 19.

The route takes him to Hell on Sept. 20. He'll walk there from Fowlerville, after being able to stay at home for a couple of nights during the local walks. He'll continue on down to the Ohio border.

Klein laughs that he has a pass to go through Hell, and he doesn't have to stay. He's hoping a lot of walkers will be inspired to journey along with him, for a distance, and maybe even through

Hell and beyond, all for a good cause.

Klein added that this year's walking tour is really an experiment. If all goes well, he said, he plans to repeat the walking for charity event again in 2007.

By then he figures, all the pieces should be in place, so that "it can really amount to something for raising funds."

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer coordinator for Klein's local walks may contact him at 517-223-8135 or email him at clayton.klein@att.net.