



All Weather News
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<http://www.allweatherwalkers.org/>
Deadline for Sept news: Aug 24



From: "Tom Baltes" tlbaltes@aol.com, our RD (or above) Written by Elizabeth Rose, a veteran Volkswalker:

1. Tom & Louise Baltes – Camas Couple Walks the World for Fun, Fitness and Friendship
clarkcountytalk.com/2017/07/21/camas-volksmarching/ 7/21/2017

Tom and Louise Baltes of Camas have walked in over 20 countries and all 50 states and 51 capitol cities through a non-competitive walking sport called volksmarching. So what makes them walk, walk, walk?

Volksmarching Began in Germany



Tom and Louise Baltes raised their children in Germany and enjoyed volksmarching with them.

“Louise and I have been volksmarchers since 1980 when we participated in our first event in Germany,” Tom recalls. Weekly outings gave the couple a way to see German villages and the countryside at a relaxed pace. “It was great exercise, fun for our family and helped us learn more about Germany,” Tom added.

Both Tom and Louise are retired Air Force officers. Their careers have taken them across the United States, to Turkey and to Germany three times. Their walking activities have added up to more than 35,000 kilometers of recorded walking. Volksmarchers record each sanctioned event in record books, fill them up and turn them in for patches, pins and a certificate.

It was not unusual for American military service members stationed in Germany to catch the “volksmarch bug” like Tom and Louise. The non-competitive sport started there. In Germany volksmarching is a fantastic way to get out and visit little villages, walk through woods and vineyards and enjoy the German culture. It is a well-organized system.



In Germany, patches, pins and walking stick shields were highly collectible for walkers. Photo credit: Elizabeth R. Rose

Volksmarching (from the German “*Volksmarsch*,” or people’s march) is a form of non-competitive walking that developed in Europe in the mid to late 1960s. It has nothing to do with marching. Now, you will see the term volkswalking or volkssports used more frequently.

In the little villages of Germany at that time, traditional running races only allowed for a few to be winners. It soon dawned on organizers that more people could be involved if they had a sport where everyone was a winner. Since many Germans loved a good walk in the countryside, a walking sport seemed to fit the bill. And, many walk events were fundraisers, for the German Red Cross as an example, so the families of the village would bake cakes and organizers would set up a beer tent. When participants finished the 10K or 20K walk, they picked up their award, had their books stamped and would stay to socialize and relax over beer and good food.

Volksmarching Comes to the United States



Tom and Louise have traveled the world through their walking sport. Here they are seen in April 2007 in the Tsitsikamma National Park in South Africa. Photo courtesy: Tom and Louise Baltes

Eventually American service members brought the sport, and the international record books, to the United States. The first volksmarch was held in Fredericksburg, Texas, a Texas hill country town with German roots. And, eventually the sport expanded. Tom explains, “Volksmarching clubs are more than just walking clubs. We are part of a 41-year-old, nationwide group of clubs numbering over 230, known as the [American Volkssport Association](#). This organization, in turn, belongs to an international program with walks in over 40 countries.”

Tom adds, “Our clubs offer fun, fitness and friendship and sometimes food to engage walkers who participate.”

Non-profit clubs dotted across the United States organize walks to highlight the beauty, history and hidden treasures that abound in their communities, parks and rural areas. Additionally, the program includes biking and swimming events, plus winter activities such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Thus, the term “volkssports” was coined. The program is low cost and available to people of all ages and fitness levels. Louise admits, “It’s the best kept secret in America!”

Volksmarching is Part of Their Lives

Tom and Louise have many wonderful walking memories. “Among our most memorable walks have been 15 guided ones in South African game parks, a

coast-to-coast trip across Scotland and a stroll under the Eiffel Tower in Paris on New Year's Eve," Tom explains. All of these were sanctioned volkswalks.



When not traveling, Tom and Louise enjoy local trails like the Lacamas Lake trail which is just down the hill from their Camas home. Photo courtesy: Tom and Louise Baltes

Tom and Louise actually moved to their home in Camas because of the sport, as Tom elaborates, "We love the program and moved from New Mexico to the Northwest six years ago because of the marvelous volkssport walks available. Most importantly, we're here to enjoy a fun group of dedicated walkers who value the health benefits and fun of walking together."

Walking in Clark County

It is easy to become involved in these all-volunteer clubs. There are two clubs in Clark County (with four more in Portland) that host walks, make do-it-yourself walking routes available and provide other services to the community. [Vancouver USA Volkssporters](#) meet in Vancouver, and [All Weather Walkers](#) meet in Salmon Creek. You do not have to belong to a club to participate in the walk events.



Tom and Louise earn walking certificates

world-wide. Patches, pins and certificates are part of the incentive program. Photo credit: Elizabeth R. Rose

There is also a regular Wednesday morning walking group that often schedules a walk in Clark County. Experienced walkers can join in the 10K, faster walk, and more relaxed walkers can enjoy a slower, 5K, guided walk. The American Volkssport Association lists walks across the United States open to the public, making for some great stops on a cross-country road trip.

The best way for a new walker to get started is to attend one of the guided group walks, such as the [Wednesday Weekly Walkers](#) or a weekend event in this area. To make it easy, clubs have set up a meet-up group, [Walking Oregon and Southwest Washington](#), with a calendar of area walks. Louise suggests, “We often tell new walkers to try a shorter distance first to be sure they have a successful outing and get a better idea of their fitness level.”

Over the next two years Tom and Louise expect to be very busy traveling around the Pacific Northwest walking with clubs across a four state area. Tom is the new volunteer regional director for volkssporting in this area and will be reaching out to club members to hear their ideas while enjoying their walking trails.



President’s Corner: Janet Traweek – no items this month



Next Meeting: Aug 8 - ALL ARE WELCOME! Details and map are now at <http://www.allweatherwalkers.org/static.htm> Sections that rarely change are also at this link: list of officers/valued associates, and Weekend Walking description.

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Club Events/Weekend/Wednesday Walk Calendar:

Washougal – Aug 26

Grass Valley – Oct 7

Group Walks: Wednesday Walks – 10:00 am

<http://www.vancouverusavolkssporters.org/Wed/wed.htm>

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Achievements: [please contact the editor with event and distance milestones](#)

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Welcome to new members – Debra Hodges, Diane Kunkel, Lisa Runkle, and Leonette Sanders

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Jan Breneman's Corner:

NEW CLUB T-SHIRTS

Liz Connors did a great job on the AWW t-shirts, and ordered a few extra to have in inventory. A number of 100% cotton short- and long-sleeve tees, and a few 50/50 cotton/poly sweatshirts are available. Cost is between \$12-\$20, depending on style, and we have a variety of colors.

I now have the shirts and if you missed the first call, here is another opportunity to choose from the best inventory. Contact me, Jan Breneman at janbreneman@gmail.com or call me at (360) 835-9686.

WASHOUGAL WATERFRONT PARK WALK

The Washougal Waterfront Park has proven to be a popular spot for community events, and our volkswalk is no exception. We have reserved the covered picnic shelter, but the river views and adjacent restrooms are included.

I've spent the last few weeks finalizing the 10km route, and the 5km is coming along – it might be a 6k. I am even considering a remote design in order

to get the best route – and in my opinion, that would be the Washougal River Greenway (which we tried to do a few years ago but spring flooding thwarted the plan). If you routinely do 5k walks and have an opinion regarding remote starts, I'd be interested to hear from you one way or another. We'll see what develops in the next few weeks.

Plans for the new waterfront trail to extend east to Steamboat Landing Park, allowing for a potential new YRE from Pendleton, but that will take another 2-3 years. In the meantime, this month's route approaches the trail from the back end, allowing for a Fantastic Finish.

Earlier in July, I spotted graders in the overflow lot adjacent to the park, which we are using for extra parking. This should help with a smoother grade, just in case we get a little rain beforehand – but perish the thought!

Full event details are on both www.AllWeatherWalkers.org and www.ava.org websites. I hope you can volunteer and also walk on Saturday, August 26. Questions? Give me a shout.

THE WALKER'S BASIC FIRST AID KIT

10 plasters (bandaids) in various sizes;
2 large sterile dressings for severe bleeds;
1 medium sterile dressing for large wounds;
4 triangular bandages to support suspected broken bones, dislocations and sprains;
1 eye pad in case of cut to the eye;
4 safety pins to secure dressings;
Disposable gloves for hygiene.

Reprinted from *Walker's Pocket Companion*, Malcolm Tait, Pavilion Books, London UK, 2007, Page 107

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