



**KENT KRIEGSHAUSER**/The Register-Mail

Dr. Detlev Henschel and his girlfriend Katrin Frommhold sit in their RV at the Gale

## **German couple touring back roads**

### **He's walking, she drives RV filled with supplies**

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**By MATT HUTTON**

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GALESBURG - For German native Detlev Henschel, it started when he was 3 years old. He ran away from home in search of a friend - naked - and slept near the river. His life has been a nonstop search for the next great adventure ever since.

Henschel and his long-time girlfriend, Katrin Frommhold, are a little more than halfway through a cross-country trek across America - on foot. Henschel, 50, began in Los Angeles in March and plans to finish up in late October or early November in St. John's, Canada. He usually makes about 23 miles per day, with Frommhold, 39, driving ahead in an RV. But on Tuesday, heavy rain he had been just a step ahead of finally caught up to him in Galesburg and they were unable to move forward. So, they spent the day at the Galesburg East Campground near Knoxville. It was their first day of rest in more than a month.

Henschel's idea was to walk the off-road, pioneer trails of America. However, he has been disappointed at how much of the nation's heritage has been plowed away or not kept up. Still, by taking the back roads he has been able to connect with an America rarely seen by the international community. He was especially struck by how friendly people in Galesburg have been with him.

"We knew America, so I knew what to look for," Henschel said. "I call them city slickers ... people just after money, in a fast-living world. In the countryside, farmers got off their truck and talked to us. You never see that in a big city."

He was also surprised by the attitude he encountered concerning the government.

"It is the opposite of what you read abroad," he said. "People are so annoyed with the government, Americans would like to have a better reputation abroad. I didn't know that before. City people don't care."

Henschel has seen both sides of that lifestyle, having grown up in a small village before heading off to a big city university in Germany. But he said the time he spent doing what some would consider holding down a steady job, was the odd time in his life. Adventure and travel are the norm, and now he has made that his career.

His trip across America comes on the heels of similar hikes of Japan and Australia. Henschel, already has written several books about his past journeys and plans to write a

book in German on each of his three latest walks – though he is still in search of an English publisher.

Some of his most frightening adventures came during a trip through Siberia, when several grizzly bears came up to his tent, drawn by the scent of fish, and almost killed him. After that, Frommhold said she would not let him go on any more trips alone. So, she drives on ahead in the RV with supplies, just in case. Though he has been fortunate and careful, Henschel said he has lost many friends to risk and Mother Nature.

"Most people don't respect nature," he said. "They have five days off a year and want to climb up mountains. I don't risk that kind of stuff."

Henschel said he would like to stay in America after this trip is complete in order to explore more of the country. However, if he stays in one place for long don't feel sorry for him - because it'll be in Maui.

"I can't stand the cold," he laughed as he watched the rain pour down on Galesburg.