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Pilgrim on the Santa Fe Trail

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Doyle Daves has written extensively about Santa Fe Trail travelers. His articles have appeared in previous issues of Wagon Tracks, and can be found online at www.santafetrail.org. He is a presenter at the Santa Fe Trail Rendezvous at Larned in September.

Pilgrim on the Santa Fe Trail

By Mary J. Cunningham, Cimarron Cutoff Chapter

On May 2 in Ellinwood, Kansas, I met Ann Sieben as she traveled through town as a pilgrim. A speaker at the April 3-6 Gathering of American Pilgrims on the Camino at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine at Belleville, Ill., she decided to walk back to the Santuario de Chimayo in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, 30 minutes north of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

She began on the Katy Trail on the north bank of the Missouri River, reaching the Santa Fe Trail at Booneville, Missouri, and taking it on west. On the Santa Fe Trail she passed through Council Grove, Herrington, Tampa, Canton, McPherson and Chase before reaching Ellinwood, a full 549 miles.

Sieben said after working as a nuclear engineer for 20 years, she took a year's sabbatical and decided to travel as a pilgrim. She enjoyed it so much she has continued that for the last eight years. She explained that a pilgrim is a person who has a definite destination and carries a credential which shows the route taken by comments and signatures of people along the way. Making a pilgrimage is quite popular in Europe and other areas of the world, according to Sieben.



Ann Sieben just outside of Ellinwood, Kansas, a few miles west of Plum Buttes and Ralph's Ruts.

Over the last few years she has traveled on four continents in 32 countries, walking a total of 24,000 miles. In December of 2007 Sieben began her venture with a trip from Canterbury, England, to Rome, crossing the Alps in the winter "with snowshoes and all" via the Francigena Route. She became known as the 'Winter Pilgrim'. She has been around the Mediterranean on the North coast of Africa to Jerusalem, from Mexico along the west coast of South America, and the Royal Road to Mexico from Denver to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Another winter the route took her from Kiev, Ukraine, to Patras, Greece, the route of St. Andrew in the first century.

Her longest pilgrimage was 9,000 miles through 12 countries. Sieben travels 95 percent off highway, 20-25 miles a day. ♦