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Hope College graduate hits American Discovery Trail

Matt Parker aims to be first person to make 6,800-mile journey on horseback



By Rebecca Aistrup Gerber

Morris News Service

DODGE CITY, Kan. -- After receiving a fine arts degree from Hope College in Holland, Matt Parker said he wanted to see the country.

ON THE ROAD: Matt Parker travels east on U.S. Highway 50 between Cimarron and Dodge City, Kan., Tuesday.

Dodge City, Kan., Daily Globe/Michael Schweitzer

And what better way to see the country than on horseback. So in May 2003 the Ann Arbor resident saddled his horse and mule and began a journey of a lifetime.

Parker wants to become the first man to cross the American Discovery Trail on horseback. The trail stretches more than 6,800 miles across 15 states from California to Delaware. This trail is the only coast-to-coast, non-motorized recreational trail.

On Tuesday, Parker traveled to Dodge City from Cimarron, Kan., where he was staying the night before continuing his trip east.

"There are a lot of things that turn you into a man, but not a lot of rites of passage," Parker said standing along U.S. Highway 50 Tuesday afternoon.

Although his trip began in May 2003, Parker had to stop for the winter in Utah because his mule became lame.

When he continued his trip in the spring he was given a Missouri Fox Trotter horse from Dennis Remington with the Remington Ranch in Utah.

"She has been holding up well," Parker said.

Along the way Parker, who is 24, has met a lot of people, especially going through the desert. He had to find areas where there was water and feed for his horse and mule.

"I have met a lot of interesting and amazing people," Parker said. "Some that are lifelong friends. Others have taken me into their homes -- just wonderful people."

Parker is always in need of donations, which are used for supplies to care for and feed his horses and other expenses related directly to the trip. He is also in need of a mule.

For more information about Parker and his trip along the American Discovery Trail, visit his Web site at www.rideofpassage.com.

"I am trying to be the first man to ride the American Discovery Trail and it looks like it is going to happen," Parker said.

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