

# Many Weary Miles Pass Under 'Old Iron Legs'

BY BETTY DOW

MONTAGUE—"Old Iron Legs," as he calls himself, has covered thousands of miles on foot through many lands from the Canal Zone to Texas; from Portugal to Italy; California to Mexico and back again, and now he is smack dab in the middle of his latest hiking feat of some 1,200 miles of Northern California.

"Old Iron Legs" is really John S. Stahl, 75-year-old veteran of the high seas and former postal clerk. His home? Well, it is where he hangs his wooden staff and rests his knapsack—perhaps in someone's barn along the road he happens to be traveling, or maybe—weather permitting—under some shady tree in the woods. He does have a mailing address, that of his brother in San Francisco, and where he rests between hikes. He keeps his brother posted as to where he will be on such and such a date, so his brother can forward his mail.

He left Sacramento, on this, his latest trek, to tour Northern California, via "shank's mare" on May 27, 1958, and after covering some 481 miles arrived in Yreka on Friday, July 11. His itinerary included stops at Marysville, Red Bluff, Alturas, Tulelake, on back to Grenada, where he took the Grenada cutoff into Yreka.

After his weekend in Yreka, where he was royally received by Capt. Floyd Winchell, head of the Yreka, CHP division, he rested at the Yreka Inn, enjoying a lunch and dinner with Father John Boland of St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Saturday. After attending mass at the church on Sunday, he set his walking sights along the Klamath River Highway, and plans to make Happy Camp his next stop.

"Old Iron Legs" is a small wiry fellow with a wrinkled face, white beard, and sparkling blue eyes peering from beneath bushy white eyebrows. Those sparkling eyes indicate a terrific sense of humor and an awareness and love of life. John talks of his many travels with a great deal of pride of accomplishment. He was retired in 1935 from the post office department in San Francisco due to ill

health, namely ulcers. Needless to say he has nary an ulcer now. Taking up walking as a "profession" was more or less due to a nervous condition, and as he put it, with a grin, "I wasn't about to sit around in a city apartment, and develop into a shaky old man."

He has cut his way through jungles traveling through Central America, where the roads were mere paths. His longest trek was some 3,500 miles from the Panama Canal Zone to Austin, Texas. One of his shorter walks, was a tour of the 21 historical missions from Sonoma to San Diego. He made the Holy Year Pilgrimage, piloted with a meeting of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, where he traveled from Fatima, Portugal, via Lourdes on to Rome, a distance of 1,560 miles, started on August 4, 1950 arriving at his destination in December, 1950.

He has many honors, among them being the position of colonel and aide-de-camp to the governor of New Mexico, and an honorary membership in the Texas Rangers. His latest yen, which he hopes to achieve at Happy Camp, is to become a member of an Indian tribe, and he wants the works—ceremonial dances and all.

He proudly shows letters of introduction from Mayor Christopher of San Francisco and Bernard R. Caldwell, head of California's Highway Patrol, and many other letters from eminent personalities. These letters he carries in a small white canvas bag, along with his diary, which he uses as an address book. There are hundreds of addresses of the hundreds of people he has met in his long travels, and many of them he writes to, keeping them informed of his progress.

Asked if he had any pet theories, he countered with, "are you like the rest of the reporters? Pulling that old routine (and which annoys him no end) 'to what did he attribute his long life?' Well, he said with a twinkle in his eyes, 'I am not going to say like so many of these old fellows do, that I don't drink coffee, I don't smoke (he doesn't), or I don't drink. I drink lots of coffee along the way, and if some one comes along the road and offers me 'a shot,' I don't care if it is 10 o'clock in the morning, I take it. Fellow needs a bit of stimulant once in awhile."

He continued, "I even like a beer or two, no more than that, once in awhile."

In this day and age of speed which he doesn't like, he finds life wholly satisfying. He finds enjoyment in beautiful surprises and sunsets, he sees the birds and creatures of the forest, in fact he sees many things that others, rushing about the business of living miss. He meets many interesting people, who are kind and good to him, eager to help him on his walks. Their solicitude for his welfare touches him deeply, and although he has offers of a good bed to sleep and rest in, he says, "I really enjoy sleeping in a barn, or out under the skies." Sometimes he yields to the insistence of his good friends, as he calls his benefactors and does sleep inside.

He specifically stressed that he was given much assistance from the highway patrol officers, the forest service and the postmasters of the many communities he had visited on this latest trip of his, and he said, "Words were inadequate to express his sincere appreciation for their kindly help." Ranchers, too, along the way "couldn't have treated me better," he said.

When the spirited old gentleman continues to wend his way from Happy Camp, he plans on traveling on to Crescent City, Eureka, and he isn't too sure yet, but may cut across to Sacramento where he hopes to meet the governor of California. From there he will continue on to San Francisco and "visit his brother a spell."



JOHN S. STAHL, or "Old Iron Legs," is shown in the Yreka Inn as he rested on his 1,200 mile walking tour of Northern California. Stahl, 75-year-old veteran hiker of the highways, enjoys life and all the friends he makes on his trips. —Dow Photo

## Crisis Ends In Thailand

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand has survived what might be described as another political crisis.

It ended when strongman Marshal Sarit Thanarat returned from five months in the United States, where he had an operation for a liver ailment.

He found the opposition Democratic party was preparing to launch a general debate against the government in the National Assembly. The Democrats had won the support of 13 independents in the budget of the debate to the floor.

The marshal called in some of the independents. To no one's surprise, eight had second thoughts about the debate and decided that "it would not be wise for the country at this time."

Wispy Khuang Aphaiwongse, the Democrats' leader snapped: "The biggest doublecross in Thai political history."

The eight independents went to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Thailand's most sacred shrine, and swore they had not taken bribes from Sarit for withdrawing their support of the opposition.

The Democrats, strongest anti-Communist group in the country, sought to debate the government on the issues of health, education, economics and corruption.

They had grounds. A cholera epidemic has killed 600 persons. Students are upset by the lack of classroom space and a new increase in college tuition fees. The country's treasury is virtually empty. Sixteen cases of corruption involving government officials have been reported since the beginning of the year.

Sarit told the Democrats: "This is not the time for a general debate. It might encourage a revolution."

## Unemployment Hikes In Texas

AUSTIN, Tex. (AP)—About 3,000 more jobless workers filed for unemployment insurance in Texas last week, upping the total to 77,786, the Texas Employment Commission said yesterday.

Initial claims for the week also showed an increase, hitting 6,594 as compared to 6,513 for the week ending July 11.

The commission said total claims actions reached 79,320, with \$1,546,267 being paid out, as compared to 76,209 claims actions the previous week.

The 1957 payment for the same period was \$474,346.

## PARENTS

HOLLYWOOD (AP)—Actor Dan O'Herlihy and his wife Elsie are parents again. The couple's fourth child, a 7-pound, 9½-ounce boy, was born last night. He was named Cormack.

# Polio Foundation Slates Campaign On All Disease

NEW YORK (AP)—The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis announced today it is expanding its program to attack major health problems of the nation.

Until now, the foundation has been concerned with polio. Paralytic polio has been virtually licked by the Salk vaccine.

Basil O'Connor, foundation president, said research initially will be in five areas: polio, virus research, disorders of the nervous system, arthritis and birth defects.

The foundation's expansion into arthritis research indicates it may vie for funds with the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation. The latter last week rejected a proposed merger by the two groups.

O'Connor said no attempt will be made to duplicate the work of other voluntary agencies. He added, however, that as scientific breakthroughs occur they will be pursued wherever they lead, with the general objective of improvement of man's health.

The arthritis group voiced regret that the polio foundation had not "seen fit to join forces" in combating arthritis, but instead was entering the field on its own.

The March of Dimes, a 20-year-old institution, will finance the polio foundation's expanded pro-

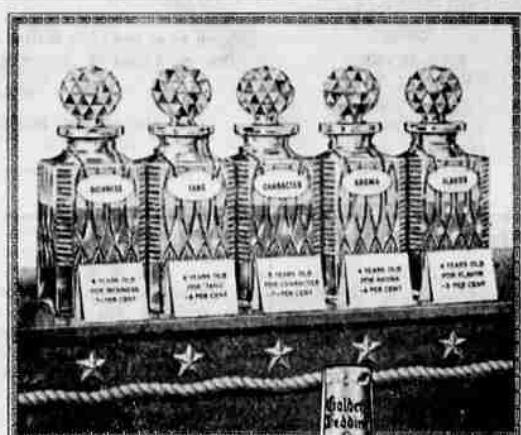
gram, O'Connor said. The organization will be known henceforth as the National Foundation.

O'Connor said the enlarged program is a natural outgrowth of work done in the course of finding a polio preventive and caring for polio victims.

"As the time was ripe 20 years ago for a voluntary organization to fight a single threatening disease," O'Connor said, "so the hour now is right to enter the broader battle to which our experience has led us."

A total of 11 million persons are said to have arthritis and rheumatism; 250,000 children are born with significant birth defects each year—these are defects present at birth not due to injury during birth; and an estimated 150,000 persons who have had paralytic polio still require some assistance.

At first, O'Connor said, patients aid is planned for arthritis sufferers through the age of 18 and for children, also through 18, who suffer malformations of the central nervous system.



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## Beauties Set For Judging

LONG BEACH, Calif. (UPI)—Judging begins tonight in Long Beach Municipal Auditorium for selection of this country's representative in the seventh annual Miss Universe Pageant.

The judges will select 15 finalists from 45 domestic beauties, representing 43 states, the District of Columbia and the city of Philadelphia. Miss Alaska was declared a "foreign entrant" because Alaskans had not approved statehood yet.

The finalists will compete Sunday night for the title of Miss United States and the right to represent their country in the Miss Universe judging, beginning Thursday and ending Friday night with selection of the winner.

## Dorothy Ziegler Dies In Utah

Mrs. Charles (Dorothy) Ziegler, 47, resident of Klamath Falls for 12 years; died July 20 in Roy, Utah, home of her parents where she had been for the last four months during a serious illness. She was a native of that city.

Mrs. Ziegler was active in the Klamath Falls Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Surviving are her widower, Charles Ziegler, Klamath Falls; a daughter, Mrs. Kay (Jean) Bodley, Roy, Utah; sons, Robert Ziegler, Provo, Utah, Carl and Roger, this city; her parents, Mr. and Mrs. V. L. Pingree, three brothers and three sisters, all of Roy.

Funeral services will be held in that city at 11 a.m. Wednesday, July 23.

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