

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Author Embarks on “Dreamcatcher Expedition” to Collect the Dreams of River Residents While Canoeing the Length of the Mississippi**

August 31, 2006, Lake Itasca, Minnesota—This Labor Day weekend, author Rick McKinney embarks on a two-month journey down the Mississippi River to collect the dreams of people living along America’s greatest river. As he meets river residents along the way, McKinney will write down their dreams and send them out to sea in a corked bottle at journey’s end. “This journey is going to be all about hope and connections between people,” says McKinney.

McKinney will begin this “Dreamcatcher Expedition” at the headwaters of the Mississippi on the Canadian border, putting in on Lake Itasca with traveling companion Frank Grandau, a retired Navy captain. Together with their mascot, Clyde the Beagle, they’ll travel the 2,350 miles from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico in an 18-foot We-no’nah Minnesota II canoe, looking for the common thread among the people who live in the small towns and big cities along the Mississippi.

Grandau, who attended Parks College on the banks of the river in Cohokia, Illinois, says of the expedition, “It’s probably been more of a goal than a dream for me. I think I’m too much of a pragmatist to dream much anymore.” But dreams were the first thing to come to McKinney’s mind when Grandau invited him along for the adventure. As the aorta of America, the Mississippi carries the lifeblood of the country. What better way to celebrate the lives of its residents than to collect their dreams and set them free?

McKinney and Grandau met while each was on a solo thru-hike of the 2,174-mile Appalachian Trail in 2004. For McKinney, the hike was a cathartic journey to exorcise his own suicidal demons following the suicide of a friend in late 2003. The story of his hike and the many connections he made along the way became his recently published book *Dead Men Hike No Trails*, a chronicle that New Hampshire’s Concord Monitor called “Better than Bill Bryson’s *A Walk in the Woods*.”

McKinney followed up his 2004 Appalachian Trail adventure with a 500-mile hike along the Continental Divide Trail in 2005 to more publicly highlight the epidemic of depression in America. He ended that journey at the memorial service of his mentor, “gonzo journalist” Hunter S. Thompson, who himself gave in to suicide earlier in 2005. On this latest expedition, canoeing down the entire length of the Mississippi, McKinney intends to focus on hope—a hope for dreams-come-true: his own, and as many of others as he can ferry downriver.

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