

Book, movie spur record numbers on PCT

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Last September, Andrew Tavalero was within days of completing his six-month hike of the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail when he stopped in a remote Washington town.

Tavalero, 22, struck up a conversation with some other hikers, who told him his Siskiyou County hometown of Weed had been hit with a devastating wildfire. A phone call to his mother confirmed that the blaze had destroyed his family home.

"I remember standing on the side of this road thinking, 'I could hitchhike home now; I could get a bus ticket,' " Tavalero said. "I sat there for 10 minutes and thought, 'I've come this far and I'm going to quit 50 miles from the Canadian border?'"

"There's no way I'm going to quit. You get that kind of attitude, that I'm going to crawl to the finish line if I have to."

Tavalero made it, and is listed on the Pacific Crest Trail Association's "2,600-miler list" as one of 3,430 people who have successfully completed the trek between the Mexican and Canadian borders along the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountain ranges, most of it through wilderness areas.

In recent weeks, as many as 1,500 other people began the arduous journey to add their names to that list.

Most will drop out or postpone finishing until another year.

But hundreds likely will finish. The number of people trekking the PCT has grown steadily for years as the Internet and, more recently, the book and film "Wild," about author Cheryl

Strayed's experience on the trail, have stoked interest.

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