

Sacred Run 2006 (www.sacredrun.org)

Weekly Update – April 17-22

Vol. 28, Week # 10 (FINAL WEEK)

by Stephanie Manning, Sacred Runner/Walker from Berkeley, California

WEEK TEN:

Monday, 4/17/06, Maxton, NC to Chapel Hill, NC - A special Circle for the walkers sent them off early with words of wisdom from Larry Crane of Kentucky: “Watch for traffic, be strong and walk with energy.” Tony and Itsuko reminded us of their continued fast. We want to respect and honor their decision to fast in this last week of the Sacred Run and to acknowledge their humility and their suffering and that they are pushing out against their human limits, just as the 24-hour runners and 12-hour walkers did.

The Walk’s route led us along the Andrew Jackson Highway, a name which vexes Native people even to this day. Jackson’s killing of the Indians and exiling them to the wilderness and the tremendous suffering that followed contributed to the genocide of 250 million Native people over the decades.

However, despite its name, this was a lovely byway. Nature was great and all about us, and Kevin of Maine spotted a mockingbird outside of Laurinburg doing its display dance, followed by a lovely and ornate vocal performance.

The roadkill count today was down to 11 of our fellow creatures killed by cars, and we realize the importance of teaching everybody that *All Life is Sacred*. (This is down from a high of 30 seen in the Texas panhandle.)

The afternoon brought a brief but powerful thundershower, much to the chagrin of our last runner of the day, Les, who got soaked to the bone on his last few miles. Good going, Les!

This was only the 3rd daytime rain in 67 days! We have been blessed with GREAT WEATHER on this trip.

Tonight’s journey ended outside Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and thanks are due for housing and feeding us to the Human Kindness Foundation there. Thanks especially to Bo and Sita Lozoff, and the many other members of the community who pitched in to welcome and feed us. A special word of thanks to Rachel Elliot, who contacted the Human Kindness Foundation and made the arrangements.

Tuesday, 4/18/06, Chapel Hill, NC to Lynchburg, VA - The day began with Morning Prayer at 5am as usual, and a long Circle led by our leader, Dennis Banks, just returned from his talk at the University of North Carolina, Pembroke. He thanked the hosts, and we were served a nice breakfast, including yogurt.

The walkers sped off at 7am and headed down the lovely but dangerous Hwy. 54 West under a bright sun. Sightings along the way included horses, two ponds with 6 Canadian Gees, and the roadkill count was down to 10.

Once the walk ended at the 15 mile mark, the long drive to Lynchburg, Virginia commenced, but we all arrived in physical safety. Readers should realize that the Sacred Run, though idyllic in a visual sense, is stressful and filled with self-sacrifice and suffering, even as the Earth and the Native people have suffered from encroaching development. So too, after walkers have been *outdoors* for 6 hours, it is *very* difficult to climb into overcrowded vehicles and drive 2 hours to our next sleeping spot. Tempers sometimes flare, there is always someone who whines (usually in jest), “Are we there yet???” And of course, the daily argument over directions. We come to expect these things and we must remember the tremendous suffering of Native people, forced to leave their homelands after centuries of habitation.

Today our tortuous journey in the cars was rewarded by a stay at Lynchburg College, with an all-you-can-eat dinner at the College cafeteria. Thanks go to Pastor Ann Gibbons, who facilitated our stay, and to Everett Heath of the Lynchburg Peace Education Center, who made the arrangement.

Welcome to Heidi Ricks of New York, who tonight joined us as a walker, drummer, and driver of her van.

Wednesday, 4/19/06, Lynchburg, VA to Louisa, VA - Thanks today to the produce man on Rte. 29, who donated vegetables to the Sacred Run walkers. Also thanks to S’Amanda’s Health Food Store for the donation of water.

A local news photographer came out to take pictures. Larry Bringing Good also had a live phone interview with KPFA-FM in Berkeley, California, home town of SR runner Joe and walker Stephanie.) The day ended at the Little Flower Catholic Worker Farm. Resident activists Bill and Sue Frankel-Streit have participated in many peace actions and have done time in jail many times as a result of their peaceful protests. They are parents to Isaac, Anna and Gaby. The farm includes a large new straw bale house, made almost completely from recycled and donated materials, a large garden, chickens, goats, cats and dogs. We offer thanks to the Frankel-Streits for their hospitality and to Sacred Walker Holly and her team for making dinner.

Thursday, 4/20/06, Louisa, VA to Fredericksburg, VA - At Circle in the Frankel-Streits’ kitchen, Dennis Banks’ talk ranged from the importance of having a supporting family at home while on the SR, to the evils of SR runners and walkers smoking. He reminded us that “people are looking at you,” and to be good role models. He mentioned upcoming Runs/Walks, including one in Seattle this June, in Tokyo and Okinawa this October, and one in Ireland and perhaps other European countries coming up in 2007. Dennis said that staying active is important, and “If I didn’t have a plan for tomorrow, I would go home and die.” Circle ended with a song by Cyrille, in French, which loosely translates: “*The whole world is a cactus, no place to lay down.*”

SR walkers had an interesting lunch along Rt. 15 today - on the large lawn of Mr. Garland Oliver, 79, who regaled us with tales of the old days, his 13 brothers and sisters, 3 children, 4 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren (with another on the way). He and his wife had driven a school bus for many years, and even now in his retirement, he sold 70 loads of wood which he chopped himself this winter, despite a recent heart attack and a bout with cancer some years ago. And so on. Three bright yellow finches arrived at his bird feeder as we chatted.

SR ended in Fredericksburg tonight at the home of Claire and Mike Huie. Most of us tented in the back yard beside the Rappahannock River, site of a Civil War battle on December 11, 1862. Some stayed indoors. Many thanks to Claire and Mike, and to Claire's sister Johanna Humphrey, who made the arrangement.

Dennis Banks reminded us that Saturday is our last day, and we should prepare to leave. And while we will be sad to part, we are also very tired and need to go home and rest. We have all been changed by the SR experience.

Friday, 4/21/06, Fredericksburg, VA to Arlington, VA - Friday morning was welcomed in with a concert by the million or so birds who live along the Rappahannock River where we camped. A gentle mist hung over the treetops along the distant shore as Jun-san, Ichi-san and Denise-san quietly drummed the runners and walkers to wakefulness. This was the last full day, #70, of Sacred Run 2006. The yard, full of tents, gradually came to life and soon breakfast was served, including our first coffee in 3 days. Off we went with rain gear into the Virginia morning.

The day ended in Arlington, Virginia, at the Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, where we were welcomed by Father Leonard J. Tuozzolo. Thanks to the church for allowing us to spend our last night here, and special thanks to the SR men for preparing our lunch and supper today.

At Circle time, Dennis Banks outlined what would happen tomorrow on Earth Day as we entered Washington, D.C. Ows the Sabre presented an eagle feather to our 17-year-old Apache Sacred Runner, Octavia, to be in the custody of Jerry Cunningham until Octavia's life settles down and she can accept this responsibility. Many were moved by this wonderful act by Sabre, a longtime SR veteran and sundancer.

Mary Morris, Ron Alex and Michael from the Choctaw Nation joined us, as did Jamie's parents, Bill and Nancy Gorman, and Joe's mom, Jane Stillwater. They will all accompany us tomorrow on our final walk from Ladybird Johnson Park to the Lincoln Memorial. Nancy Lewis, of Sausalito, California, will also join us for those last few miles.

Dennis Banks outlined plans for Sacred Run **2008**, which would require minors to bring a parent. He urged the smokers among us to try to quit smoking and for all of us to quit eating junk food. He said that a specialist would be sought to come and give advice about diabetes and proper diet. Jerry will be the California coordinator of SR 2008, an appropriate activity for this hardworking Sacred Runner who is always so willing to lend a hand.

As SR2006 draws to a close, we are also grateful to Jim Toren, who, with Marcus and Roger, stayed up late every night to plan our route. Despite his diabetes, Jim continues to be a friend to everyone. He never fails to do what he has promised to do. Besides all that, he's an excellent runner in his own right. We all hope to see him at the next peace walk in Seattle this June.

Saturday, 4/22/06, Arlington, VA to Washington, D.C., LAST DAY - We woke up early as usual, but this time carefully packed our bags, knowing that this would be our last time with the trailers. Through the driving rain, Sacred Runners and Sacred Walkers joined to walk all together the final few miles from a staging area at Lady Bird Johnson Memorial Park in Arlington to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. There we gathered, and under even more blessed rain, Dennis Banks gave one last rousing speech, calling for environmental responsibility, caring for our Mother Earth, and decrying the despoiling of the land for corporate concerns. "We must raise our voices and we must raise them loudly!! Let this country know of our concerns. Let this country know that Mother Earth's health is not ok – that Mother Earth is trembling with fever. It's temperature is very high – it's heartbeat is weakening. It is gasping for air, clean air – it needs fresh water, clean water." Our closing songs and prayers were for the Sacredness of all life, for Land, Life and Peace.

Afterwards, we motored to the Nipponzon Myohoji Buddhist temple and there had our last tearful good-byes. Off we went to the four directions, some to Cincinnati with Jim Toren by car, some to Jun-san's temple in New York State, some to Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota... and some, like me, to California.

What a fantastic experience, one we shall always remember forever, under the great leadership of the irreplaceable Dennis Banks, a journey through nature from desolate deserts, with one house per 100 miles, to the destruction of inner-city New Orleans, to the tropical weather of the southeast, to the hustle-bustle of the city of Washington, D.C., praying as we went for peace and the holiness of all living things. We saw 3 full moons and many stars on this trip, and although we did not always get along, we bonded with each other anyway, and soon became a family. We will miss this family. Maybe some day we'll be together again. But in the meantime, don't forget to watch for traffic, be strong, and walk with energy. A-ho!

The story of Sacred Run 2006 will remain available on www.sacredrun.org. Check back often for new stories on the "Postscript" pages.

This will be the last Newsletter, but we will send out occasional news about future Sacred Runs using this same mailing list. To remove your name from this email list, please hit "reply" and type "remove" in the subject line. Thanks for supporting Sacred Run 2006.