

Sacred Run 2006 (www.sacredrun.org)

Weekly Update – April 3-9

Vol. 28, Week # 8

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

WEEK EIGHT:

Monday, 4/3/06 - Choctaw Nation, Philadelphia, Mississippi - Thanks to Silver Star Casino's Villa Restaurant for providing breakfast today. After breakfast, Sacred Run (SR) held a talking circle, a good time for airing ideas and feelings. The final words of wisdom were assigned to Kevin of Maine who reminded us to: Be Present, Be Grateful and Be Awed. He stressed that "we are truly lucky to be here on the Sacred Run, that many people would like to be here but couldn't be due to work, lifestyle, etc. We are lucky." Among those participants leaving for home today were Dennis S., George, Jeremy, Tuffy, Robert and Patty.

Thanks to the Choctaw community and especially Leland for leading tonight's sweat.

Tuesday, 4/4/06 - A fabulous blue sky accompanied SR's Les on his 40-mile marathon walk today in celebration of his 53rd birthday. A tradition amongst SR runners and walkers is to challenge their limits on their birthdays. Les attributes his distance to the Creator and the effect of frequent praying during his grueling journey, which serves as an inspiration to us all. Supported by Jim Torn, K.A., Octavia, Gari and Marcus, Les left Tues. morning at 5:30am and completed his journey in 18-1/2 hours. Congratulations on this amazing accomplishment.

Tuesday's fine dinner of Japanese curried vegetables and rice was prepared by Jun-San, Eri, Itsuko and others. Thanks to our great chefs in the SR walkers!

Wednesday, 4/5/06 - The call to circle-up came at 5:30am to give thanks and say farewell to the Choctaw people. Leland, Juanitsa and Louie came to say goodbye and by 6:10am we were on the road after six days rest. Everyone was concerned and giving prayers for Les who had completed an astounding 40 miles on his birthday memorial walk. Congratulations Les! The walkers began today's journey where Les' walk ended, along a beautiful wooded road, the Natchez Trace, headed towards Mathiston and Tupelo, MS. Runners had a long distance to cover and met up at "The Farm" in Summertown, Tennessee. (It should be noted that on the way to "The Farm," SR walkers stopped in Tupelo to visit the birthplace of Elvis Presley, drove a great length of the beautiful Natchez Trace northward, saw the ancient native Pharr Mounds, Bear Creek Mound and crossed the laconic Tennessee River after a 15-minute walking stretch.)

Thursday, 4/6/06 - Wednesday night was spent snug in our tents listening to the call of peacocks at "The Farm" under Orion's Belt and the smiling crescent moon. Thanks to the community at The Farm for Wed.'s dinner and Thursday's breakfast and dinner. All of the food served here is healthy, organic vegetarian food. It is prepared lovingly by elder volunteers, mostly women. On Thursday we returned to running and walking, and that night we slept once more in our tents at The Farm. And while Yuki, Kuni, Nuno and Gari played basketball, campers secured their tents and we got to know people at The Farm better. Later we watched a slide show on the history of The Farm, founded in 1971 by a caravan of old schoolbuses carrying young people determined to organize a spiritual community based on non-violence and respect for the earth. 35 years later, the original farm has gone through changes but still supports an organic healthy way of eating, a K-12 school and a vigorous mid-wifery training program. Now they also have a deli and a construction company. They formed the Swan Conservation Trust to secure and preserve the open space adjacent to The Farm. Other Farm organizations include Peace Roots Alliance, Farms Not Arms, and "Plenty," a non-profit service organization. More info is

available on The Farm's website at www.thefarmcommunity.com.

Friday, 4/7/06 - Under threat of rain, hail, lightening and tornadoes, SR left The Farm, happy to have made its acquaintance and grateful for the food and hospitality and kind support of our cause. We arrived at The Friends Meeting House in Nashville, TN about one minute before a great downpour, hail, thunder and lightening storms. And although we heard many warnings about tornadoes in the Nashville area, none came near to us and we are grateful to Mother Nature for this. (We later learned that 12 people were killed by tornadoes near to where we had been.)

We were also grateful to the Quakers for the indoor space in their well-maintained meeting hall and good conversations with members of their community that came to visit us. That night we were entertained by SR runner Kid Valance and the SR Singers (K.A., Marcus and Jim) along with professional singer Koh-The, giving a preview of their Sat. night show in Nashville.

Saturday, 4/8/06 - We left Nashville fully prepared for a rainstorm and fortunately got to our destination without any rain, only cold air. Ralph Hutchison and Lissa McLeod of Knoxville opened their home for us to stay in and provided a wonderful dinner of potato-cauliflower soup, lasagna, salad and apple crisp with good bread. Their community has been providing shelter for walks and runs like SR for some time and they live in a wonderful large house in the country with their children and cats. One nice thing that they did was play music on the violin and piano for us. What a pleasure to be there!

Sunday, 4/9/06 - SR people awoke to the familiar sound of Jun San's drums and the sunrise prayers, a fine sunny day. And despite Ralph and Lissa providing us with a delicious breakfast, we also had a yummy lunch of sandwiches. Their daughters showed the video "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" which drew the engrossment of James, Sean, the daughters and Stephanie, all of whom had Not been to the movies in many weeks. Thanks to the girls of the house and especially their parents.

After lunch we all headed off for the Y-12 Weapons Assembly Plant in Oak Ridge, TN to join the weekly Sunday peace vigil at the front gate to the plant. The plant manufactured components for the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Our vigil was particularly meaningful to our Japanese members of the SR. Altogether we were about 75 in number. The strength of our drumming and chanting only served to demonstrate our commitment to peace and to the concept that "All Life is Sacred." We faced several soldiers in combat fatigues, one with a machine gun drawn. This gate represented the eastern end of a national landholding that extends 15 miles long by 10 miles wide, a huge government property dedicated to three laboratories: "X-10" National Laboratory which is a research lab, "K-25" which enriched uranium back in the 1940s and "Y-12" which makes components for nuclear weapons and especially for the bomb which was dropped on Hiroshima. Currently, bombs that were made in the 1960s are being rebuilt, disassembled in Texas and parts shipped here to "Y12" for refurbishing. Once completed, the new weapons will not degrade for 120 years, enough bombs to annihilate all life on earth! We ask why is such a stockpile necessary. We question the wisdom of storing such a stockpile and we question the use of violence and killing as a way of life. During our vigil we introduced ourselves to each other and heard a brief talk about Mary Dennis Lentsch, who is about to serve 6 months in jail for protesting at the School of the Americas in Georgia. Mary Dennis is a regular at the Sunday vigils. Also Dennis Banks spoke strongly against bombmaking and one's personal choice to work for peace or to work for war and imperialism.

A creek running by the entrance to Y12 is contaminated with toxic levels of mercury from the plant. The creek has contaminated the soil in the creekbank. Recent use of this soil at a nearby school had to be remediated due to its toxic content.

SR's own Paul Owns the Saber sang a song and drummed. Following a prayer in which we lined up at the plant's fence and prayed, we were led in song by Ralph. Then it was off to Bissell Park for a dinner provided by Food Not Bombs and music provided by Sacred Runner Kid Valance, Sacred Walker Tony Baugh, and the SR Singers, and a speech by Dennis Banks and dancing. Soon it became very cold and we headed back for our last night at Ralph and Lissa's. What an awesome day it was - another one which we will never forget.

For the latest information and photos of Sacred Run 2006 as we move across the country, please visit www.sacredrun.org. To remove your name from this email list, please hit "reply" and type "remove" in the subject line. Thanks for supporting Sacred Run 2006.