

Sacred Run 2006 (www.sacredrun.org)

Weekly Update – April 10-16

Vol. 28, Week # 9

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

ANNOUNCEMENT!

**Saturday, April 22, 2006, Earth Day - Ending Ceremonies at
11am at Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.
See you there!**

WEEK NINE:

Can you believe it? We are now 9/10ths finished with our Sacred Run! Here's a summary of events during the last week....

Monday, 4/10/06 - We woke to a sumptuous breakfast prepared by our hosts, Ralph Hutchison & Lissa McLeod, in Knoxville. After a big clean-up after ourselves at their house, we circled up for a fond farewell and pushed off towards our next destination, the Smoky Mountain Peace Pagoda.

Thanks are owed to a gentleman from Full Service Auto Repair on Chapman Highway for greeting us with bottles of soda and water. Kudos to Julie and Charlie of Concord, California, for their support of the SR Walkers and especially for the use of their rental vehicle, at their great expense. Their friendship and tolerance of our many different personalities was most appreciated. At the end of the day's journey, we arrived at the Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, a building project in progress. And after a short steep climb up a rubbly road, we arrived at the top of a promontory and a beautiful ornate temple of the Nipponsan Myoghi Buddhists. Here we met the Japanese head monk, Utsumi Shonin and his tall assistant Denise San, who, along with local volunteers and supporters, prepared a sumptuous meal and offered great friendship and hospitality. Utsumi Shonin conducted the evening prayer from 5 to 6 pm with dinner afterwards. What a splendid clear night high above the little valley town of Cosby, Tennessee, overlooking the mountains. A giant bonfire was made by the Sacred Runners further uphill, at the site of the future Peace Pagoda, and SR songs were sung. SR runner Kid Valance was on hand to sing "I run, I walk, I pray" as people found cozy spots to bed down for the night under the stars.

Tuesday, 4/11/06 - After an hour-long morning prayer and breakfast, we set about working at the site until noontime. SR runners and walkers hiked uphill to the site of the future Peace Pagoda and helped to saw up trees that had fallen, moved vegetation and so on. SR's Stephanie gardened with local volunteer Ray. Later, Stephanie helped with the Peace Pagoda mailing, helped peel sweet potatoes and wrote installments to the SR newsletter. Others made a big trip to the laundromat, and still others helped Jun San with the preparation of Japanese potato croquettes, including Rogelio, Eri, Stephanie, Sean and Jun San. And Kevin helped pull brush for tonight's bonfire.

In the evening, another great meal was followed by three cakes to honor Dennis Banks' birthday. Happy birthday, Dennis, our beloved leader.

Wednesday, 4/12/06 - Today marked the beginning of a fast to honor Dennis Banks' birthday.

Dennis Banks' age has been the subject of whimsical debate among SR runners and walkers. Theories range from a low of 69 to a high of 80. But whatever his age, most will agree that he is a great leader and speaker worthy of the respect afforded to him. People participating in the fast included Tony, Holly, Larry Bringing Good, Larry of Kentucky, and Jerry of California. (And others?)

We left the Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, happy to know we had helped a bit towards the realization of the new Pagoda and grateful to Utsumi Shonin and Denise San and the local volunteers for a splendid time and a view of nature's grace, high over the valley town of Cosby.

The walkers made an early departure, honored to now have the company of Denise San, her drum and chanting adding to the walkers' strength. The route took them along the gorgeous Pigeon River, where the first Canadian Geese of the SR trip were spotted frolicking mid-stream, reminding us that "All Life is Sacred." Further along, we crossed another beautiful river, the "French Broad," quite a dangerous crossing on a narrow green metal bridge. SR walkers became runners for about 1,000 feet or so. Kudos to the walkers and the service vehicles for making it across without incident. This was but one example of the teamwork required to make this long journey.

Eventually, we arrived at the Blue Ridge Motion Picture Studio in Asheville, North Carolina, and thanks to Anna Lara and the Blue Ridge Motion Pictures staff for providing us a camping area and a fine dinner, topped off with another cake in honor of Dennis Banks' birthday. Dennis Banks' connection to the Studio stemmed from his acting in the 1980s film, "The Last of the Mohicans." An honorary showing took place after dinner.

Meanwhile Jim and Marcus began planning for Friday's 24-Hour Run.

Thursday, 4/13/06 - SR had an early start and pushed off towards Charlotte, North Carolina. (Some SR runners went on ahead to Maxton to build a sweat lodge, including Dennis, Nathan, Eri, Larry BG, and others.)

Contending with a lovely but dangerously curving roadway, Jun San stopped the walkers to pay homage to the sunrise, a welcomed pause along the nerve-wracking route, a chance to pray in one's own tradition for the courage and strength to go forward and receive the great gifts of morning beauty and a chance to continue our prayers for peace. Great thanks go to our front and rear flaggers, doing the risky business of warning cars that we are coming, to please slow down and make a bit of space for us. ("All Life is Sacred" includes the lives of SR runners and walkers!)

After completing 15 miles, the walkers were driven the remaining 100 miles to Charlotte, North Carolina, miles which were being covered by the runners. We are accustomed to this daily routing, despite the discomfort of too many people squeezed into a van already packed with luggage. But this time, the reward for our suffering was great! The beautiful Yosemite-like village of Lake Lure in Hickory Nut Gorge, North Carolina. What an awesome spot! To those of us from California, Lake Lure rivaled the Alpine lakes of the high Sierras. And after 61 days on the road, it was a site for sore eyes.

Thanks to Ralph Hutchison's brother, Harold "Hutch" Hutchison, for letting us sleep in his garden and house in Charlotte, and for the spaghetti dinner (for those not fasting) and good conversation. Cheers and good-bye to Kuni. We will miss his friendship, his running, and his massages. Kuni, we are sure to meet you again someday!

Friday, 4/14/06 - Today's route took us at length through suburbia, lots of traffic, but still a myriad of wildflowers, redbuds and dogwoods in full bloom and wild grasses along the shoulder. It is definitely Spring. Echo even got a chance to play with his dad Tony in a park while awaiting the walkers' break.

Today the 24-Hour Run and 12-Hour Walk began, walkers in the early morning, runners at 3pm. The 12-Hour walkers included Sabre, Stephanie, and Minoh. The 24-Hour runners included K.A., Marcus,

Jerry, Octavia and Kid. Many thanks to the support crew for the walkers and runners, which included Jim, Rogelio, Les, Tater, Eri, and Mindy, who stayed awake and alert and helpful for all that time! (See www.sacredrun.org, "Reflections from the Road" for pictures and details.) Congratulations to all who made the extra-grueling effort on behalf of the Sacred Run. Runners and walkers have been challenged to extend themselves beyond their capacity. Completion becomes achievable only through fitness, commitment to the cause, the loving help of the SR comrades and the Creator, which provides energy beyond human limitations.

After arrival at Big Mac's in Maxton, North Carolina, SR and Big Mac's family took part in a sweat lodge and we tented down with a prayer for our 24-Hour runners and support people who would spend the night out on the road.

Saturday, 4/15/06 - With the North Carolina heat beating down, our SR runners returned from their 24-Hour marathon. K.A. and Marcus did an astounding 72 miles! Jerry and Octavia did 60 miles! Kid ran 54 miles! We are grateful for their safe return and their incredible achievements. See the SR website, www.sacredrun.org, for details. Jun San, Denise, Itsuko, Eri and others chanted all day and prayed for the safe return of the runners.

Sunday, 4/16/06 - Sunday was spent resting as the thermometer climbed to about 88 degrees Fahrenheit. We realized that in only six days, the Sacred Run will arrive at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. and having delivered our message, we will all go our separate ways - to the four directions.

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.