

SRI CHINMOY ONENESS-HOME PEACE RUN

April 27 - August 8, 1987

Five hundred runners followed the peace torch of a group who covered on foot more than 11,000 miles in the United States and 27,000 miles worldwide to promote world peace, as The Sri Chinmoy Oneness-Home Peace Run, history's longest relay run, concluded in New York City, on Saturday, August 8.

Some 20,000 people carried and ran with the Peace Torch in 53 nations during the 104-day event. The arrival of the Peace Runners in New York, where they started out on April 27, capped 15 weeks of twenty-hour days during which a team of men and women carried a Peace Torch through cities and towns where thousands of citizens greeted and ran with them.

"The Peace Run is part of the decade of 'The Big Event' and its message - peace starts one person at a time - is universal," says Peace Run Executive Director, Neil Vineberg. "To achieve outer peace we need to feel inner peace. We need to feel friendship before we can have friends. We can throw down all our weapons but if the feeling of peace is not there, a lasting peace on earth will be difficult to achieve and maintain," he added. Vineberg has organized cross country and 50-state bicycle relays, such as the 1982 America's Freedom Ride inaugurating the Bicentennial Celebration of the United States Constitution.

The Peace Run kicked off on April 27 when the Peace Torch arrived from its lighting at New York City's Battery Park, followed by a gala opening ceremony at The World Trade Center, covered live by NBC's Today Show.

The Ceremony featured pop singer Carly Simon who carried the Peace Torch, performances by the 'Big Man' Clarence Clemons and Narada Michael Walden, and a recording of the Peace Run theme song sung by pop superstar Whitney Houston. A variety of other celebrities and prominent figures, including pop singer Grace Slick, Chicago Bears' wide receiver Willie Gault, running superstars Grete Waitz and Ingrid Christensen, and actress Joanne Woodward - participated in The Peace Run.

A theme song, "Oneness-Home Peace Run," was specially composed and produced for The Peace Run by America's hottest record producer, Narada Michael Walden, (producer of the hit singles for Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, Starship, and Kenny G), and featured Clarence Clemons on saxophone.

The Peace Run was endorsed by Prime Minister Bob Hawke of Australia, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, dozens of members of the United States Congress - including Senators Moynihan, D'Amato, Cranston, Pell, Lugar, Quayle, and Congressmen Ackerman - and by America's Cup winner Dennis Conner, comedian Dick Gregory, and Dallas Cowboys football star Herschel Walker. Prime Ministers of Iceland and New Zealand also carried the Peace Torch.

AFS International/Intercultural Programs, for 40 years the leading cultural exchange organization worldwide, participated in The Peace Run, with students from more than 50 countries around the world bearing the peace torch.

Along the routes, thousands of local runners, community leaders, government officials and celebrities participated in local peace events and relayed the torch as it passed through their city or country. Mayor Andrew Young carried the torch when the Peace Run arrived in Atlanta, Georgia, on 6 May.

A core team of American runners carried the torch along a continuous 11,000 mile route through each of the 48 contiguous states, passing through New York, Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, and Boston. Emissaries flew to Alaska and Hawaii. On June 1 a Canadian team began a 5,000 mile relay from Victoria to Halifax. At the same time, respective national teams carried peace torches from the United Kingdom to Italy (5,000 miles) - from Adelaide to Brisbane in Australia (2,000 miles) - and from Sapporo to Nagasaki in Japan (1,300 miles).

An international running team completed runs through nine countries of West Africa. Shorter runs by local running clubs were also organized in East Africa, the Philippines, South America, Mexico, Singapore, Burma, the Middle East, China, and elsewhere.

The Peace Run is sponsored by the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, now celebrating ten years of race organization and service to the running community. Its members were responsible for the movement of the peace torches and the overall relay organization.

The Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team is highly respected in the running community for the quality of its races. Each year the team sponsors and organizes several hundred running events worldwide, ranging from short informal races to world class ultramarathons. The team has also held triathlons, transcontinental bicycle rallies and other sports events, including the Liberty Torch Bicentennial Relay of 1976, in which a torch was relayed through the 50 states in honor of the nation's Bicentennial.

The team was founded and is directed by Sri Chinmoy, the author, artist, humanitarian and leader of the Peace Meditation at the United Nations, the U.S. Congress and the British Parliament.

The Peace Run was not held to raise money for any cause, and there was no charge for participation," said Neil Vineberg, Executive Director of The Peace Run. "It was intended as a non-political statement that international peace is possible if we join with our fellow beings on our small planet," he added.

For more information, write to: THE PEACE RUN, 164-03 85th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11431. Or call 1-718-523-9292.