

LAST UPDATE 2009-05-11
GMAPS: Thomas Eric Beliveau

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Jean Beliveau - WORLD WIDE WALK PEACE FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

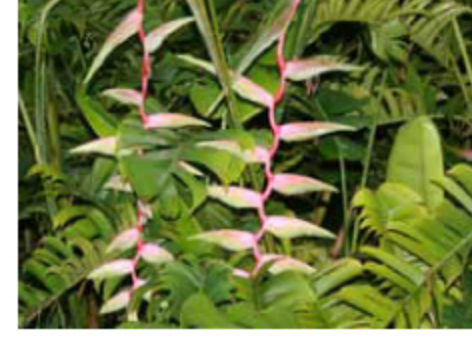
Text and photos by Janey Schueller

When I turn back the clock to August 18, 2000 at 9:00a.m, I can vaguely assume that as it was summer in Toronto and LBK (life-before-kids), that I would have been at work as usual on a sunny Friday, planning which patio to have lunch on and counting the minutes until the weekend. It is humbling therefore, to meet Jean Beliveau who, on his August 19, 2000, set off from Montréal with a goal to walk around the planet to promote "peace and non-violence for the profit of the children of the world". Needless to say, goals of this magnitude are not made every day and as it far surpasses any goal that I have ever made for myself, it was difficult for me to comprehend such an enormous journey.

After spending 5 minutes with Jean Beliveau however, I now have proof that heroes come in all shapes and sizes and may not wear capes and drive super fast cars. On the contrary, Jean travels alone with a three-wheeled stroller to carry some food, clothing, a first aid kit, a small tent and a sleeping bag. It is also notable that this is the 9th year of Jean's 11-year journey and that it will coincide with the UN proclamation that 2001-2010 is the International Decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world.

His Excellency David Seigny and the Canadian community welcomed Jean to Singapore on July 22 with a stroll around the picturesque Singapore Botanical Gardens and the Honourable Stockwell Day was also in town and dropped by to extend his greetings to Jean.

The early morning rain conveniently stopped its downpour long enough for us to walk around the lake and chat with Jean about the past 9 years....



What is Jean's background and inspiration/reason for deciding to walk the globe?

Jean was working in the "neon sign" business and was fed up with the routine. To keep his health, he was running and one day he asked himself where he would end up if he kept running forward instead of coming back home every time he trained. With the help of his bedside book (an Atlas) he figured that he could reach New York in 2 weeks and so on... Soon, what began as a physical challenge became a mission for him.

What are some of the 'roadblocks' that Jean has come across during his journey?

Mostly not being able to obtain visas, like Libya and Tibet... problems with his feet in China... and in very hot and humid or hilly countries. On a more psychological aspect, moving from one country to the next brought total immersion in different ways of life thus keeping him in a constant "cultural shock".

How can our readers and community support Jean's project?

There is a double answer to this question:

- Please support the wwwalk itself. At the moment, we can roughly estimate that the wwwalk supports itself for about 85%, meaning that Jean's basic needs are looked after by people he meets on the way or people he has met before. His family does the rest.
- Support for the mission. This can be done in many ways... mainly in supporting NGOs that look after children. Some communities have organized yearly walks or other events to the profit of children to commemorate Jean's passage. To a similar question, he once answered: "For me, if this walk brings but one moment of inspiration in the heart of one human, it is great... I do not intend to change the world; I only want to help developing a vision of love on the planet thus changing my own world in an ever positive aspect."

What is Jean's favourite place that he has walked through thus far?

To this, he replies humorously: "Always the latest place I have been to!" This is the most difficult question to answer... but his partner Luce comments that, "He seems to be enjoying deserts, seashores and mountains very much. He prefers rural areas to big cities and places with simple lifestyles".

Any other interesting facts/experiences that Jean would like to share with our readers?

Luce advised that, "Meeting so many different people and cultures has broadened his mind. He did experience particular sensations walking through "high risk zones", or hearing large wild animals while sleeping in his tent. Desolated arid places or conflicting areas were also problematic sometimes. I suppose he will never look at the world with the same eyes again..."

Where is Jean now?

If you would like to receive these updates, please email luce@wwwalk.org

****To date, Jean has walked 60,000kms - equivalent to the distance ...that is one and a half times the circumference of the earth at the equator (40,075 kms)**

You can track Jean's progress at www.wwwalk.org