

'The Walking Man' comes to Dover



Chaplain Carlton Cannon, center, helps Danny Garcia, right, and his wife Jackie fold an American flag the Kent County Veterans Memorial Park off South Little Creek Road in Dover on Friday afternoon as part of Mr. Garcia's Honor Walk 2023. DELAWARE STATE NEWS/MATT MCDONALD

By Mike Finney
Delaware State News

DOVER — Sgt. Danny Garcia, a retired veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, has encountered people such as Pope John Paul II, numerous U.S. presidents, kings and queens and heads of states during his vast travels.

Mr. Garcia, known as “The Walking Man,” has prayed and walked more than 52 million steps on six continents for children and world peace.

However, there are no individuals who Mr. Garcia enjoys sharing his message of the transformational power of the love of God and peace more than with his fellow veterans of the armed forces and first responders.

His relentless journey took him to the Kent County Veterans Memorial Park off South Little Creek Road in Dover on Friday afternoon as part of his Honor Walk 2023.

“I just want you to know first of all that I love you,” Mr. Garcia told the veterans who gathered at the Veterans Memorial Park. “You’re my family.”

Mr. Garcia, escorted by a couple of American Legion Riders on motorcycles and trailed by a an American Legion ambulance, was met by members

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of the Delaware Patriot Guard who greeted him with a pathway of American flags into the park.

Once there, he spoke of joining the Marine Corps at the age of 17, saying, "I was never the same after that."

Throughout his service in the Marines, he was involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis and ended up in Vietnam, not knowing where he was the first day he landed and not knowing what the future held.

"There were a lot of friends of mine who didn't come back," said Mr. Garcia, who was born and raised in New York's Spanish Harlem. "I've seen a lot of things that right from the beginning, I'd keep trying to forget, so that I could do my job.

"I think one of the hardest things to me even when I walk, I think about those men, women, people that I knew that didn't make it back. That's why I walk.

"I started walking for their children because they're not here. I am here, so I have to stand in the gap and continue to deliver the message on their behalf. I'll always remember. I can't forget. Every day, I remember them."

Mr. Garcia continues to battle the effects of Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder.

He wakes up every night soaked in sweat and remembering those who were lost in Vietnam.

"Doctors don't know what it is. I know that God knows," he said. "The dreams, the flashbacks ... I don't know, but I don't quit — and that's what I tell the kids when I walk around the world — no matter what, don't quit. Keep walking."

Dover walk sparks memories

Mr. Garcia said that when he was walking down South Little Creek Road with the patriots covering his front and back it reminded him of a time when he walked into Baghdad.

He had walked from Oman, Jordan to Baghdad and when he got close to Baghdad, there were 20,000 Muslims coming at him from both sides of the road.

"My escort was an Iraqi police and military and others and they asked me, 'What are we going to do?'," said Mr. Garcia. "because they were coming straight at me. I said, 'You don't have enough bullets. Let them come.'"

"Little did we know that they were singing to me as I walked into Baghdad. I was an American. I was a Christian. And I was walking for their



Former Marine Danny Garcia, right, known as The Walking Man, presents an American flag to Paul Davis, president of the Delaware State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America, during a stop on Mr. Garcia's Honor Walk 2023 in Dover on Friday. DELAWARE STATE NEWS/MATT MDNOALD

children. So they ended up singing to me as I walked into Baghdad with 20,000 people who were joining me for that walk. I'll never forget it."

Now, the walk continues, but is not nearly as long as the 50 miles a day he used to trek since he has a brace on one leg. Car rides have also become a routine part of his repertoire.

"I can't walk 50 miles a day anymore, but I can walk," he said. "As long as I can breathe, I can walk — and I don't quit.

"I encourage all of you — don't quit. Don't quit on the kids. Don't quit on what's going on in our world today. Don't quit. God has a plan. If we hang onto him, he will surely hang on to us."

Mr. Garcia then saluted the veterans and led the crowd in singing "God Bless America."

Military Order of the Purple Heart National Chaplain Carlton L. Cannon got to know Mr. Garcia during his brief stay in Dover.

"He's got a story to tell and that's what I appreciate about him and he seems sincere," Mr. Cannon said. "Let's face it, for Vietnam veterans, times like these are very important to us.

"The majority of us out here are suffering from PTSD, so we have a story to tell."

Winding down the Honor Walk

During the ceremony, Mr. Garcia's

wife, Jackie Garcia, who retired from the U.S. Air Force as a lieutenant colonel after 21 years, participated in a flag-folding demonstration.

When it was complete, she presented the American flag to Paul Davis, president of the Delaware State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America, and vice president of Kent County Chapter 850.

Mr. Davis extended the invitation for the Garcias to visit the Kent County Veterans Memorial Park as part of their "Honor Walk 2023," which extends from Florida to New York City — and then back again.

They are headed back to their home in Florida, where they are scheduled to complete their tour Thursday and Friday.

The Garcias are co-authors of the 2022 book "Marines Don't Cry," which relates stories of death, deep sorrow to joy, darkness, to life and freedom in Christ. It is available on Amazon.com.

Mr. Davis also took a tour of the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base with the Garcias on Thursday night.

Dan Watson, a representative on the Commission of Veterans Affairs for Vietnam Veterans, provided the Garcias with a reminder of their first-cross country walk from San Francisco to New York back in 1996.

He presented them with a check



Mr. Garcia approaches the event on foot, as is his custom as "The Walking Man." He served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War.

for an undisclosed amount to help them on their journey.

"I had \$48 in my pocket when I started (walking) in San Francisco," Mr. Garcia said. "Yet, God had provided everything all the way to New York.

"This comes from God through you. I walk by faith and not by sight."

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