

# Marine's journey takes him far

## Vietnam veteran walks to heal

By DAVE MASKO  
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LONDON — A former Marine who ~~walks~~ ~~travels~~ ~~the~~ ~~country~~ ~~of~~ ~~Vienna~~ is ready to walk around the world on behalf of peace.

"God has a different plan for me; to serve my fellow man. God has touched my life and showed me what I can do for my neighbor," said Danny Garcia.

His 25,000-mile journey will start Tuesday when he hikes 126 miles from Dublin, Ireland, to Omagh, Northern Ireland.

Omagh is the site of the recent bombing that killed 28 people in the worst act of vi-

olence to hit divided Northern Ireland in 30 years.

"I normally walk in areas where there is prayer and healing needed. When I get to Omagh, I want to touch as many people as I can," Garcia said Wednesday during an interview on the steps of the U.S. Embassy in London.

At Omagh, Garcia will present a cross made of 8,000 pearls.

"It must be worth \$200,000 or more. It was given to me by a jeweler who wanted to help with my walk," said the 53-year-old with a squint-eyed expression. "After the bombing in Omagh, and this upcoming journey across the world, I thought the cross deserved to be given to these people as a symbol of faith."

Afterward, he'll walk to Belfast, Northern Ireland, and then to Glasgow, Scot-

land, where he'll hike 340 miles down to London. From London, he'll go to Brussels, Belgium, where he'll start his journey across Europe and then the Middle East, Africa and Australia.

Garcia himself is no stranger to suffering. His marriage broke up after 18 years and the birth of four children. Then his second marriage fell apart.

"I could have blown myself away," Garcia said. "I didn't love myself at this point in my life."

Then, Garcia found walking. "I was so devastated by not only the first divorce, but then a second divorce. I had to do something, so I just started walking. At first, I just did it for myself because the act of walking gave me peace. In just my first two weeks of walking, I started to feel better. It then became a sort of Forrest Gump kind of thing," he said.

He started walking an average of 20 to 30 miles a day. Now he is up to 50 miles a day with his pace at 5 to 7 miles per hour. He doesn't get paid, and he said all money raised goes to charities.

Garcia finds he must depend on strangers for various types of support. The latest strangers to provide for him are the Marines who guard the embassy in London. They gave Garcia a place to park himself and his things.

"I receive much more than I give, and it's not just a bed and a meal. It's being accepted for what I'm trying to do," Garcia said.

Gunnery Sgt. Mark Lang, Detachment Commander for the Marine guards at the American Embassy in London, said he's glad to help Garcia.

"I admire somebody who's taken years out of his life to walk for charities," said Lang, the detachment commander for the Marine guards. "What he's doing is a good idea, and I and other Marines here support him."

Garcia joined the Marine Corps at age 17 to better himself and get toughened. He spent 10 years in the Marines, serving one tour in Vietnam, and left in 1975.

More than two decades later, he also made his first fund-raising walk on behalf of the Marines. It was May 1995, and Garcia walked from San Francisco to Tijuana, Mexico, to raise awareness for the Marines' Toys for Tots campaign.

"I left for the Toys for Tots walks with just \$41 in my pocket. I had no idea how I was going to survive," Garcia said. "After



S&S: Dave Masko

Danny Garcia holds up his walking stick and gets a hand from Marine Gunnery Sgt. Mark Lang with the framed cross of 8,000 pearls that Garcia will present to the people of Omagh, Northern Ireland, this week.

the first two days, I almost got hit by two cars around Half Moon Bay. The Marines heard about it, and the next thing I knew I had Humvees following me all the way to San Diego."

After the trek to Mexico, Garcia decided to conquer America with various walks between states. On one of those walks, Garcia went from Louisiana to the site of the bombed federal building in Oklahoma City.

"In the last mile of the walk, I was joined by over 2,000 people who were all trying to heal from the tragedy that shocked their world," he said.

After more than 5,000 miles, Garcia said he's aching.

He often gets bleeding blisters the size of silver dollars if he hasn't been walking for a while and said his legs get swollen after each walk.

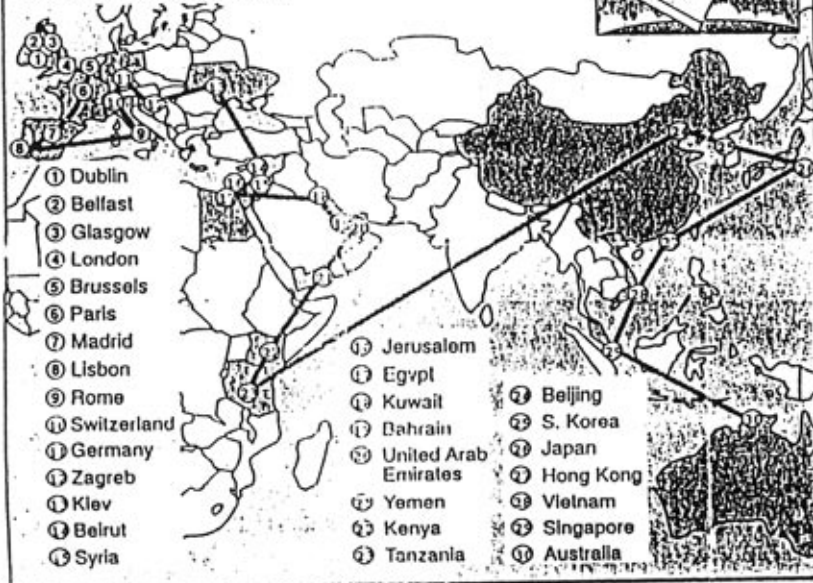
That's not all. "My back hurts so bad sometimes, it feels like somebody broke it," he said.

Still, the man is tough.

"The pain doesn't bother me when I walk into some troubled area and make a difference," he said.

### Hitting the road

Danny Garcia plans to start his 25,000-mile journey Tuesday when he hikes 126 miles from Dublin, Ireland, to Omagh, Northern Ireland. From there, he plans to visit a host of other places, possibly those listed below, but his exact trip depends on who helps him out. People who want to help Garcia's world walk should view his Web site: [www.enespanol.com/our.world](http://www.enespanol.com/our.world)



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