

# Walking for world peace

by KATIE HAMPSON

DANNY GARCIA has come a long way in his bid to promote world peace; 26,000km actually.

He's been travelling the world alone, on foot, for almost five years now and he's finally reached our small city.

New York City, Baghdad, Belfast, there are few places he hasn't been or faces he hasn't seen.

He's been praised by the Pope, commended by Bill Clinton and is expected to shake the hand of Nelson Mandela before the year is out.

Travelling up to 100km a day, there has been nobody to lick his wounds.

He's suffered blisters that bust and bleed, swollen toes and painful stabs in his legs and back. He's weathered tornadoes, scorching heat, freezing cold and wild storms.

And he's seen more suffering children, war-torn countries, pleading families and homeless children than any one man should have to in a lifetime; but it's to help prevent such misery that he keeps going.

Last week the New Yorker sunk into the plush velvet lounge at the City of Melville and was feted for his spiritual journey; an ordinary man made extraordinary by sheer will and determination.

"I wanted to tell people to love one another and never forget to love yourself," he said to those present; there was an almost guru-like feel to the air. The room was in thrall,

hanging off his every word.

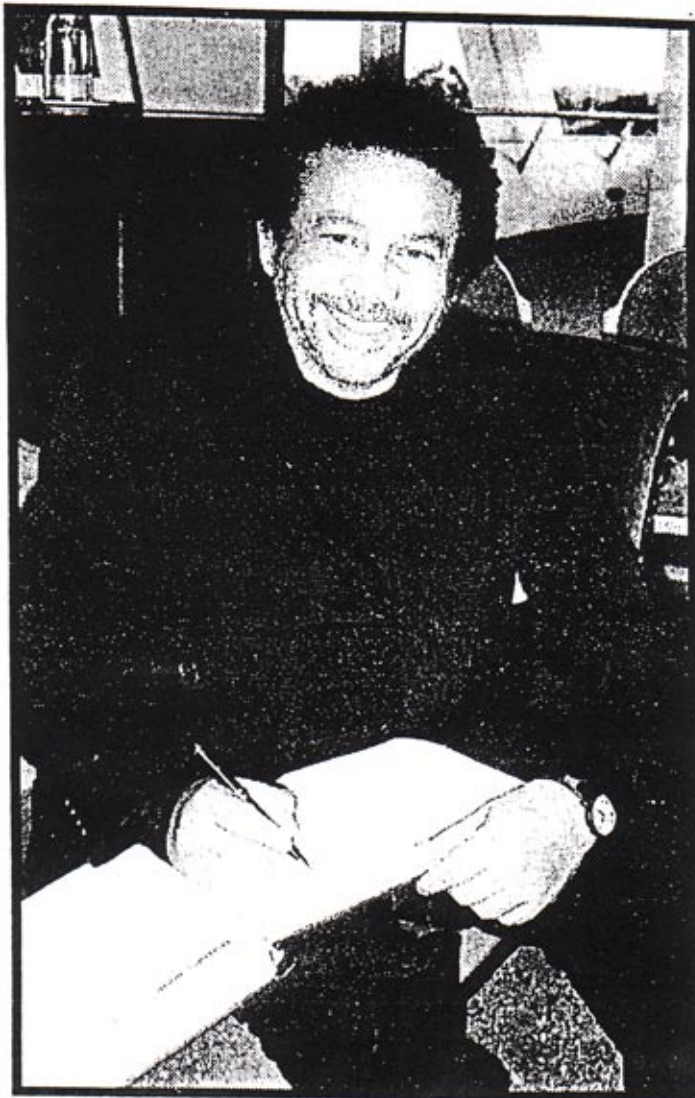
"In Israel, children followed me spontaneously... one time I met a child who wanted to speak to me but couldn't walk because he'd lost his legs, so I gave him my sneakers and signed them," he said gently.

"I have been called to New York when the city was in distress, because a mother had jumped off a building with her baby and she'd encouraged her five and seven year old children to jump too.

"I think the pain kids are going through today is much more painful than what I'm going through, so I'm on a mission and I've made a commitment to keep on going," he added passionately.

He said a good servant to the people constitutes a good leader, and his mission is not yet complete.

"I can't see myself handing my shoes in any time soon," Mr Garcia chimed in.



• Danny Garcia - inspirational.

He's heading to Asia and hopes to eventually settle in France.

Last Thursday he officially included the City of Melville as part of his "world tour", accompanying Mayor Katie Mair on a walk from the Raffles Hotel to Point Walter.

It was but a few steps for Mr Garcia, "but an honour to the city," beamed Ms Mair.