

## ALAN PRICE – AMERICAN CENTURION LEGEND

A list of all U. S. Centurion performances can be found at [https://www.unitedstatescenturionwalkers.com/?page\\_id=783](https://www.unitedstatescenturionwalkers.com/?page_id=783). Of particular interest is the wonderful string of 24 100 mile walk qualifiers put together by C23 Alan Price between 1978 and 1995. This is an achievement that deserves some investigation.

1 Sep 1978	Columbia, MO	age 31	18:57:01
2 Aug 1979	Ft Meade, MD	age 32	21:09:09
3 Sep 1979	Columbia, MO	age 32	19:52:15
4 Aug 1980	Ft Meade, MD	age 33	21:51:36
5 Sep 1980	Columbia, MO	age 33	19:28:16
6 Nov 1980	San Diego, CA	age 33	19:56:22
7 May 1981	Methuen, MA	age 34	20:09:18
8 Oct 1981	Columbia, MO	age 34	20:21:33
7 Aug 1982	Ft Meade, MD	age 35	22:26:18
10 Sep 1982	Columbia, MO	age 35	19:43:52
11 Nov 1982	San Diego, CA	age 35	19:35:44
12 Aug 1983	Ft Meade, MD	age 36	23:09:33
13 Sep 1983	Columbia, MO	age 36	22:36:54
14 Aug 1984	Ft Meade, MD	age 37	21:18:27
15 Sep 1984	Columbia, MO	age 37	18:46:13
16 Sep 1985	Columbia, MO	age 38	20:32:06
17 Aug 1986	Ft Meade, MD	age 39	23:49:00
18 Oct 1986	Springfield, OH	age 39	22:34:44
19 Aug 1987	Ft Meade, MD	age 40	21:51:00
20 Sep 1987	Columbia, MO	age 40	20:58:42
21 Sep 1989	Columbia, MO	age 42	19:54:11
22 Sep 1991	Columbia, MO	age 44	20:41:31
23 Sep 1993	Xenia, OH	age 46	21:03:07
24 Aug 1995	Ellicott City, MD	age 48	23:55:12

Alan Price, of Washington D.C., born 3 January 1947, first qualified as American Centurion C 23 in September 1978 as a 31 year old and his time of 18:57:41 was a new American record. His first 50 miles was indeed fast – 8 hours 54 mins – and his final time showed the he maintained his pace fairly well in the second half.

The next year, he prepared for the American Centurions race with a 100 mile walk in August 1979 at Fort Meade. His time of 21:09:09 was done in 90°F heat, an amazing performance. Only 6 weeks later he fronted for the annual American Centurion event in Colombia and showed that he had recovered well. He flew through the first 5 miles in 42:15, a time more at home in short roadwalking events. He passed the 50 mile mark in 8:44:00 and looked set to beat his 1978 record. Alas, the cold overnight conditions took their toll and he slowed to 19:52:50. But on this occasion, he decided to keep going and recorded a new American 24 Hour record of 118 miles 316 yards.

Price went on to win the American Centurions qualifier event on 9 straight occasions and in 1984 broke his own 1978 record with 18:46:13. In an interview with the Columbia Daily Tribune after his 1984 record walk, he told how he first came to Columbia in 1978. He said,

*"I heard about the race in Columbia in an ad in Runners' World along with a feature on one of the guys who won a lot. They had some times in there, and I said, 'I can do this.' So I told everyone in D.C. I was going to Columbia and set a record. I had a hard time getting the money for the trip, but I always knew I would go. I was kind of the dark horse figuratively and literally."*

Price was referring to his race by that remark. He was a black in a sport that did not attract blacks. He had never walked in a race longer than 50 miles prior to 1978. He was actually a "closet walker," and he said he felt funny practicing in the daylight, so he would go to the track at Bennicker Junior High in Washington, D.C., after dark and practice in the pitch black. He told the Columbia reporter,

*"People who don't do this think it's easy. That's because they haven't tried it yet."*

Price enjoyed telling about entering a 100-mile race in San Diego in 1982 where the promoters wanted a "name athlete" for a big draw. They got Don Choi, who held the American distance record for a six-day run of more than 450 miles. The race promoters figured walking a 100-miler would be a piece of cake for him. Price blew him away in 19:35:44. "Well, he finished it," Price said, "but I'm telling you, he was hurting pretty bad". I asked him which he thought was

harder, a six day run or a hundred-mile walk. He said, “*No doubt about it, a hundred-miler!*” Alan Price liked having the best in another sport invade his turf and come away shaking his head..



*Alan Price walks in the 1978 American Centurion qualifier in Colombia*

In 1984, at the age of thirty-seven, Price, who is only five feet seven inches tall, weighed 138 pounds at the start of his record-setting performance. He weighed 127 pounds at the finish. During the race, he consumed a quarter of a large watermelon, a half gallon of apple juice, and a pint of water. There were no fat endorsement contracts from shoe companies and clothing manufacturers for racewalkers; consequently, he had to cut corners wherever possible to save money. He set his American record wearing a \$1.90 pair of discounted Foot Locker shoes he picked out of a pile on a clearance sale table. Such is the humble life of a racewalker in the United States—even a champion.

He may have been unheralded outside our sport but his place amongst the greatest long distance walking exponents is guaranteed. His string of 24 centurion qualifiers in 17 years and his American records put him head and shoulders above those of us who dabble around the edges of this most demanding sport.