

ALAN PRICE – AMERICAN CENTURION LEGEND

A list of all U. S. Centurion performances can be found at http://www.ultrawalk.com/Centurion/US_Centurions.htm. Of particular interest is the wonderful string of 23 100 mile walk qualifiers put together by Alan Price between 1978 and 1993. This is an achievement that deserves some investigation.

Name	Date	Location	Time	Age	Birthdate
Price, Alan	23-Sep-78	Columbia, MO	18:57:01	31	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	11-Aug-79	Ft. Meade, MD	21:09:09	32	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	22-Sep-79	Columbia, MO	19:52:15	32	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	02-Aug-80	Ft.Meade, MD	21:51:35	33	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	27-Sep-80	Columbia, MO	19:28:16	33	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	01-Nov-80	San Diego, CA	19:55:22	33	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	09-May-81	Muthuen, MA	20:09:18	34	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	03-Oct-81	Columbia, MO	20:21:33	34	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	07-Aug-82	Ft. Meade, MD	19:43:51	35	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	25-Sep-82	Columbia, MO	19:43:51	35	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	20-Nov-82	San Diego, CA	19:35:44	35	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	06-Aug-83	Ft. Meade, MD	23:09:33	36	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	17-Sep-83	Columbia, MO	22:36:54	36	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	04-Aug-84	Ft. Meade, MD	21:18:27	37	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	29-Sep-84	Columbia, MO	18:46:13	37	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	28-Sep-85	Columbia, MO	20:32:06	38	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	02-Aug-86	Ft. Meade, MD	23:49:00	39	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	01-Oct-86	Springfield, OH	22:34:00	39	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	01-Aug-87	Ft. Meade, MD	21:51:00	40	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	26-Sep-87	Columbia, MO	20:58:42	40	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	30-Sep-89	Columbia, MO	19:54:11	42	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	21-Sep-91	Columbia, MO	20:41:31	44	03-Jan-47
Price, Alan	25-Sep-93	Xenia, OH	21:03:07	46	03-Jan-47

Price, of Washington D.C., 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 23 centurion qualifiers in 15 years and his American records put him head and shoulders above those of us who dabble around the edges of this most demanding sport.