Long March and Hunger Strike for Freedom and Democracy in BURMA

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Day 9 September 9, 2004 (Ninth Day)

Initially, the Japanese-born Buddhist nun, Venerable Jun Yasuda, planned to start the day's journey at 9:00 AM. However, as some people from Albany were still on their way, the group ended up departing from downtown Kingston, Albany at 9:40 AM to begin their journey. Since the rain was not as heavy as during the prior day, the marchers were able to continue with their walk comfortably.

□ While the group rested briefly at around 11:30 AM, Venerable Jun Yasuda asked the group aloud if they knew why she "is participating in this campaign with heart and zeal?"

□ Everyone replied in unison, saying that since she [Venerable Jan Yasuda] belongs to an order called Nipponzan Myohoji -- and the order's mission is to walk and pray for peace all over the world -- that it is natural that she wants to help the campaign to be successful so that Burma may be in a peaceful state too. Venerable Jan Yasuda replied with a smile that the answer is correct to a point, but that it is insufficient and requires more explanation.

□ Venerable Jun Yasuda explained that marching is a form of paying gratitude to the people of Burma. She relayed the following background:

□ The Grafton Peace pagoda (the beginning point of the "Long March" campaign to the United Nations – first day) enshrines three Buddha's relics. A Japanese Buddhist Reverend Nagai brought these relics out of Burma during British occupation. Reverend Nagai was helping Burma to gain independence from the British Colonials and he was placed in jail by the British authorities. While in prison, Reverend Nagai went on a hunger strike for about 100 days, and, as a result, he was almost at a deathbed. Afraid that the people of Burma would rise up against the British authorities if Reverend Nagai were left to die, the British released the Reverend. The Reverend was allowed to carry thirty pieces of Buddha's relics with him to Japan. After ten years, Reverend Nagai presented the relics to Venerable Jun Yasuda's teacher. It was dedicated that the Buddha's relics would be used at Peace pagodas throughout the United States. (Up to this date, there are two Peace pagodas, one in Massachusetts and the other in New York State.) Jun Yasuda feels very fortunate to carry out her predecessors' work of freeing Burma. (Note: Information for the people of Burma.)

□ The march resumed at 12:10 PM and it ended for the day at around 4:00 PM in front of the West Park Post Office, New York. The Ninth Day's journey covered 12 miles. To this day, the journey has covered a total of 103 miles.

□ The following is a list of donations received by the activists:

Dr. Aung Khin (California) – US$700 and a box of medicines
U Tin Aye (Fort Wayne, Indiana) – US $100
Ko Ye Hein (Fort Wayne, Indiana) – US $40
Ko Ngwe Hlaing (Fort Wayne, Indiana) – US $50
Ko Seing Moe Ko Ko (Milwaukee) – US $100
Democratic Burmese Community (Ithaca, New York) – US $150
U Myo Aung (Texas) – US $300

□ The activists are very grateful to those who took part in the "Freedom Long March" and to those who helped them to secure foods and lodging while they were in Albany. The activists would like to offer special thanks to Venerable U Eithareya for helping to secure foods and lodging in the Albany area. The activists would also like to offer special thanks to Venerable Jun Yasuda for her assistance in obtaining food and lodging during future journey segments. Likewise, the activists would also like to thank all individuals and organizations for sending letters and statements of encouragement. Finally, the activists would like to thank Mrs. Maura Stephens (Editor, Ithaca College quarterly magazine) and Mrs. Phyllis De Feno (Literacy Volunteer) for all their help.

(Note: For those who are unable to support the Freedom "Long March" activists in person, e-mails of encouragement and support can be sent to freedomlongmarch@aol.com)

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