

BUTTERFLY

ButterFly

A HEALING ARTS RESOURCE



A Leap of Faith

By Sandy Penny

Healing our fears and overcoming limitations is a big step in our overall healing and success in life. In our healing process, once in a while, we encounter a challenge that requires a giant leap of faith.

I circled the firepit, striking a tambourine on my thigh in time with the chant, "My body does whatever it takes to protect itself." I gazed into the glowing red eyes of the twelve by four foot bed of coals and watched a layer of white ash begin to form. The fire pit glowered at me and silently asked, "Will you walk tonight?" Would I cast aside caution and logic and take a stroll on a bed of coals?

I shivered a little as the chant changed to, "I am the light, I am the love," and then swelled around me with, "The fire and I are one." I thought about how I came to be

standing here on the edge of eternity, questioning the very nature of reality.

A week earlier, I had been to the Chapel of Prayer, a metaphysical church in Houston where I studied all kinds of alternative subjects. A Hindu Guru was telling traditional Indian parables, and I met Charmaine McGhie and Tore Fossum. We sat next to each other and connected so quickly that they invited me to a party and firewalk. They turned out to be Houston's premier firewalking instructors.

I was intrigued. I had seen firewalking on TV with Tony Robbins and read about it in National Geographic, but never had I personally witnessed it. They gave me a book called "Firewalk" by Jonathon Seinfeld. It called firewalking an empowerment tool and a subculture movement in the U.S.



since the '70s. The U.S. has more firewalkers than the rest of the world put together. Amazing! I had done every "new age" experience I had run into. How could such a phenomenon have slipped by me? The book discussed the unsatisfactory research that often denounces firewalking as fake. I was primed for the experience—to watch, at least.

I arrived early at the suburban house in a quiet Friendswood, Texas, neighborhood. Not really where you'd expect to see a firewalk. It looked like any other party; guests arrived with covered dishes, and someone

played '50s hits on a piano. About 9:00 pm, everyone gathered in the back yard. The grass was water soaked as a safety precaution; fire marshals approved the site, and the evening began.

We took turns carrying logs to build the fire. We were told to think of the logs like children and focus loving attention on them. A firewalk instructor built an impressive "boy scout" teepee with half a cord of wood, soon to be a raging bonfire. The fire was lit with great ceremony. It blazed skyward while a lady wearing a gossamer skirt—which surely was a fire hazard—intoned words of thanks and protection. When the fire was blazing violet and gold, we went to the patio for another phenomenal activity. It would be two to three hours before the coals were ready.

Someone suggested we play the "rebar game" and a chorus of assent rang out. I had no idea what that meant. The rebar were 3/4 inch by 6 foot steel reinforcement bars. Two people stand face-to-face, six feet apart, and a rebar is suspended between them with the tip of the metal rod in the hollows of their throats. Spectators focus energy and imagine the rod bending. When the couple feels ready, they walk toward each other. The rod could either pierce your throat, cut off your breathing—or it could bend. There were no tracheotomies; they all bent. When the energy is focused, the rod amazingly just sort of melts, and you are suddenly catching your partner in your arms, laughing as you fall toward each

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other. Yes, I did it!

Finally, the coals are ready. The fire is so hot it's difficult to stand close to it for more than a few minutes. We take turns raking the coals out smoothly, and the temperature measures 1,800 degrees. How could we hope to walk on this? I'm glad I only came to watch.

We circled the fire pit and chanted. I wondered if anyone would find the courage to be first. Suddenly, Charmaine walked up, quietly chanting, stepped onto the coals and kept walking, slowly, not rushing, the full 12 feet. As she stepped off, a cheer went up, and she turned and repeated it. A line of people followed, and no one was injured.

Some people walked slowly, some ran, and some danced. One young man cartwheeled through the coals, and then stood in the middle of the firepit, reached down, picked up a handful of coals, and threw them into the air. Then he quietly walked away—unharmed. The lady in the long, full skirt walked eight times, and the fabric never caught fire. Everyone had walked, except me. I had only come to watch anyway.

This went on for a couple of hours, like a dream. My mind had no place to file this scene. Could I do it too? Did I have enough faith or whatever it took? I did not feel afraid, but I also did not feel compelled to walk. Even so, I had removed my shoes and socks. Was that significant?

A voice called out "last call, time to go in and dance." Charmaine stepped up once again, and this time I stood beside her and took her hand. We looked briefly at each other. She squeezed my hand, and we began to walk, not too fast, casually.

The coals crunched under my feet. I no longer felt the radiant heat. I felt a cool breeze. Suddenly I stepped off the end of the pit. I had actually walked on 1,800 degree coals, and my feet were intact—not even a blister. Now everyone was cheering for ME! I knew I was about to begin rethinking reality. ❁

HORSE FLY

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