

Olympic Torch Fires Patriotism

Are the Olympic Games stirring latent patriotism in America? The answer is almost certainly affirmative. Something of a "home-team" spirit swells in our breasts when we witness competitions and, most particularly, when those competitions are characterized by well-training, well-prepared men and women giving their earnest best and making their utmost efforts.

Even before the games commence, while torchbearers run in relays across this nation, carrying the symbol through 33 states, few, watching the torch pass by, fail to respond with an emotion that can only be called patriotism.

Patriotism is more, by far, than pride, for pride's a lonely thing, and cold, that shuts out everyone else. Patriotism encompasses all, shares generously, and is as warm and contagious as laughter. The more of us who feel it, the better we all feel.

As torchbearers run the 9,000-mile-long trail from coast to coast, farmers in fields halt their plowing, turn in their tractor seats, and take off their hats while the torch goes by. Farmers' wives pause in their routine of daily chores to stand at the edge of the road where runs a man or a woman bearing the symbol of the Olympics.

For 82 days this summer, through city streets, on suburban thoroughfares, via highways and by-ways, alongside lakes and rivers, over country lanes and mountain roads, the flame moves on toward its Los Angeles goal. Wherever it goes, it rekindles smoldering fires of patriotism. Seeing the flickering

flame of that torch, held aloft by a runner symbolic of men and women who will soon represent our country at Olympic Games, reinforces our satisfactions in being American.

This is not to say Americans are complacent. Quite the contrary. Not with 10 million of us collecting welfare. Not with eight million unemployed. Not with millions of teenagers becoming unwed parents before finishing high school. And not with our cities burdened with slums, our jails overcrowded with prisoners, and our borders being invaded by illegal aliens...not to mention invasions by runners of drugs.

No, this is not to say Americans are complacent; far from it. Not with our own leaders and those of the U.S.S.R. glaring at each other from behind their respective nuclear arsenals. Not with a national election one of this fall's coming attractions. Not with the Middle East, Central America, and Afghanistan embroiled in wars that threaten to engulf the rest of the world's nations.

Even though we Americans know problems aplenty await and solutions cannot easily be found, when that flaming torch goes by, our tensions relax, peace of mind prevails, and hope surges in our hearts, hope for our own future, and hope for all mankind.

Athletes participating in the Olympic games gain inspiration from the motto, "Swifter, Higher, Stronger." The motto represents for Americans, perhaps for people all over the world, whether participating in the games or not, goals to set so that future generations may survive on our planet.