

## The Olympic Flame

On Friday November 2nd, the Olympic Flame was lighted on the very site where the Games of Antiquity were held. According to a tradition dating of a few thousands years, a 'priestess' handed the Sacred Fire which had previously been kindled by the sunrays, to the first runner on its way to Melbourne, the Flame's ultimate destination. The first runner stepped out of the ruins of the ancient temple and the olive trees of the Peloponnesus, carrying the Flame on its way to Athens whence it was flown to Australia. 350 Australian athletes carried it in relays over the 350 km. route which marks the distance between Olympia and Athens. A short ceremony took place in that town on November 3rd at 10 a.m. while an aircraft transporting the Flame by means of a miner's lamp from the Saar, took off, bound for Darwin where it landed on November 6th at 9.25 p.m. The 1450 km. journey between Darwin and Cairns was covered by an aircraft belonging to the Australian R.A.F. It is from Cairns that the Flame relay race took place from November 9th. This has been the longest journey ever-known in Olympic history when 2750 Australian athletes, each running one mile, carried the Olympic Flame to the Melbourne Stadium, in time for the Opening Ceremony of the Games on November 22nd at 4.32 p.m.

### The Ceremony of Departure of the Flame

Greece has brought back to life her ancient days. The kindling of the Olympic Flame assumed a most pronounced archaic character this year. Herewith is a description of the ceremony :

The priestess of the temple dedicated to Zeus in Olympia, stood at the East side of the altar on the ground of the Stadium, keeping watch over the Sacred Fire of Olympia, while at the West side of this altar, within a short distance, the priestess

of the Pallas Athena's temple at the Parthenon in Athens arrived attended by three other priestesses. Standing on the foot of the column, she invoked Zeus, beseeching him to grant fire. By the end of the invocation when Zeus sent lightening as the symbol of his approbation, the priestess of Zeus' temple handed the Sacred Fire to the priestess of the Pallas Athena's temple of Athens. The two priestesses then, with their escort of young girls who transported the Fire and carried baskets of flowers, walked towards the altar where arrived the first athlete who knelt in front of the first priestess who proceeded to light the torch that he carried in his hand. Thereupon, followed the relay race to Athens. The last Greek runner reached the Acropolis where in front of the Propylaea, two soldiers of the ancient days, wearing the uniform of the warriors of the battle of Marathon, stood barring the way and forbidding him to pass. The athlete then uttered "I carry the Sacred Flame of Olympia" thereupon, the sentries gave him leave to pass. Still running, he then reached the Parthenon when a choir of several hundreds of boys welcomed him with the singing of the *Olympic Hymn* of Samaras (words by C. Palamas). The goddess Pallas Athena holding a spray of olive leaves gave her blessing to the runner who approached the officials and handed the Flame to the President of the Greek Olympic Committee. The President then proceeded with the lighting of the Saar miner's lamp from the Sacred Fire of Olympia and handed it over to the Consul General for Australia in Greece, in order that it should be conveyed to Melbourne by the means we described in the first article.

We cannot conclude this narrative without giving due praise to the Greek Olympic Committee on whom fell the duty to organize this manifestation which was highly successful in every respect.



*A Olympia.* Hestias (M<sup>me</sup> Kazazi) followed by the chief Priestess (M<sup>me</sup> Katseli) and a retinue of priestesses leaves the crypt of the Stadium carrying the Sacred Fire and walks towards the Temple of Ira.

# A memorable date, November the 2nd 1956

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**Photographic reporting illustrating the ceremony  
of departure of the Olympic Flame (from Olympia to Athens) which was transported  
to Melbourne for the Opening of the Games of the XVth Olympiad.**

(A full account of this is to be found in the present issue of the Bulletin.)



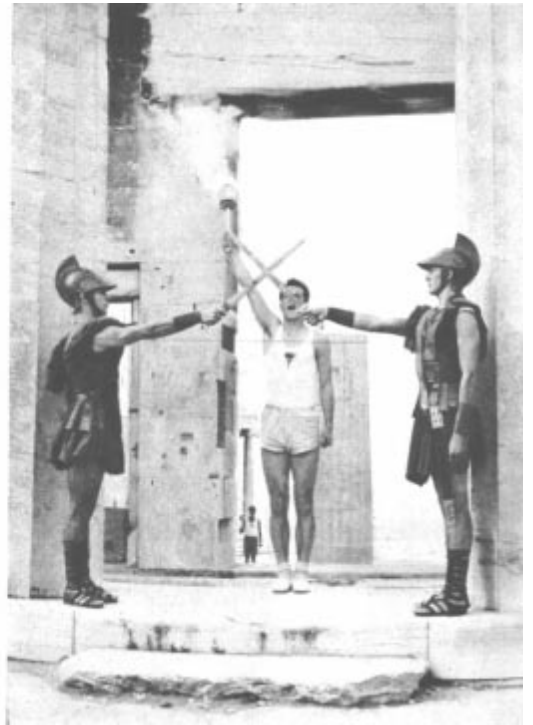
*At Olympia.*

Hestias carrying the Sacred Fire is seen handing it over to the Chief Priestess in the Temple of Hera.



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No. 1. — *At Olympia.*

At the Temple of Ira, the chief Priestess hands the Sacred Fire to the first relay man.

No. 2. — *On the Acropolis at Athens.*

The last Greek relay man (Ev. Marinos) is stopped at the entrance of the Propylaea by the sentries (Marathonomachi) who ask him :  
— “Who are you ?”, “What do you want ?”  
— “I bring the Sacred Flame”, replies the carrier

No. 3. — *On the Acropolis.*

The Marathonodromi allow him to pass with the Sacred Flame.