



**Questions and thoughts during my October 2007 A-bomb Exhibitions Tour in the USA - Alliance, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois by Emiko Okada**

Steven L. Leeper, Director, Peace Culture Foundation

Chikage Sakamoto, Chief, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Translated by Michiko Yamane

**Tour Itinerary Dates:**

**Oct. 13 -- 25, 2007**

**Oct. 18** (Thu.) We visited the city office of Akron with Keiko Miyahara, a graduate from Jogakuin Senior High School and an exchange student at Mount Union College, to request that we hold an A-bomb exhibition there in the future.

**Oct. 19** (Fri.) I told my [A-bomb Hibakusha experiences](#) for the first time during the tour to the students and citizens at the chapel located on campus. Wearing the T-shirt printed "No More Hiroshimas", I talked about my personal experiences of 62 years ago using a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate my story. While showing the world map with 30,000 nuclear warheads located geographically, we talked about ways to abolish nuclear weapons and urged the audience to take action.

**Oct. 20** (Sat.) Located in the lobby, we had a panel exhibition showing A-bomb disasters and gave explanations of the exhibit. I gave my A-bomb testimony in a lecture room. Alice and Larry, former Directors at the WFC, visited us with warm smiles. We were overjoyed with the reunion.

There were many questions from the audience after my presentation:

- \* "What is the meaning of peace as symbolized by folded paper cranes?"
- \* "Why do we tell such painful and traumatic experiences?"
- \* "It was not only Hiroshima but also the United States that had terrible war experiences, including Pearl Harbor. Why do we talk only about the dropping of the A-bomb?" (Asked by a U.S veteran)
- \* "What do we think about the fact that the Japanese government hasn't made an official apology to China yet?" (A student from China)
- \* "Germany went through a lot of hardships in history. Germany committed atrocities against other

countries - most countries have done similar things as well. No country has the sole right to criticize others. We have to learn from history and think of the ways to peace in the future regardless of nationality." (A student from Germany)

- \* "What kind of concrete actions can we take to create a more peaceful world?"
- \* "Do we (Japanese survivors) have grudges against Americans?"
- \* "Do Japanese students learn about the A-bombing and wars fought by Japan?"

**Oct. 21(Sun.)** We attended the church service in Alliance and had a chance to meet a large number of people. Later we visited a newly built nursing home which looked like a resort hotel and watched an American college football game. We also had a stroll in the park where Leeper san enjoyed catching a snake.

Our visit and the A-bomb issue were covered widely by the local mass media. According to one newspaper, a majority of the people didn't know much about the tragedy of the A-bombing nor the current nuclear weapon situation. Most of the people who listened to our stories seemed to be attentive and pondered seriously about what they could do.

**Oct. 22 (Mon.)** I gave a special thank you to Yuki Miyamoto, Assistant Professor of the Religious Studies Department at DePaul University in Chicago. She was from Hiroshima and helped us with transportation during the tour, arranging schedules and interpreting. We had lunch with a Deputy Consulate General at the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago.

Questions asked at the Japanese Language Department of DePaul University:

- \* "What do we think of the America that dropped the A-bomb?"
- \* "Do we think that using nuclear weapons might happen in the future?"
- \* "What can American students do (to help eliminate nuclear weapons) other than voting for pacifist politicians?"

Questions at Northwestern University:

- \* "Did we (Japanese people) receive any assistance from America (government)?"
- \* "Is it possible to abolish nuclear weapons from the earth?"
- \* "Do we work for reconciliation or have hatred toward Americans?"
- \* "Do Japanese often talk about the A-bomb issue?"
- \* "What do we think of the opinion that using the A-bomb brought an early end to the war?"
- \* "Why hasn't the Japanese government officially apologized about the Nanjing massacre?"

**Oct. 23 (Tue.)** I shared my A bomb survivor experiences with the students of the Religious Studies Department. Some questions were:

- \* "What was the most rewarding result we got so far by talking as a witness?"
- \* "Is there any difference in the interest of people (different audiences) about the A-bomb when speaking with audiences in United States and those in other countries?"

\* “What do you expect from the United Nations in the future?”

**Oct. 24** (Wed.) I shared my story with women students in the Japanese Studies Department. A student asked, “How was Hiroshima restored from ashes?” A student from Lebanon told us while shedding tears that civil war broke out in her country last year and families, relatives and friends were killing each other.”

**Oct. 25** (Thu.) We visited the City Hall of Chicago and requested to hold future A-bomb exhibitions there, as well as requesting their participation in “Mayors for Peace”. We listened to the message from the mayor of Chicago. I gave testimony in a history class at Lake View High School. The students made for us something similar to a ‘noren’- a hanging curtain with red and white folded paper cranes. There were a few women students wearing military uniforms among the many attentive students.

A reception was held for the A-bomb exhibitions at the Culture Center of DePaul University. The reception started with messages by Gene Lee, Deputy Chief of Staff, Chicago City Hall, and by Mr. Shibata, Consulate General in Chicago, followed by the President of DePaul University and Steven Leeper. American students recited A-bomb poems, both in English and Japanese, in front of the screen showing the paintings titled “A-bombing” painted by Iri and Toshi Maruki. Then I told my A-bomb experiences in front of about 200 people and shook hands with everyone. I was so impressed by the young people listening to me very earnestly and with shining interest in their eyes. They were positive and eager to start doing something for peace. There were so many Americans who had little

apprehension about nuclear weapons, but I believe that our A-bomb exhibitions triggered them to think about peace and take actions in the future. I want the leaders of the countries possessing nuclear-weapons to realize that they are wasting too much of our valuable resources, when they should care more about starvation, poverty and infant deaths.

I think my duty is to commit myself to telling my story so that all children in the world may live with smiles. I send my warmest thoughts for peace and blessings to everyone.

**Visions for a changing world “inside and outside” the World Friendship Center (WFC) : “Passing the torch” to the next generations.**

**Kent Sweitzer, Volunteer Director**

World traveling guests that stay at the WFC sometimes inquire, “Where are the “other” World Friendship Centers (located)?” A name can convey a great deal about the mission, expectations and potential of an organization. Barbara Reynolds, the founder of the WFC, apparently didn’t suggest that the name assigned to her vision should be “Hiroshima Friendship Center” or “Japan Friendship Center”, or just “Friendship Center”, but World Friendship Center. Promoting peace and “building friendships across borders” is a mission that requires cooperation and partnerships around the world - not just having programs and activities based at a single location for a restricted number of participants.

From Barbara’s genius to think “bigger than life” and to “think beyond the immediate” we have collectively discovered some opportunities and challenges whereby World Friendship Center can perhaps more effectively move forward with renewed conviction

and confidence. The two global areas of additional potential are best described as “partnering with others” and “intentionally enhancing our volunteer’s experiences and opportunities.” Barbara herself extended beyond her initial engagement with the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and subsequently founded the World Friendship Center (WFC) Hiroshima, Japan, the [Peace Resource Center \(PRC\) at Wilmington College](#), and also engaged in the peace callings of her time including her commitment for Vietnamese and Cambodian orphans and refugees. Barbara was not hesitant to “pass the torch” of responsibilities to others nor to engage others in the beliefs and causes she deemed important and critical. She knew that it was just as important to “partner with others” to move the peace mission forward as it was to share her vision and ideas. Her ideals continue to inspire others even now, not without challenge or setbacks of course, but with a vision that connects volunteers with others through a message of peace and understanding.

While many organizations that strive to endure need to evolve and re-evaluate their mission over time, the many that do not survive beyond a few generations, often fail because they do not readily adapt to changing needs in a changing world –they cease to be relevant because they do not connect with the interests and understandings of newer generations. They fail to “re-invent” themselves as part of their mission’s journey. Some changes are “forced” upon us with little notice, however, just as in Barbara’s life, those moments can present the “opportunity” and the “inspiration” for acting upon and being motivated to make enduring and productive changes.

To better organize our potential within the recommended framework of the

Japanese National Government, the World Friendship Center has committed to become a Japan NPO (Not for Profit Organization). This process not only helps the WFC define specifics about its goals, organization, and operations, but allows us to join a larger family of NPO organizations, many of which have similar aspirations for peace education and social justice using different “business models”. The partnering possibilities for sharing resources and programs are exciting and may provide some of the keys for connecting with the next generations as well as promoting Peace Activities with other countries and cultures.

World Friendship Center ( WFC) collectively has some unique positive “assets” - a Japanese style guesthouse with an outstanding reputation, a community based practical English conversation program which includes important social connections, a strong volunteer presence which provide [Peace Park Tours](#), programs at [Mutsumien Nursing Home](#), [Peace Choir](#), stories by [Hibakusha](#), a history of exchange programs and many others. To learn more, Click on Activities when you visit the World Friendship Center’s website at [www.wfchirosima.net/](http://www.wfchirosima.net/)

Many volunteers of the World Friendship Center including students and Riji members enjoy participating in projects which make a noticeable improvement in the WFC facilities – both the guesthouse and the Peace Garden Villa Classrooms. Maintaining and improving the services and “assets” of the WFC is a practical and sometimes educational and fun way to learn new skills such as painting or hosting international guests while speaking English (see Chiyoko Ogura san article “**Participating in Volunteer Activities**” in this issue).

Another emerging opportunity is to have an invited guest staying at the WFC, join one of the English topic and conversation classes so they can share their special area of interest or expertise. In this forum, we can bring some of the many interests of the world to the WFC classroom thereby connecting the local Hiroshima community with the international community. For example, see the WFC website and click on WFC Albums link – select [Professor Nick Waterproof Rice](#).

A pioneering method for some college students to connect and dialogue with the World Friendship Center is via an internship program. This year and next the World Friendship Center will partner with both the Hiroshima Shudo University and the Wilmington College, Ohio ([Peace Resource Center](#)) with two unique types of internship programs. In September 2008, two students from Hiroshima Shudo University will intern at WFC for 10 days. After having read select papers, books, and background information written by Barbara Reynolds, Doctor Tomin Harada, and Norman Cousins the two interns will experience the WFC as students, as teachers, as guests, as Directors and even as guest Riji while they attend a Riji meeting. One proven method to learn more about any organization is to expand the possibilities by having others “experience” the organization. What activities and opportunities might we pursue differently if we could partner with other programs already established and better utilize our many talents and assets? How might more frequent interactions with the next generations help us better define our goals, mission, where we meet with others and how we utilize our volunteer time for daily operations? During our on-going website innovation project we benefit tremendously from the volunteer computer and programming skills of Hiroyuki Kurihara, who

researched and implemented many new features that are now available. One of our goals was to literally “link” the [World Friendship Center](#) with many of our “partners” websites so that we could improve the usefulness and help provide resources for use by our guests, students, and other website visitors. Partners of the World Friendship Center include, for example, the [Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Memorial Park](#); [Brethren Volunteer Service \(BVS\)](#) which helps recruit and train the [Volunteer Directors](#) of the WFC, and the [Wilmington College Peace Resource Center \(PRC\)](#).

While linking our website with the PRC’s website, we exchanged ideas about our programs, and the challenges of making our respective organizations more relevant for today’s young people, including an international forum. Out of that dialogue a program is underway to foster the first WFC-PRC-Hiroshima Shudo Exchange program beginning in May 2009 which will host our first intern, Abbey Pratt-Harrington, for three months. A subsequent Yu Ai article will outline the research and scope of this new exciting internship, endorsed by the Riji at the February 2008 meeting.

In summary, the World Friendship Center continues to evolve and innovate by visioning creative and practical ways to change with the times –both “inside and outside” of the WFC. Our visioning questions include the following: How might we partner more effectively with existing organizations including other NPO’s and colleges? What opportunities are there for talented and interested people of any age to participate, volunteer, and engage in the mission of the [World Friendship Center](#)? How can we better utilize the assets and resources of the World Friendship Center including some of the hard earned funds and generous donations to

communicate the Spirit of Hiroshima and build peace-making partnerships that extend around the world? How can we be more effective now and as we anticipate the future, seeking both “inside and outside” the WFC as we “pass the torch” to the next generations?

### **Participating in Volunteer Activities**

By Chiyoko Ogura, Sarah’s Wednesday Class

Translated by Sachiko Hiraoka

I have been a member of a WFC English conversation class for the last seven years. I greatly appreciate having been given many valuable opportunities to serve and talk with guests. I had a vague idea about “volunteering”, but while doing volunteer work, I found myself enjoying it and realized that I was given much more than I gave. I’m sure that this feeling is within “Volunteering” itself.

Sarah’s Wednesday English class has enjoyed a variety of activities including making paper cranes with a crystal bead, serving breakfast to the guests on the second and fourth Sundays, and painting the WFC guesthouse interior. Each member that makes paper cranes hopes that they will convey the beautiful crystal sparkle to everyone in every corner of the world.

We learned that it is exciting and empowering to take the very first step of what we want to do. I think that WFC gives the touching memory of HIROSHIMA to the guests from all over the world, appealing for peace to the world. I believe this after my study at WFC. I have kept participating in WFC programs, because I feel comfortable to be with the inspiring American Directors. I get a warm feeling when I think of American Directors who voluntarily come to Japan (a small country with a different language) to work for peace. I also am

inspired by the strong will, beliefs and generous hearts of WFC members.

While working at WFC, I am often told “Thank you very much”, but I am the one that should be saying, “Thank you very much.” I feel grateful to have such opportunities and am very appreciative of having them. Humans have good and evil in themselves. I can find the good in myself through my involvement with WFC. I realize that I am led toward doing positive and helpful tasks and also think that it is wonderful to have met people I’d like to follow.

I hope that from now on more and more people who have the same desire for peace will come together. It is my desire that each of us, while working together with others, will make a positive difference in the world.

### **WFC Guest Comments from Around the World**

By Sarah Sweitzer, Volunteer Director

WFC Guests sign a guest register which provides space for comments. People have many positive things to say about WFC. If a person has had the opportunity to listen to a Hibakusha tell a story or tour Peace Park with one of the WFC guides, these experiences always stand out. A designer from Australia wrote, “Thanks so much! Especially for tour and talk...” A visitor from the UK wrote, “Excellent - tour and talk were awesome”. A film producer from Canada commented, “warm and cozy place; great and weighty discussions, floored by Hibakusha”.

Our visitors are pleased with the accommodations. “Slept great!”, “excellent breakfast, very comfortable bed, bedroom!”, “really feels like home! Thanks for everything.” are a few of the recent comments. Sometimes the

feedback prompts us to make changes. After a family from France wrote, “cold house but warm atmosphere”, we checked all the heaters, cleaned the filters and noticed an improvement in the heat output.

You can read additional guest comments at [www.wfchirosima.net/](http://www.wfchirosima.net/) under the heading of Accommodations. The following comments give feedback on the overall WFC experience: “We stayed two days longer than we planned - it was so great!!” “What an amazing and unforgettable experience! Thank you is not enough!” A Doctor from Scotland said, “Excellent, great atmosphere. Loved Hiroshima.” A student from Korea was to the point with his comment, “So cool!”

Thank you to all the WFC volunteers that help to make a difference in the experiences our guests have. Peace Park Tours, Hibakusha stories, warm bedding, comfortable mattresses, clean sheets, and freshly painted guest rooms all make a difference.

### **Introduction of a New English Conversation Class - Wednesday Afternoon** by Sarah Sweitzer

How many students are too many for one English Conversation Class? While there is not an exact answer, when the Wednesday morning class enrollment climbed to fourteen, thereby considerably limiting the time each student had to practice; we decided it was time for a change. Two regular members, Yasuko Yamagata san and Setsuko Kuramoto san, volunteered to help get a new class started on Wednesday afternoons. The class meets from 1:30 - 3:30 PM. Three new class members have joined; Shigeki Michihiro san, Michiko Yamaoka san and Yoko Hirasue san are the newest members. WFC English Classes are

more than English Conversation. Over the years, close friendships have formed. Therefore, on the first Wednesday of each month, the morning and afternoon classes meet together and enjoy each other’s company. On other Wednesdays, there is a relaxed afternoon class with time for everyone to speak. In addition, there are plenty of chairs and new members are welcome!

### **Building Bridges with China and Korea: Peace Camp 2008**

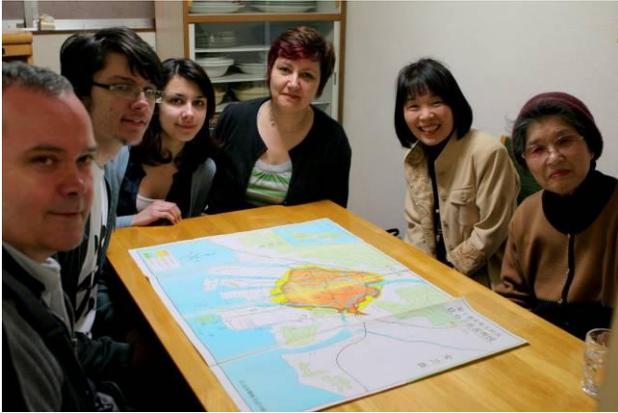
At the April 12<sup>th</sup> Riji Meeting both the recently proposed Building Bridges Fund and Peace Camp 2008 were fully endorsed. This summer, July 27<sup>th</sup> to August 5<sup>th</sup>, children ages 12 to 15 from Japan, Korea, and China will gather in Chengdu, China for a Peace Camp. This unique venue for “passing the torch” to the next generation is the collective work of several partnerships including the Korean Anabaptist Center (KAC), Mennonites in China and the World Friendship Center (WFC) Hiroshima, Japan. The Agenda is packed with Peace Activities and Classes along with volleyball, baseball, ultimate Frisbee, repelling, drifting, wet and dry hiking and other bonding and group games. Additional highlights planned include a visit to a Panda Natural Reserve Park and [Xi’an](#), one of the six ancient Chinese capitals. The children that attend Peace Camp will be experiencing something that often past generations could not experience – the opportunity to learn from and become friends with others from different cultures and countries. Many of the activities will be taught in English by bi-lingual counselors and staff. In Japan, children and counselors from Nagasaki, Fuchu Church and the WFC family are invited to apply for the opportunity. Sponsors are encouraged and thanked for participating in this investment for future generations.



Peace Walk 2008



Peace Choir sings in Peace Park



Sora Sensei tells her story to a Hungarian family which now lives in Sweden.



Wednesday afternoon Class



NPO Planning Session



Volunteer: Chiyoko Ogura