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**Yu-Ai Friendship**

**The Newsletter of NPO World Friendship Center**

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**Unplug Nuclear Power, Now!**

JoAnn Sims



On March 11, 2012 people of Hiroshima including several people from World Friendship Center gathered at Peace Memorial Museum to hear a series of experts share their views on the nuclear disaster. We then moved to a gathering at the A-bomb dome. More people joined us, as we were approximately 500 strong by that time. We walked with Police escorts crossing streets and

following sidewalks to Hiroshima City Central Park. Several groups of people joined us. Young, old, middle aged and families with children met around a stage area to listen to a Hibakusha share his continuing health issues as a result of radiation exposure. A young father from Fukushima shared his story of first a narrow escape from the Tsunami and then the evacuation of his family from their home because of the radiation danger from continuing radiation leakage. Last we heard from a group activist who urged pressure from all present and across

Japan to show the government and the electric power company that in April when all the nuclear power plants in Japan would be down for maintenance or stress testing that this was the time for Japan to show that it can survive without Nuclear Power Plant energy. This will be a prime time to move Japan to a *phase out* status of nuclear power and a *phase in* status for renewable, safe, clean, and green energy.

The crowd of 750 had now grown to 3,000. The crowd listened holding flags and yellow cards saying, "No to Nuclear Energy." The last speaker led the assembled group in a time of silence for those who died in the earthquake, tsunami, and for those evacuated and exposed to radiation. Donations were collected to assist in the relocation and care of the families that survived. Our group then created a huge parade of 5-6 people across, carrying cards, banners, and flags. This time car traffic was reduced to one lane in the direction of our march. We walked in the street and police guided us across each intersection walking with us, keeping the cars from the marchers for the entire three-mile march through the downtown district of Hiroshima.

World Friendship Center (WFC) has worked for nuclear disarmament and world peace since 1965. This renewed interest in the dangers of nuclear radiation is compatible with the goals of WFC. World Peace and nuclear weapon disarmament may well come with a nuclear power free world! As Volunteer Directors of World Friendship Center in Hiroshima we were proud and honored to protest the continued use of electricity generation with nuclear power.

## One World, Peace Concert



**JoAnn Sims**

What began as a dream in Oregon, USA for Asaka Watanabe, WFC Choir Director, in the fall of 2009 became a wonderful reality on April 13, 2012. Mike Stern, a musician, songwriter,

and singer from Seattle, Washington joined many musicians, dancers, and singers in Hiroshima for a beautiful concert featuring Mike's original song, "One World."

The concert was held in the Catholic Memorial Cathedral for World Peace. The capacity of the sanctuary is 400. We had a full house with over 400 people in the audience! Part of the audience was Dave and Evie Bertche, former WFC Directors! As many left the concert they shared their feelings of appreciation for Mike Stern and World Friendship Center for bringing together musicians for Peace from both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Performers included Mike Stern, a dance prayer by Gospel Hula, traditional Japanese Koto and wooden flute musicians, a pianist, and several violins, violas, and bass players. The vocalists included three opera singers who joined Asaka for a couple of songs. The WFC Choir also sang one of Mike's recorded pieces as well as the magnificent "Spirit of Hiroshima." All songs were signed for the deaf. The blending of Mike's folk singing style with the other performers in the last number was beautiful. All the performers and the audience joined in together singing, "One World."

The months of organization, planning, finding a venue, rehearsing, preparing schedules, creating concert programs, and selling tickets resulted in a very successful One World, Peace Concert. Spreading the word of Peace continues at World Friendship Center! You may see a condensed concert on the WFC blog.

WFC blog : <http://wfcnews.blogspot.jp/>

YouTube:[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-tUiav\\_1m0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-tUiav_1m0)

## A Letter from Seattle

Before I visited Hiroshima in April, I felt that I knew much of the history of the atomic bomb and its destructive power. I had read books, seen pictures and documentary films. But the invitation by the

**Mike Stern**



World Friendship Center for me to actually come to Hiroshima to perform for a peace concert gave me a unique opportunity to experience something much more than factual information and two-dimensional images of history. Now the images in my mind are multi-dimensional. They are images of the A bomb dome with its broken edges & twisted steel, and the museum with artifacts of destruction - like the wristwatch frozen in time at 8:15 on August 6<sup>th</sup> in 1945. Now the new friendships that were forged by working and singing with Japanese musicians fill my mind and my heart, too. The stories I heard from Hibakusha have provided me with more knowledge than I could ever have learned through books or film. As soon as I returned to my home in the United States, I wanted to write a song for Hiroshima - to honor its people. Now that I have done so, I want this song to help people of all countries (and especially my own) not to forget the devastation caused by the atomic bomb, so that no country will ever use one again. The song has now been recorded in two different versions. One is with me singing in English, and the other is narrated in Japanese. For more information about obtaining the song for digital download, please visit my website at [www.mikesongs.net](http://www.mikesongs.net)

### ***As If the Flowers Knew***

As if the flowers knew  
A flower grows in Hiroshima  
But it's known by very few  
How its color changes at a certain time  
As if the flowers knew

From spring till early August  
It remains a solid blue  
But then its edges appear to be burned  
As if the flowers knew

It's funny how it happens  
So precisely but it's true  
Every August 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:15  
The blossom changes hue  
As if the flowers knew

I think flowers remember  
And there's something else they do  
They pass that memory on again  
If only we will, too  
If only we will, too

At 8:15 on August 6<sup>th</sup>  
In 1945  
Out of rubble a flower grew  
And still the flowers thrive  
Still the flowers thrive

A flower grows in Hiroshima  
But it's known by very few  
How its color changes at a certain time  
As if the flowers knew



## **Thoughts from a departing Chairperson**

### **Hiromu Morishita**



The late former chairman, Tomin Harada, asked me not to close World Friendship Center. Actually, during a long time in service, I had wanted to resign and hand over the post to the younger generation. However, there were many issues that had to be solved: financial and managerial problems, incorporating WFC as nonprofit organization, the 40-year celebration party, editing the WFC records, the unveiling ceremony of the Barbara Reynolds monument and so on.

The successor chairperson, Michiko Yamane, was selected, and I felt relieved to leave the position. Now I hand over more expectations of the new activities which will be done by the new chairperson and the Riji members. When I look back, memories of former directors, staff, Rijis and other members, who worked hard and cooperated together during my service of 27 years and for 47 years since the foundation of WFC, are going through my head. I'd like to write up these memories someday.

Expectations and thoughts for WFC from now are always in my mind. Now I'm over 80. Thinking of my family and getting involved in the activities concerning the A-bombing, peace, international interaction, calligraphy and education. I worked hard for 40 or 50 years. It is true that the huge stack of information and records has been piled up in my house. If I don't get all these materials sorted out, I can't undertake a process to prepare my memoirs, give advice or express a viewpoint. I consider the present time as the time to charge.

# New Leadership of World Friendship Center

JoAnn Sims

During the May 2012 Riji meeting a new Chairperson was selected. Michiko Yamane will now lead World Friendship Center (WFC) as its third Chairperson since it was established in 1965. Her selection follows Morishita-sensei who led WFC for 27 years. Morishita-sensei followed the first Chairperson, Dr. Harada, who led WFC for 20 years.



Michiko Yamane has been an active volunteer at WFC for thirty years. She is known for her positive attitude and cheerful smile. Her participation in all activities at WFC and her historical knowledge of WFC and Barbara Reynolds make her an ideal Chairperson. Michiko is recognized in Hiroshima for her Peace activities. At WFC her talents in translating, interpreting, guiding visitors through Peace Park, visiting Mutsumein a retirement home for Hibakusha are famous. She sings in WFC Peace Choir, and works on various community events such as the recent, *One World, Peace Concert*. Michiko has also traveled with WFC PAX groups abroad. Her multiple activities and experience make her superbly qualified to lead World Friendship Center into the next generation.

Michiko was recently interviewed by the Peace Media Center, a division of the Chugoku Shimbun newspaper, in Hiroshima. Michiko enthusiastically said, "I am taking on a great responsibility, but I would like to continue conveying Hiroshima's message to the world with the help of our staff. I would also like to strengthen our activities with young people."

## <Future Programs>

## **One-year Anniversary for Barbara Reynolds Monument**

### **Larry Sims**



On June 12, 2012, at the Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Park, WFC held the First Anniversary Celebration of the unveiling of the monument to Barbara Reynolds. Greetings were shared by WFC Directors, JoAnn and Larry Sims and newly appointed WFC Chairperson, Michiko Yamane. During the ceremony, more than 50 people heard about Barbara

Reynolds through video news clips and from a presentation by Morishita-sensei who personally knew Barbara. The WFC Peace choir and Haruki Tamura, an opera singer from Tokyo, sang at the monument. Following these activities, about 35 people gathered for lunch and shared personal stories about Barbara. At the luncheon, Morishita-sensei was presented with a framed picture commemorating his many years as the WFC Chairperson. It was also announced that he has been nominated for the Okinawa Peace Prize. Pictures from the Reynolds' family trip around the world on the "Phoenix of Hiroshima" were on display. A framed letter in Barbara's handwriting was also shared. It was a heartwarming celebration.

### **WFC mourns the passing of Mrs. Mieko Yamashita**

#### **Chizuko Taguchi**

In the morning on June 24 I was informed from Mrs. Yamashita's son that she has passed away, but I could not believe my ears. When I visited her house in early April, she welcomed me smiling. We spent time chatting for an hour before I hurriedly left. I was assured she was



okay for the time being.

At World Friendship Center (WFC), volunteer Directors from the U.S. rotate every two years. Because they engage in the goal of creating world peace, assisting them in fluent English conversation is essential. Over 31 years, Mrs. Yamashita has supported successive directors as a foremost, unrivaled interpreter utilizing her English talent. With her inherent precise judgment and a sense of justice, she also carried an important role as a bridge between curators who are unfamiliar in Japanese, catching their trouble and leading to solve the problems. Bearing in her mind the future direction of WFC, she also paid attention to help such as guests' breakfast, cleaning and washing. Pouring her heart and soul, she supported the backbone of WFC and fulfilled a significant contribution to its survival.

Two years ago in June, four friends including me begged her to teach us English grammar privately. During an unusually hot summer, she taught us English twice a month, each class preparing printed home work in her tight schedule. Her accurate, beautiful pronunciations and clear explanations with familiar examples were excellent. She seemed shining with enthusiasm and we were filled with appreciation. In autumn, we were dismayed to hear she was losing her physical condition. We had forced her overwork.

Always Mrs. Yamashita had a friendly smile and refreshing, dignified attitude. In addition, her husband would constantly help WFC in the background, and in these two years and seven months, he did the best to support his wife's struggle with illness. Her precious husband's quiet and tolerant Kyushu born man's figure is also burned into our mind. Thank you very much rendering us a great service for such a long time. We wish her soul may rest in peace from the bottom of our heart.

Here are some photographic images that Kent Sweitzer has chosen to share with you. [Remembering Mieko Yamashita](#) Double click on the link and then for Full Screen, click on ***Slideshow in the upper right corner.***