

Remembrance of War, Dedication to Peace

By Robert and Janet Nunn

In the spring of 2002, we spent six weeks in Japan. Our travels took us to a number of places where the gravest issues of war and peace were impressed on us:

- the memorial to the 1100 Special Attack Corps (Kamikaze) pilots who died in the attempt to defend Japan from the encroaching Allied forces;
- the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, telling the story of the Battle of Okinawa, March-June 1945, in which over 200,000 died, including some 120,000 Okinawan civilians.
- the Himeyuri Peace Museum, commemorating the high school girls who were forced by the Japanese military to serve as field nurses during the Battle of Okinawa, in unimaginable conditions and with great loss of life.

Most importantly we had the great privilege of meeting with a group of Atomic Bomb survivors and several of their supporters, in Fukuoka. We gave a brief slide presentation about the Peace Garden in St. Catharines, an initiative of Project Ploughshares Niagara, and its monument bearing the inscription "Benevolence / Hiroshima" donated by an A-bomb survivor in Hiroshima. After our presentation, survivors asked us penetrating questions about Project Ploughshares, Canada's position on nuclear disarmament, its relation to the US, and other matters. Then each in turn gave his or her testimony about what had happened to them on August 6 or 9, 1945. Here are two of them.

Mr. Hiroshi Ito, President of the Chikushi Association of A-Bomb Survivors.

On August 9, 1945, he was indoors, hunting for his shoes, so he lagged behind his friend as the pair of 14-year-old schoolboys headed outside to look skyward at the American B-29 bomber. So he was still inside when the atomic blast hit nearby Nagasaki. That slight delay saved him from the searing burns that took his

friend's life the next day. The friend, wearing shorts and shirt sleeves, was outside and unprotected in their neighbourhood one point four kilometres from the blast's epicentre. Mr. Ito required medical treatment for five months. Seventy per cent of his junior high school class died.

He has been active for many years in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons. He has said that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a crime by the Japanese government against the United States. But the dropping of the atomic bomb by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was, "a crime against humankind."

"The damage to humanity was terrible, We must demand the total prohibition of nuclear weapons. No more Hiroshimas, No more Nagasakis."

Mrs. Sachie Yoshizaki.

She looks younger than her 62 years. (She was wearing a bright scarlet dress, and had matching lipstick; very bold for a Japanese woman in her early sixties!) She said that people ask her if she's really an A-bomb survivor. She was 5 in August 1945. Her father has died of cancer. Her mother is in hospital with cancer.

Her sister has cancer. She looks fine but every day she worries about her health. She doesn't like hearing people say, "but you look fine." She will be a survivor until she dies. She wants to tell the next generation to abolish nuclear weapons.

We will never forget the absence of bitterness of the survivors; their zest for life; their passionate commitment to educating young people about the terrible realities of nuclear war and about the need to abolish nuclear weapons; their gratitude to groups of younger people who support them and are carrying on their work. Groups such as "Dream 21", the small group of peace activists who organized the meeting. Groups such as the Never Again Campaign, which sends volunteers

THEIR PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE TERRIBLE REALITIES OF NUCLEAR WAR AND ABOUT THE NEED TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

to North America to spread the message of the A-bomb survivors: “Never Again Pearl Harbour. Never Again Hiroshima. Never Again Nagasaki.”

Everywhere we went in Japan, but especially in Okinawa, we saw Peace Poles, on which the text “May Peace Prevail on Earth” is written in several languages. There was even one on the grounds of the elementary school on the six square-kilometre island of Taketomi. These poles are the work of the Peace Prayer Society, based in Japan, which erects Peace Poles in countries around the world.

All of these experiences left us with a profound sense of the devastation and futility of war, regardless whether it is fought with nuclear or conventional weapons. But they also left us with the hope shown by the many people we met who are dedicated to spreading the peace message in Japan and around the world. This double perspective, looking back in grief and forward in dedication, is crystallized for us in the message that is inscribed at the entrance to the “Cornerstone of Peace” in Okinawa, a memorial covering several acres, consisting of zigzag rows of polished black stone, which



record the names of all known victims of the Battle of Okinawa, without distinction between friend and foe, military and civilian:

*Whenever we reflect upon the realities of the
Battle of Okinawa
We think nothing is more brutal,
more degrading than war*

*In the face of these horrifying experiences,
No one could approve of,
much less glorify, war.*

*To be sure, it is human beings
that would start a war,
But what is more important is,
Is it not we, human beings,
who could endeavor to prevent it?*

*Since the battle ended,
we have detested all kinds of war,
Determined to build an island of peace.*

*This is our unwavering principle
That we have come to cherish,
In return for a price too high to pay.*

Robert and Janet Nunn are members of Pelham Executive Meeting.

“FAITH IN ACTION: QUAKER SOCIAL TESTIMONY”

BY JONATHAN DALE AND OTHERS

... we have to ponder whether John Punshon was right to question whether contemporary Quakerism is prepared for a spirituality based on a ‘transforming power.’ Easy words to say, less easy to actually live. Indeed has our Quaker faith become, as he puts it, a therapeutic confirmation that we are all right as we are, rather than a revolutionary agency to effect our transformation into a fuller inheritance of our nature as children of God? This is what he writes: “Thus, I detect a tendency for contemporary Quakerism to become a needs-centred movement with an essentially harmonising and reinforcing role in the lives of its members. Traditional Quakerism, on the other hand, performed a challenging and transforming role which had quite a different effect. Crucial to its challenge were its testimonies, then incapable of severance from its doctrine of God.

- Jonathan Dale (page 104)