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Yu - Ai **Friendship**

Newsletter of NPO World Friendship Center

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1-1. 2016 Korean PAX Report

Masao Itoh (A-bomb survivor, Hibakusha)

I didn't know much about PAX and I had never been involved in the World Friendship Center before, but Jim-sensei introduced me to Korean PAX, so I participated in Korean PAX from WFC. I express my heartfelt thanks to WFC and I also thank all Korean PAX sisters who traveled with me. Korea is a neighboring country. It is located very close to my country, but I felt that it was far from my mind. In the past, Japan gave South Korea a lot of pain for some decades. I had understood about Japan's aggression in my mind, but I was an old man who couldn't erase awful memories from my

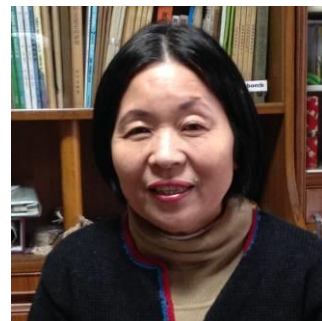


boyhood, such as Korean people's high-handed behavior just after WWII and the damages from the Syngman Rhee Line. I even had ill feeling about recent events between Japan and South Korea. But I had a great shock in Korea and I reflected deeply on my thoughts about Korea. That is because of meeting and having a relationship with '83-year-old Father.' He was born as a second generation Christian. He studied in Japan when he was young. He has a profound knowledge of the history of Christianity in Japan during the Meiji era. He has had extreme anger against Japan's invasion in his mind, but he didn't show his feelings. He is a man of vision. Some people have one million yen and some people have only ten thousand yen. All people bury their money in the ground and work with sweat and tears to have flowers blooming there. According to his feeling to practice love, the father decided to send his two sons to the U.S. to study at the Mennonite's Divinity University. They founded KOPI (literally meaning "Korean Peace Education Training Institute"). Last year, the head office was constructed. It has a community hall, a chapel, three officers' private rooms including three generations and single teachers' accommodations. The name of the new building is "Peace-Building." This is written on the wall of the community hall, "Doing Justice, Seeking Peace. Building Community Together." Though I visited Korea to talk about peace, I learned a lot from the people we met there. They are seeking to build friendly relations between Korea and Japan. I feel strongly that I am narrow minded and I reflect on my past conduct every day. Jae, Karen, Father, Yeoreum, and all, thank you for many wonderful memories! And, thank you very much, all WFC friends.

1-2. 2016 Korean PAX Report

Mieko Ozaki (WFC English Class student)

We met a lot of wonderful people this time. I really appreciate this trip to Korea. Thank you very much. I was surprised when we met many young people who are working on world peace there, while most of us are not so young. At the same time, I was very happy and excited. I think that in Japan, old people are more concerned about world peace than younger people, probably because younger people are busier with their work than the elders. I think that each of us, whether young or old, should think about his or her situation because everybody



has a right to be happy. We visited "Gyodong," a small desolate island. At the entrance, we saw two soldiers with guns. Probably they asked our destination and purpose. I thought oh, we were close to North Korea. We also heard the rumble of artillery. There were a lot of fields with stubbles of rice there. We saw some small round-shaped graves at the foot of the hills. I thought about the strong historical connections between Japan and Korea. There was an enormous contrast between "Gyodong" and Seoul, which has lot of modern buildings. The people of this island originally came from North Korea. Their homeland in North Korea was seen across the narrow sea; they could swim back there. When this peninsula was divided into north and south 65 years ago, around 30,000 people fled to this island hoping to return soon. Those people died year after year, dreaming of their homeland. Now the number of those people has diminished to 3,000. We saw a monument called "Longing for Homeland" on top of the hill. There an old man from North Korea talked to us about his sad story. His relatives died one after another since they came here. All of his deceased family died leaving their words, "Please take my bones back to my motherland." Because this place around here is very close to the borderline, we rarely saw people, cars and houses. There were barbwire fences along the coastline. And two coast guardsmen were walking with their dog. Several white birds were flying over there freely. We visited a small downtown hub and saw some old tiny stores there. Three old men with suntanned faces were smiling at us. There was a nursery school brightly painted, from which we heard children's vibrant voices. We saw a lot of swallow's nests under eaves of those tiny houses. "We envy those swallows. Swallows surely fly home to lay eggs. But we cannot," said a woman of around 50. She taught us the sad history of "Gyodong." She is a courageous campaigner for one Korea. She has a dream of making this small island a peace-bridge between the north and south. We met some old Korean women at a nursing home called "Nanumu." They were raped by Japanese soldiers 40 or 50 times in one night. I felt very, very sorry for them because their lives were damaged. Life is only once. I could not find any words to console them. I think they would like to fall in love with decent men. I think they would like to have happy families. They are called "sexual slaves" in Korea, not "comfort women." They are also victims of war. War always victimizes the weak. War always produces sorrow and destruction. Whenever we came back after finishing our schedule, people of the community met us with big smiles and warm dinners. We enjoyed not only dinner time but breakfast time as well. The food was very good and the conversation at the table

was very meaningful. I'll never forget the wonderful 6 days in Korea and I'm very grateful to all the people we met there.

1-3. 2016 Korean PAX Report

Nanako Yamaashi (Hiroshima Shudo University)



I attended Korean PAX to build a peace bridge between Japan and Korea. I felt that I have grown from the three main things I learned from Korean PAX. First of all, there was an incident when I visited the House Sharing – Nanumu – on the second day. I couldn't quite step directly in front of the comfort women because I was wondering how I would meet them in light of their history of sexual abuse. I had mixed feelings if I should meet them as a Japanese person or as a woman. Yi Okseon, one of the victims, said: "I want to prevent women in the world getting involved in such damage by sexual abuse, so that I am continuing to tell the story." When I heard her voice, I thought that I should tell it to the next generation and I could reach out to her just before leaving there. So, I said to her, "Yes, I will! I will tell my friends at the University when I go back to Japan." Then she grabbed my hand very hard and said, "Please come again, thank you," and looked me straight in the eye. She took me in her room grabbing my hand and showed me her many photos. She experienced cruel treatment in the past and had much sadness in her heart. However, her hand was very warm and her smile was wonderful. Secondly, it was the third day and we were in RJA (Restorative Justice Academy) where I did origami and spoke in Korean with several children - we became so familiar each other! I got very happy responses from them - "Let's have a seat together, Nanako-chan!" "When do you go back? Don't go back, Nanako-chan!" "Nanako-chan, please come to our church this Sunday." "I love you so much!!!" etc. Lastly, a girl came close to me and said, "I didn't like Japanese at first, but now I have come to like Japanese very much after I met you." I was so impressed by her words. It was the first chance for her to meet a Japanese person. Though I am but one person, I could change her image toward Japanese. It was a moment I felt that I could build a bridge for the next generation between Japan and Korea. I promised them to meet again before leaving. I sincerely hope that Japan and Korea will form a good relationship when I meet them again. Finally, the last strong impression was about the members of

the Peace Building. They were really heartwarming and felt like a large family. I stayed in the house of a newly married couple in their 20's: Donguk and Hyeseon. I talked with them about a variety of topics such as Hiroshima and private matters every night. It was a joyful and relaxing time for me. They got up earlier than I and prepared breakfast together. I hoped to someday be in a relationship like them. The place where we stayed was really a wonderful open space. We planned to keep in touch with them after coming back to Japan. They e-mailed me, "We want to meet you. Please contact us whenever you come to Korea. Come and stay here again. We want to visit Hiroshima, too!" Also, I became a good friend with Yeoreum, who took care of us as a translator, because we were about the same age. I talked with her in her room. She has never been to Hiroshima and said, "I will go to Hiroshima at the next opportunity. Then I will get in touch with Nanako." I am so happy to hear such words: they want to come to Hiroshima and see me. It was the best thing to be the person who made them interested in Hiroshima and want to visit Hiroshima. I want them to visit Hiroshima in the future, see it in person, and feel with their heart what Hiroshima is. As a result, I found the word, "Link," through Korean PAX. I visited many places and met many people in Korea. I think we can make peace if we link these connections. I believe that we can find something new if we meet and talk directly with people and step up to meet each other. I want to link people using the slogan "link" from now on. It is not only a relationship between Japan and Korea, but also people in Australia where I am going to soon. I strongly want to tell all over the world what Japan is, what Japanese people are like, and what Hiroshima is like based on the experiences of Korean PAX. I am deeply appreciative of the WFC staff of Korean PAX and this chance for members of our group. I got such a precious experience by meeting all of you. I want to treat this bond as an important matter. Thank you.

2. Hosting Large Groups at WFC

Maggie Phoenix (WFC Director)

WFC saw a lot of large groups from March to May 2016. These large groups bring interesting perspectives from different countries and make the Center a lively place for the few days of their stay.

Beginning on March 1st, we had a friendly group of 18 high school students from the province of Quebec, Canada stay for 3 nights. Each morning, 4 of the students helped us to prepare breakfast.

On March 11th, we had 5 students and 2 adults from Northcoast Preparatory and Performing Arts Academy in California come to stay 3 nights with us. Besides a Hibakusha story and Peace Park tour, the group attended a special program at Honkawa Elementary School. Fujii-san helped design the program which included an exchange with 7 high school students from Chugoku Shinbun's Junior Writers program. The American students also participated in a tea ceremony, presented a play of their own on women's rights, and toured the Honkawa Peace Museum.

On April 6th, we had a group of 5 filmmakers from Australia stay for 12 nights. They were filming a documentary involving nuclear victims. Another group of 8 people from Australia, who arrived on April 20th, included 5 aborigines. They were here for only 2 nights but they were able to join us for the program at Mutsumien Nursing Home. A group of 10 people comprised of 2 families with 3 children each stayed with us for 3 nights starting on April 10th. One family came from Seattle and one family is currently stationed at Yokota Air Base. One of the families was lucky enough to meet U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry at Hiroshima Castle, exchanging a few words and handshakes.

On May 18th, 14 students and 2 professors from the University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies visited for 3 nights. Several of these students are studying the Japanese language, so they had a chance to try out their Japanese phrases.

Then on May 25th, a group of 10 arrived from Hikone, Japan. They were with the Japan Center for Michigan Universities. Initially they were going to stay 2 nights, but they cut their visit short to only 1 night as they were worried about the impact of President Obama's visit on May 27th to Hiroshima.

Outside visitors, usually in groups, have begun more and more to request our Hibakusha talks and Peace Park tours. Because the outside groups do not stay overnight at WFC, they make a contribution to WFC. We had 3 people in March and 13 people in April request these services. In May, we had a group of 16 from Butler University and in June, we will have a group of 21 from Envoys, a company that specializes in global education programs.



University of Michigan May 19, 2016



Butler University, Indianapolis May 31, 2016

3-1. WFC New Riji Mikiko Shimizu

What an honor to get a recommendation to become a board member of WFC! I had never imagined such an opportunity at all because I have been in WFC for only 3 years as a student in English class. I had no time to think it over, but I accepted it thinking I could do something to help the organization. I am still learning more about WFC now.



Just three and a half years ago, I came back to Japan from the States, where I had lived for six and a half years as my husband was on business there. I was seeking something to keep up my English. I met two directors then, Larry and JoAnne, at my first meeting of HIP, and I was fortunate enough to attend by chance an English class at WFC. Unfortunately, the first observation class was their last class, but I was asked to attend their farewell party. I met many people who loved and respected them. I was so impressed by their wonderful personalities, and it was the first event I attended at WFC.

At the party, I met very kind members of the Tuesday English Class who had very good rapport with one another, and they took care of me very well as I didn't know anything about WFC. Then I started to take the English class from the next directors, Richard and Xinia. This resulted in hosting Barbara's granddaughter (Lisa) and her family on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of WFC last year. Thanks to their warm and friendly assistance, we had a special opportunity to take Lisa's family around the area, including shopping, having dinner at a Sukiyaki restaurant, and visiting Miyajima with Barbara's extended American family who had also traveled to Hiroshima.

Last fall, I changed my English class to Thursday with the recent director, Maggie, due to my schedule. I attended and led Korean PAX with three members of this class and another four members this past March. Though I experienced the harsh reality of Korean and Japanese history, I was touched by their kind and gracious welcoming host and I was able to share a vision of world peace with them. I really started to keep up with English at first, however, I knew there are many things I have to learn about promoting peace, as I am from Hiroshima. I don't know the exact abilities right now that I can devote to the WFC team, but I will make every effort to work together. Thank you all for this wonderful opportunity.

3-2. Yukari Takasugi

I am Yukari Takasugi, I'm coming aboard as a new member of the WFC's board.

It is nice to meet you. I was born and raised in Hiroshima. I have been attending Saturday English class at WFC, and I also participated in some events. Although I am not used to the board's jobs, I'd love to be helpful.

"Seventy-one years ago, on a bright cloudless morning, death fell from the sky and world was changed." As you know, this is the opening part of President Obama's speech in Hiroshima on May 27.



After death fell from the sky, the surviving people of Hiroshima stood up to start rebuilding. The A-bomb dome would have reminded them of those days.

Nevertheless, they tried to preserve the A-bomb dome as a symbol of "No More Hiroshimas." And the A-bomb dome was registered on the World Heritage List in 1996.

I respect the A-bomb survivors who have overcome their hardships and live on strongly. In order not to forget the tragedies of the Atomic Bomb and War, some of them are testifying to their experiences. If you ask me, that's the greatest achievement of the century. I know that the testifying survivors take great pains to tell us their many bitter experiences. We must not forget the horrors of war. For a peaceful world free of war, let's make the light of peace that was ignited by Barbara Reynolds reflective and bright.

4. Our Experience as Members of the American Committee **Richard and Xinia Tobias (Former directors 2013-2015)**

I join Richard when he quotes a song "I left my heart in San Francisco..." both of us could truly say we left (part) of our hearts in Hiroshima. Our two years as co-directors of the World Friendship Center have influenced our lives beyond our expectations.

We count it a privilege to have volunteered for 2 years at the World Friendship Center as co-directors. It was the busiest we have been in our lives (We know most of the former directors agree with us). However, we knew we wanted to serve beyond ourselves and that sacrifices needed to be made, as Richard said it many times and I quote, "We came to serve" and "We are here to do what is good for the Center."



When we returned to the USA as former directors of the WFC, we became members of the American Committee. This committee is formed by 12 to 14 active members. However, not all of them are former directors of the WFC. The meetings are held in North Manchester, Indiana, and those who attend live in Indiana and Ohio. Other former directors live in Oregon, Arizona, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

We have a secretary, Dwight Berry, and a treasurer, Dennis Horn, who volunteer their time as members of the committee although neither are former directors. In the April meeting, our chair-person Evie Bertsche resigned her position and was replaced by Xinia Tobias. We meet when the need arises, and the dates change depending on the availability of the members. Since we returned in August of 2015, the committee has met on two occasions, September 2015 and April 2016. Our next meeting will be on August 6th.

In the September meeting, we gave an account of our experience at the World Friendship Center. We also talked about fundraising efforts and the new directors for 2017. We have, what appears to be, two very good Christian couples as prospective directors. The desire of the American Committee is to continue supporting the World Friendship Center in prayer, financially, sending PAX teams to Japan and especially supporting the WFC and its endeavor to spread the message of peace and a world without nuclear weapons.

5. The Middle East Oleander Initiative

Michiko Yamane (WFC Riji Chairperson)

This Middle East Oleander Initiative has gradually taken shape since it was briefly introduced in the last Yu-Ai newsletter. Twelve high school teachers and one staff member, 13 in all, will stay at the WFC from August 3rd to the 9th. The teachers are from Algeria, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Morocco (2), Tunisia, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and the USA, 11 countries in all. During their 7-day stay in Hiroshima, they are going to experience a visit to the Peace Memorial Museum, hibakusha accounts, and a guided tour of the Peace Park. There will also be lectures by Professor Bo Jacobs of Hiroshima City University and Sensei Ron Klein, one of our board members. The group will also join the World Conference Against A & H Bombs, visit the Atomic Bomb Hospital, take part in the Peace Memorial Ceremony and Lantern Floating Ceremony, and have a chance to exchange ideas with Jogakuin High School students.

The aim of this week-long project is to help the teachers realize the cruelty and inhumanity of nuclear weapons so that, when they are back home, they will tell their students that human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist. We are glad the WFC can play a part in this significant project. If this project is successful, it may be repeated every year.



*Back row: Earle and Barbara Reynolds
Front row: Ray's mother, Yoshino, and Jessica Reynolds*

The project executive director, Ray Matsumiya, is a Japanese-American living in Boston. Another Bostonian, Mary Popeo, who was once an intern at the WFC, introduced the WFC to Mr. Matsumiya. As a child, Ray's mother lived in Kure, near Barbara and her family. Barbara wrote a novel, "Emily San", describing how Barbara helped Jessica and other American children living in Rainbow Village to learn language and culture together with Japanese children. Ray's mother was among the Japanese children. She got interested in English while playing with Jessica, and eventually went to America to study, got married there and Ray was born. These coincidences are miraculous, and I am again amazed at Barbara's ability to connect people. I hope we will all work together to make this Middle East Oleander Initiative a success.

6-1. Interns from Hiroshima Shudo University Narumi Hosoda

I'm Narumi Hosoda. I'm a 3rd year student and I major in English literature and language.

I'm studying English because I want to be able to communicate with people from other countries. I also study English for my future career. I'm interested in World Englishes, such as British English, Australian English, etc. I live as an assistant in the university's dormitory for overseas students with 30 exchange students. I have been to England and Australia so far. I like playing sports and reading books.



The reason why I chose the WFC is because I'm interested in learning about peace. I participated in Peace Memorial Park volunteer guide activity in English when I was a 1st and 2nd year student. After I graduate from university, I want to tell foreigners about Hiroshima. Also, I like talking with people from other countries. I usually talk with exchange students in Japanese but I want to use English more. So I'm really glad to join the internship at WFC!!

6-2. Interns from Hiroshima Shudo University

Taiga Nishimura

My name is Taiga Nishimura. I was born and raised in Hiroshima city. I'm a sophomore of the English Department in Shudo University. I mainly studied American literature, history and linguistics in my classes in the first year. I haven't studied abroad yet, so I'm thinking of doing that next year. I want to be an English teacher in the future, so I will need to have a good command of English.

I belong to ICL (International Communication Link) which is the university's club and organization with AFS (American Field Service), a kind of student volunteer group. In ICL, I help with some international events which Shudo students and exchange students can join. In AFS, I support high school exchange students who come to Japan through this organization's program. In this volunteer activity, I also teach peace to the students every summer but this is in Japanese because they learn Japanese.

There are two reasons why I applied to be an intern at the World Friendship Center. First, I'd like to have a knowledge of peace. Actually, while I was born in Hiroshima, I feel my knowledge of peace in Hiroshima is not enough. It's a shameful thing not to know my hometown's history. I have learned about that in AFS but I want to know more to educate myself and the exchange students who I'll tell about peace.

Next, I'd like to use English because I only have a few classes in which I'm able to speak English. I thought if I join the internship at the WFC, not only can I join English lessons, but also communicate with foreign guests. And I like to get along with people, so this should be a good chance for me.



7-1. Robert Ramseyer's Obituary

Shizuo Tachibana (WFC Riji Vice Chair)



Robert Lewis Ramseyer, 86, a former board member of World Friendship Center with Alice Ruth Ramseyer, passed away on April 30, 2016 at the Mennonite Memorial Home in Bluffton, Ohio. He was born May 9, 1929 in Bloomington, IL. His grandfather was a Mennonite who emigrated from Europe to the U.S. for religious freedom. Mennonites refuse to engage in war and the Mennonite Church is called a historical peace church as are the Church of the Brethren and the Quakers in the U.S.

Robert graduated from Bluffton High School in 1946 and Bluffton College (now University) in 1950. He got married to Alice Ruth Pannabecker in 1951. Robert Ramseyer earned an M.A. from the University of Michigan in Japanese Studies in 1959 and a Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1969.

Robert Ramseyer, with his wife, Alice Ruth, came to Japan in 1954 as missionaries sent by the U.S. Mennonite Church. They served in Miyazaki Prefecture and Hiroshima for three decades. Robert Ramseyer was a professor emeritus of Missions and Anthropology at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminar, Indiana, where he taught between 1972 and 1996.

Robert and Alice Ruth Ramseyer learned about the World Friendship Center from a Mennonite, Eva Harshbarger, who had been director of WFC. The Ramseyers stayed at the WFC while looking for an apartment in 1978. In 1980, they founded a Mennonite Church in Hiroshima. From 1982 to 1987 they were in the U.S. In 1987 they returned to Hiroshima and stayed there until retirement in 1995. During their time in Hiroshima, they served as board members of the WFC.

Robert Ramseyer had a good command of the Japanese language and translated Japanese books into English, such as "Hiroshima Peace Reader," published by Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, and "Moments of Peace" and "Hiroshima Surgeon," both written by Dr. Tomin Harada, then Chair of the World Friendship Center.

Robert and Alice Ruth Ramseyer also served on the American Committee and advised Evie and David Bertsche to come to Hiroshima as directors of the WFC. They retired to Bluffton in 1997, where they joined the First Mennonite Church. They welcomed PAX members and friends from Japan and took them to The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center in Bluffton University.

7-2. Memories of Robert Ramseyer

Kaori Kurumaji (WFC Riji Vice Chair)

Robert (Bob) Ramseyer passed away on April 30 this year. It has been over 37 years since I first met Mr. and Mrs. Ramseyer. I heard that they used to live in the Takachiho region of Miyazaki Prefecture for many years before they came to Hiroshima in 1978 as missionaries of the Mennonite Church. In the beginning, they stayed at the WFC for several weeks until they found an apartment house in Hiroshima. The WFC was located in Midori-machi near the Prefectural Hospital at that time and I used to work for the WFC as a live-in staff for 2 years from 1978 to 1980. I got the impression that they were very close to each other. After a while, both of them became board members of the WFC and worked hard for us. Especially, it deserves recognition that they translated Dr. Harada's books into English. Both Bob and Alice were adored by many people since they were persons of character. Bob had a calm manner and an intelligent air, but he showed us a mischievous look sometimes. Alice was very modest and a woman with grace. I remember I once invited them to our home in Saka-cho and we had a great time together. They invited us to their home for dinner in Funairi-cho when my son was very small, around 4 or 5 years old. I also visited them at their home in Ohio as a PAX member in 1982. Alice cooked very delicious Japanese food for us. We PAX members were so moved by their warm hospitality. As far as Bob and Alice are concerned, I only have nostalgic and happy memories. Please let me pray for the soul of the deceased. I also hope for a lot of blessings on Alice.



*(L) Kaori Kurumaji, Robert Ramseyer,
Kaori's son, Kotaro Kurumaji
Alice Ramseyer*

8-1. To the memory of Sora sensei

Michiko Yamane (WFC Riji Chair person)

Our beloved Sora sensei passed away on March 10 at the age of 87. Fumiko Sora was a junior high school English teacher and because she had actually experienced the A-bomb, she was extraordinarily enthusiastic about peace education. She was exposed to the effect of the A-bomb at an aircraft factory in Yoshijima, 2.7 km from the hypocenter. She lost the sight of one eye, and had to wear a glass eye for the rest of her life. She chose a teaching career as she wanted to make a living on her own. In her classes, she persevered in telling her students about the cruelty and inhumanity of the A-bomb and the absurdity of war.

She frequently told her A-bomb experiences to WFC guests from overseas. I often helped her as an interpreter. I shared a lot of WFC activities with Sora sensei. She actively took part in English classes, translation classes, Mutsumien visits, Peace Choir, and so on. Thanks to her, we had a lot of chances to translate her peace education materials and to learn the aggressive side of Japanese history. Her translated teaching resources were used at junior high schools. One of them, "Tami-chan's Long Night," was used in Korean PAX, showing that there are some teachers in Hiroshima who teach not only the victim's side but also the aggressive side of Japan. Jim sensei also used this material for Chinese, Korean and Japanese participants in the Youth Peace Camp. Sora sensei and I went together to America in 1996 and to Germany and Poland in 1999 as PAX.

She got married to Tatsuo Sora after they both attended the international peace seminar held by Barbara at Wilmington College under the title of "Wilmington Conference 30 Years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki" in August 1975. Both of them dedicated their lives to peace education. Forty years have passed since Sora sensei became involved with the WFC.

She grew vegetables in her home town of Kumano, and often brought her organic vegetables to the WFC and to my house as well. Her earnest, untiring life-style is my ideal. We will never forget her gentle smile.



1996 American PAX

(L) Jessica Reynolds Renshaw, Fumiko Sora, Yoshio Sekiguchi, Earle Reynolds, Michiko Yamane



1999 German PAX

Back row: Emiko Okada, Mieko Yamashita
Front row: Michiko Yamane, Fumiko Sora

8-2. Mrs. Fumiko Sora lived for “Peace Seminar”

Chizuko Taguchi (WFC Riji)

Proposed by Mrs. Fumiko Sora, Peace Seminar was launched in 1994. The first lecturer was her husband Mr. Tatsuo Sora, who had published his book “The Assailant Base Ujina—Hiroshima Study” in that year. At the time, I joined the seminar without any knowledge about the history of Hiroshima, which was full of indescribable events, starting from the construction of Ujina Bay, Meiji government’s policy taking great account of Hiroshima, Ujina bay that became the front door to the Sino-Japanese War, the holding of the Meiji government’s assembly in Hiroshima, to the expansion and development of Hiroshima as a military-based city. Learning through the course from Japan’s schemes trying to extend its territory in Asia to the atomic bombing on Hiroshima, I severely felt Mr. and Mrs. Sora’s deep feelings toward Hiroshima.

Mrs. Sora was exposed to the atomic bomb at the age of 15, and lost her eyesight in her left eye. She went through a great deal of hardships with an unyielding spirit - from her experience growing up receiving education on “Japanese world domination” to eventually incurring a great handicap during student mobilization. As a junior high school teacher, she devoted herself to bringing up human beings who have exact knowledge and can decide things correctly. Specifically in peace education, with Mr. Tatsuo Sora, she practiced research at home and abroad. After retirement, she volunteered to give testimonies about her atomic bomb

experience. She continued to proclaim the cruelty of nuclear arms and to appeal for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Supporting World Friendship Center and the directors, she dedicated her life to activities that lay the foundation for peace.

Brimming with a sense of justice, Mrs. Sora led Peace Seminar for more than 20 years, always responding to problems that threaten our society and picking them up as themes for the seminars, preparing information and inviting experts in the field.

We have discussed various issues such as the impact of the Chernobyl accident, an objection to the construction of the Kaminoseki nuclear power plant, keeping Japanese Constitution Article 9, which bans the right of collective self-defense, a society for the study of Japan-Korea peace education, problems of Shimane nuclear power plant, use of renewable energy such as small scale hydroelectric power stations, Fukushima nuclear power plant accident and others. Each time, Mrs. Sora taught us the importance of having a global mind and of creating future visions through reflecting upon the past.

On the other hand, Mrs. Sora loved traveling, keeping a youthful frame of mind. When I accompanied her on a trip to Germany in 2007, carrying two suitcases, she walked at a smart pace, saying, "After all I need is a dress and high heels for the concert." With a surprising appetite, she tirelessly searched to get what she wanted. She was a pleasant woman indeed.

I was informed that suddenly she fell ill and was hospitalized at Ichinose Neurosurgery. Even though I still had a lot of things to learn from her, sadly she passed away. My sincere condolences for the soul of Mrs. Sora.

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