



Hope in the new year

The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda rises toward the sky in East Tennessee



INSIDE: A YEAR FOR HOPE

- The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda
- Stopping the UPF bomb plant
- The Vienna Conference
- A Year for Hope
- Pope Francis

*T*HIS HOPE IS NOT AN ASPIRATION, something to hold onto in hard times, a goal to strive for, or a belief that things have to get better because they can't get worse.

This is real-world hope, forged in collaborative efforts to create the world we want to live in.

Building Peace in the Great Smoky Mountains

THE ROAD UP the mountain narrows as you ascend, then there is no more asphalt, only dirt and gravel, finally becoming so steep it requires 4-wheel drive. Like most of the hundreds of people who have traveled that road to join a work party at the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, I thought I was on my way to build a shrine to the Buddha and the way of peace. I had heard Utsumi-shonin and Denise Anjin-san talk about the Peace Pagoda as an answer to Oak Ridge—standing as a public witness to life one hundred miles east of the Y12 death factory that manufactures nuclear weapons, that produced the highly enriched uranium that destroyed Hiroshima, Japan and continues to build thermo-nuclear bomb cores today.

I had seen Peace Pagodas in Japan, so I had a mental image of the dome rising high above the earth, and somewhere in the back of my mind that image remained the goal even when the work was twisting rebar ties, hundreds and hundreds of ties. The work was good, hard, demanding, and tired muscles the next day brought twinges of pain but even deeper feelings of satisfaction. We were building a Peace Pagoda!—how many people can say that?

It was only as the work went on that we came to see the sometime-in-the-future Peace Pagoda was not the only thing, maybe not even the main thing we were building. Gathered together to sweat, to laugh, to eat, to drum and chant and sit in the hot tub at the end of the day, we were building a community.

Denise says, “The building is a kind of tool. In the work, in the coming together, we discover ourselves, and transform ourselves. We find that we are building relationships internally, within ourselves, and also externally, with the people we are working with.”

This particular Peace Pagoda in Cosby, Tennessee, began with a vision that Utsumi describes as “almost like electricity in my body,” a vision that came over him one evening soon after he was ordained into the Buddhist order Nipponzan Myohoji. It left him with a compelling sense of urgency to do something; drumming and chanting, the



spiritual lifeblood of the order that has walked millions of miles in all corners of the globe for peace, was important, but maybe not enough.

Listening to him talk I was reminded of the song I heard in Nicaragua in the 1980's, *No Basta Rezar*—prayer is not enough, sang the activists. Necessary and important, yes, but, not enough.

In a journey that began in Japan, continued for years of ministry in India, and eventually brought him to Atlanta and then Oak Ridge, Utsumi explains the large concrete pagoda under construction stands sentinel against the nuclear weapons production activities. “The bombs they build there will last a hundred years,” he notes. “The teachings of the Buddha have lived for thousands of years. Our pagoda will outlast the bombs.”

Utsumi sees the Peace Pagoda as a witness, confronting not just Oak Ridge and recalling Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but recalling the more recent Fukushima disaster as well. “It is a shrine to the Buddha’s self and the Buddha’s tomb,” he says, “But it also guides us to the future,” he says like someone whose spiritual practice includes walking for peace: “This work, like the Buddha’s teaching, is ongoing.”

A. J. MUSTE’S CREED became a popular quote: “There is no way to peace, peace is the way.” The truth he captured lives in the building of the peace pagoda. The peace we seek, we find in the working together, the rhythms of repetition, the common exertion. Perched on the scaffolding, holding the form with one hand, you turn to look for a clamp and Larry, anticipating, is holding it out for you.

“It’s not traditional teaching,” Denise says. “But in the work, our assumptions get cracked open. It’s spiritual work, and the work is deep. People have come who, at first, are unfamiliar with this kind of work, maybe uncomfortable. But little by little you realize your limitations maybe are not as constraining as you thought.”

Utsumi cites the movie “Brother Sun, Sister Moon,” and a scene in which a lame man helps to plumb a line. “Everyone can offer



something. Even people who think maybe they cannot; there is something they can do.”

There are more than eighty Peace Pagodas built by Nipponzan Myohoji around the world. Twenty outside of Japan. Some are maintained by the monks and nuns, others have been turned over to local governments. Each one is different. “Each one is an expression of the community that created it, each one has its own character,” says Denise. We joke about the East Tennessee effort, comparing it to the Catholic Worker movement that has compelled small groups around the world to come together to commit themselves to works of mercy, living simply in service to others. The Peace Pagoda site in Cosby may be the first Buddhist Worker house.

“The character of this effort,” Denise says more seriously, “is the community that it is drawing together. It truly is a community effort. People come, sometimes people surprise us, showing up to help. And the work parties, twice a year, bring new people and old people.

“The work is a spiritual expression, a spiritual experience,” she says. “We grow, we give people space to grow. Some parts are more challenging than other parts”—she may be remembering that first concrete pour, when we finished just before 11:00pm, working the last four hours in darkness—“but those are the times that are more rich. It’s the nature of the spiritual path to be dynamic, changing.”

THIS PARTICULAR PAGODA, in this location, “manifested itself from a peace walk from Atlanta to Oak Ridge,” says Denise. During peace walks, conversations with hosts along the way raise all kinds of thoughts and ideas, and during one of them, the seed was planted that is growing now.

If you visit the work in progress, and you should, you will find more than a concrete structure rising from the top of the mountain. There is a temple for daily prayer, flower festivals, fabulous feasts and ancestor’s ceremonies. There are several guest spaces—a dormitory, some private rooms, the tiny Teramori House and the larger Forest House. There is a Spirit Garden tucked into the woods where the ashes of loved ones rest quietly together in nature. There are gardens terraced up the side of the hill and a long, lovely deck outside the temple where, at the end of a

tiring work day, you can sit in a rocking chair looking out across the ridges of the Great Smoky Mountains, watching as the earth turns away from the sun and the light turns brilliant orange, then fades to glitter only in reflection off planets and stars.

The Pagoda we are building will outlive us all, as will the community. Asked about the future, when we are no longer here, Denise says, “Now, committed people are coming, people who are already part of the work and the vision of peace. Once it is built, and people see it driving along Interstate 40, other people will come.”

That is the investment we are making in the future.

“This pagoda is not just a concrete structure that holds relics of the Buddha; it holds the spiritual energy of all those who come to be part of the community that is building,” says Denise. “A good practice will continue.”



photos by Jim Toren, Ralph Hutchison and Judith Mohling

be a significant departure from that official decision.

NNSA is required to look at its 2011 EIS and determine if it is still sufficient. OREPA and the Alliance of Nuclear Accountability wrote letters to Energy Department officials in July pointing this out. We got no reply.

When NNSA does its analysis, it will have to face some unpleasant facts—the earthquake analysis they used in 2011 has been rendered obsolete by the latest earthquake hazard maps published by the US Geological Survey in August 2014. The new maps increase the hazard risk in East Tennessee significantly.

NNSA will also have to rework the section of its old EIS that dealt with the possibility of unexpected surprises. In the old EIS, OREPA had pointed out that any major construction project at Y12 could be expected to turn up legacy waste which, back in the day, was often dumped in a convenient place, with few records kept. In 2011, NNSA responded by saying they would implement an advanced sampling

program and address any problems appropriately. But in February of this year, the crew working to build a haul road for the UPF came across a field of radioactive debris fourteen feet below the surface. We have filed a Freedom of Information Act request (last March) for details on the nature and extent of the contamination, as well as the results of the pre-disturbance sampling program they had promised to do. No answer to that, either, except for “We’ll get back to you.”

When the new EIS happens, construction plans will have to be put on hold. The farther NNSA pushes without an EIS, the stronger our case when we ask a judge for an injunction to stop spending money on a project that has not met its legal requirements. NNSA will have to hold public hearings, which is another chance for us to speak truth to power and lay out an alternative agenda for Oak Ridge.

The UPF Accountability Project

One further sign of hope. In November, OREPA announced the creation of

the UPF Accountability Project, an effort to collect information from the various agencies who have responsibility for the UPF bomb plant, combine it with our own research, NNSA statements and media reports, and present it in UPDATES that are used to educate the public, decision-makers and others who are committed to accountability in government.

The UPF Accountability Project has already published two UPDATES (you can find them on OREPA’s web site: www.orepa.org) laying out the budget shenanigans and calling attention to the runaway train.

We envision the UPF Accountability Project as a collaboration with allies who are already interested in the UPF; some want to stop the bomb plant because they understand it to contradict US commitments to a world free of nuclear weapons and our promise in the Nonproliferation Treaty to disarm. Others just don’t like wasting taxpayer dollars on a mis-managed project which will not have a mission if it is built.

A report on civil society and governmental gatherings in Vienna, Austria

Time to Ban the Bomb

by Alice Slater

Global Momentum is building for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. While the world has banned chemical and biological weapons, there is no explicit legal prohibition of nuclear weapons, although the International Court of Justice ruled unanimously in 1996 that there is an obligation on the part of nuclear weapons states to bring to a conclusion negotiations for their total elimination.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), negotiated in 1969, required the five existing nuclear weapons states—the US, Russia, UK, France and China—to make “good faith efforts” to eliminate their nuclear weapons “at an early date,” while the rest of the world promised not to acquire them (except for India, Pakistan and Israel, who never signed the NPT). North Korea relied on the NPT Faustian bargain for “peaceful” nuclear power to build its own bomb, and then withdrew from the treaty.

In December, more than 600 members of civil society from every corner of the globe, with more than half of them under the age of 35, attended a fact-filled two day conference in Vienna organized by

the International Coalition to Ban Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), to learn of the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons from the bomb and from testing as well, and of the frightening risks from possible accidents or sabotage of the nine nuclear arsenals around the world.

The meeting was a follow up to two prior meetings in Oslo, Norway and Nayarit, Mexico. ICAN members, working for a treaty to ban the bomb, then joined a meeting hosted by Austria for 158 governments in the historic Hofburg Palace, the residence of Austrian leaders since before the founding of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

In Vienna, the US delegate delivered a tone-deaf statement on the heels of heart-wrenching testimony of catastrophic illness and death in her community from Michelle Thomas, a down winder from Utah, and other devastating testimony of the effects of nuclear bomb testing from the Marshall Islands and Australia. The US rejected any need for a ban treaty and extolled the step by step approach (also known as nuclear weapons forever)

but changed its tone in the wrap-up and appeared to be more respectful of the process.

There were forty-four countries who explicitly spoke of their support for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, with the Holy See delegate reading out Pope Francis’ statement calling for a ban on nuclear weapons and their elimination. Francis said, “I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home.” This was a shift in Vatican policy which, although they had called for the elimination of nuclear weapons in prior statements, had never explicitly condemned the deterrence policies of the nuclear weapons states (see p. 6).

Significantly, and to help move the work forward, the Austrian Foreign Minister added to the Chair’s report by announcing a pledge by Austria to work for a nuclear weapons ban, described as “taking effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of

nuclear weapons” and “to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.

The Non-Governmental Organizations’ strategy now is to get as many nations as possible to support the Austrian pledge coming into the CD and the NPT review and then come out of the 70th Anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with a concrete plan for negotiations on a ban treaty.

One thought about the 70th Anniversary of the bomb is that we should not only get a huge turnout in Japan, but we should acknowledge all the victims of the bomb, illustrated so agonizingly during the conference by *Hibakusha* and down winders at test sites. We should also think about the uranium miners, the polluted sites from mining and manufacturing and use of the bomb and try to do something all over the world at those sites on August 6th and 9th as we call for a ban on nuclear weapons and their elimination.

Only a few days after the Vienna conference, there was a meeting of Nobel

Laureates in Rome, who after meeting with Nobel Prize winning members Tilman Ruff and Ira Helfand, issued a statement which called for a ban on nuclear weapons, and asked that negotiations be concluded within two years.

We urge all states to commence negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons at the earliest possible time, and subsequently to conclude the negotiations within two years. This will fulfill existing obligations enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which will be reviewed in May of 2015, and the unanimous ruling of the International Court of Justice. Negotiations should be open to all states and blockable by none. The 70th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015 highlights the urgency of ending the threat of these weapons.

One way to slow down this process to negotiate a legal ban on nuclear weapons would be for the nuclear weapons states to promise at this five year NPT review

conference to set a reasonable date to bring to a conclusion time-bound negotiations on effective and verifiable measures to implement the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Otherwise the rest of the world will start without them to create an explicit legal prohibition of nuclear weapons which will be a powerful taboo to be used for pressuring the countries cowering under the nuclear umbrella of the nuclear weapons states, in NATO and in the Pacific, to take a stand for Mother Earth, and urge that negotiations begin for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

Alice Slater is New York director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and serves on the Coordinating Committee of Abolition 2000.

Pope Francis updates Catholic church’s position on nuclear weapons

“The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far more.”

IN THE FIRST HALF of the 1980s, faith communities spoke about nuclear weapons—since then, the movement to abolish nuclear weapons has often focused on political, legal and technical arguments and the moral voice has been seldom raised, and even more seldom has it commanded attention.

That may be changing.

In early December, Pope Francis, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, delivered a powerful statement calling on the nations of the world to abolish nuclear weapons. The message was delivered by the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi, who also walked back the church’s 1980s conditional acceptance of the policy of nuclear deterrence.

The shift is significant, stripping nuclear weapons states of the one argument they hoped would hold the church

at bay—the use of nuclear weapons in a defensive posture. (Of course, the reality is that some of those same states consider their weapons to be offensive as well as defensive weapons.)

The statement was delivered on the first day of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

“Nuclear weapons are a global problem, affecting all nations, and impacting future generations and the planet that is our home,” said the Pope.

“Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among people and states. The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far more.”

Francis noted that spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations and said resources would be “far

better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty.

“When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price.”

Francis’s statement, rooted in the teachings of the Catholic church, cited past Popes. It was also a statement to inspire. The final words of the statement: “A world without nuclear weapons is truly possible.”

The Pope’s statement may also inspire other moral voices to speak, to remind spiritual communities across the spectrum of belief that nuclear weapons are a fundamental threat not only to humanity but to the planet itself. As the Indian writer Arundhati Roy said:

“Nuclear weapons are humankind’s direct challenge to God. It’s worded quite simply: We have the power to destroy everything you have created. If you are not religious, think of it this way: This world of ours is six billion years old. It could end in one afternoon.”



HOPE IN ACTION

2015 is a crucial year for our nuclear abolition efforts—OREPA plans to hit the ground running

THE TIMING COULD HARDLY BE BETTER.

In the coming year, the efforts of the United States to modernize its nuclear weapons production facilities, warheads, and delivery systems will stand in stark contrast to the world's yearning for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Two significant events will focus the world's attention on the need to hasten the day when nuclear disarmament becomes a reality rather than a vague promise. In late April, continuing into May, the nations of the world will convene at the United Nations in New York City for the five-year review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Then, in early August, the world will mark 70 years since the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by US atomic bombs.

At the UN

OREPA will participate in several activities leading into the NPT review. In late March we will help launch a 700+ mile walk/bike/ride from the gates of the Y12 Plant in Oak Ridge to the entrance of the United Nations. The long trek, organized by Footprints for Peace, will include an international delegation of bicyclists and peace walkers and runners from across the county. Each day, groups of walkers, bike riders and runners will combine to cover the ground from Tennessee to New York via Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

OREPA members will meet the travelers in New Jersey for the final walk into New York City where the long-marchers will join the mass march for nuclear disarmament being planned by organizers in New York for Sunday, April 26th.

During the first days of the NPT Review, OREPA's coordinator will participate in workshops at the United Nations with members of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability. We will offer briefings on the current efforts by the United States to modernize its nuclear weapons facilities and warheads in direct contravention of our commitment to pursue disarma-

ment in the 1969 Nonproliferation Treaty. Specifically, OREPA will be explaining the purpose of the Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant slated to be built at Y12, where the ongoing production of thermo-nuclear cores reveals the duplicity of our promise to pursue disarmament at an early date.

Spring Action for Peace

OREPA's spring action for peace took a hiatus last year; it will be back this year. On Saturday, May 2 we will gather in Oak Ridge for an action led by young people. Planning for the event is just getting underway, and we'll send out more information (and post it on the web site) as soon as we know the details, but it's not too late to mark your calendar now!

Seventy Years Later

Oak Ridge will be a focus of a week-long series of activities marking seventy years since the Y12 Plant produced the highly enriched uranium that fueled Little Boy, the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. A fast for peace will begin on Monday, August 3 and continue through the week, launched in part by a media event with local religious leaders who will address weapons production activities in Oak Ridge.

OREPA's puppetistas will also be busy during the week preparing puppets for events the following weekend.

"Our goal is to engage a broad cross-section of people in the community," said Kevin Collins, OREPA Board president.

We have plans for a speaker who will address the history of nuclear weapons on Tuesday, August 4. On Thursday, August 6 we will have our traditional early morning Names and Remembrance Ceremony. On Friday, August 7 we will call together people who will join in fasting for one day for peace.

Saturday, August 8 will be an **Action for the Earth: Saying No to the New Bomb Plant**, a program, march and action in Oak Ridge.

Sunday, August 9 will close out the week's activities with a Peace Lantern Ceremony in Knoxville.

Events in Oak Ridge will support the efforts of the *hibakusha*, survivors of the



Gathered in the chilly air of a late November Sunday afternoon, vigilers celebrated the conclusion of 15 years of Sunday vigils at the entrance of the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN



At Y12, August 6, 2014

atomic bombing, to deliver the message “Never Again!” to the world.

“We are coordinating our message and our activities with groups across the country who will be recognizing Hiroshima and Nagasaki days,” said OREPA Coordinator Ralph Hutchison. “We know, because of Y12’s key role in creating the Hiroshima bomb, special attention will be paid to Oak Ridge.

“We are calling for people to come to Oak Ridge to make a strong statement against the ongoing production of nuclear weapons and the plans for the new bomb plant.

“If we have learned the lessons of Hiroshima, this is the time to come and show the world.”

Other events

OREPA’s busy year will also include events celebrating the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr in January—our annual Community Conversation will focus on the role of nonviolence in our efforts to create a more just society, and our puppets will once again be the hit of the Knoxville MLK parade!

In early March, we’ll celebrate local peacemakers with the Peacemaker Awards; in May, we’ll travel to Washington, DC for the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability’s DC Days; in July we’ll mark the 1996 ruling of the World Court with a public reading of the opinion that ruled the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to be a violation of common humanitarian law and found that nuclear weapons states have an obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Add in the weekly vigils (in late November, we celebrated the completion of 15 years of uninterrupted Sunday vigils at the gates of the Y12 Plant), the publication of Reflection Booklets, organizing for Environmental Impact Statement hearings on the new bomb plant when they are announced, and it’s a full slate.

OREPA needs you as much as you need OREPA

Stopping the UPF is our biggest challenge. Last year, in the face of our unrelenting opposition, the NNSA had to give up its grandiose plans for a massively oversized facility. This past month, as their latest plans began to surface, it became clear they haven’t changed their stripes; they are just trying to be sneakier about it.

To stop the UPF, OREPA will need more resources than we have ever had. We are determined to oppose the project in every venue, to force the government to do a new Environmental Impact Statement, to hold hearings that will be a chance for all of us to weigh in again for sanity and peace, to take them to court if we have to.

That’s where you come in. **How much we can do depends on how much we have to work with and how many people join in the work.** When the hearings are held, we’ll need everyone to come; when the world is watching Oak Ridge in August, we’ll need a crowd. And when it’s time to make plans, one of our first questions is about capacity—what can we afford to do?

Please join us in this crucial year. And please invest in OREPA’s work as generously as you can. You can count on us to continue to provide information, to speak with courage and determination, to say Yes to peace and an emphatic No! to the UPF bomb plant.

What climate change will do in thirty years, nuclear weapons can do in one afternoon.

Seventy years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons are the single most immediate threat to life on planet earth. Nuclear powers have thousands of warheads pointed at each other. A decision, a computer glitch, a communication failure, human error—in a split second—can destroy the biosphere in a matter of hours.

The United States continues to produce thermonuclear bomb parts at Oak Ridge, TN to “upgrade” and “life extend” US nuclear weapons. Plans call for a new multi-billion dollar bomb plant at Y12 in Oak Ridge—the Uranium Processing Facility. It’s a done deal unless we stop them with the raw political power of people saying NO!



SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2015
Action for the Earth:
Say No to the New Bomb Plant

OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE

for more information

www.orepa.org

THE OAK RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACE ALLIANCE
NONVIOLENT IN TONE AS WELL AS ACTION