

Jopie and I are happy to join you at the 2006 IARF Congress, Fo Guang Shan, Taiwan. I have been asked to give a brief account of my spiritual journey. I am honoured to be on this programme with Rev. Yoshiko Izumida, and Professor Kazi Nurul Islam. In hope, *Richard Boeke*

What would you use as "landmarks" on your life journey?

What "gates?" What turning points? What significant others?

TRUST. Our life begins with love and the "*basic trust*" that comes with bonding with our parents.

I think of the insight of the founder of Itto-en

As he saw a mother nursing her baby,

*"It is blessed to give. It is blessed to receive."*

We gave to our two daughters and to our granddaughter.

Now, they are giving back to us. At every step of life, others give to us.

In our global village, life is not Independent, but Interdependent.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.,

*"By the time we have eaten breakfast,  
we have depended upon half the world."*

Wars, Teachers, Friends, all touch our lives.

In Taiwan, we join in the common heritage of the IARF,

A tradition which says,

*"In essentials unity, in doubts liberty, in all charity."*

We seek to be pilgrims. We seek to live a holy life.

Yet we know the wisdom which says,

*"In our age the road to holiness is through the path of action."*

**The bomb** that fell on Hiroshima has linked our lives.

A half a century ago, I served as a US Air Force Chaplain.

In the belly of bombers at our base were weapons

many times the power of the Hiroshima Bomb.

In 1958, the year of the Chicago IARF Congress,

I read **Albert Schweitzer's** autobiography.

I was struck by his words, "*Example is not the main thing  
in influencing others. It is the only thing.*"

I left the Air Force to become a Unitarian Universalist:

A "*peacenik*" who witnessed against war.

I did not attend Chicago in 1958 or IARF Davos in 1961.

After 1961, when I became minister In Flushing, New York,

my Odyssey is linked to Odyssey of the IARF.

I shared my Flushing home with two college students from Kenya.

This led to a journey to Kenya and around the world in 1962.

In the Philippines, I found a friend in Rev. **Toribio Quimada**.

In Japan, I climbed Mt. Fuji, made a pilgrimage to Hiroshima, and was blessed by **Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka**. Dr. Imaoka lived to be 106. He inspired Buddhist and Shinto commitment to interfaith friendship. Some called him a living Buddha.

In the summer of 1964, after a pilgrimage to Eastern Europe, I was a delegate to the IARF Congress in the Hague. We dropped the term, "*Liberal Christianity*" from our name. I spoke for the change, but moved that the name be "*for liberal religion and religious freedom*," or for the suggestion of Dr. Imaoka, "*The International Association for Free Religion*." To me, at heart, the IARF is religious community which works to create a wider circle of religious trust and friendship.

At an evening reception given by the Mayor of the Hague, I met a young Dutch lady named **Jopie**.

She became my partner and wife a year later.

After our marriage, we drove south for a summer in Mississippi as part of the civil rights struggle.

One week we drove **Dr. Dana Greeley** to Selma, Alabama, where he had marched with Martin Luther King, after the murder of Unitarian Minister, James Reeb..

On our last night in Mississippi, I was to preach at an old Universalist Church in Ellisville.

At supper, I asked "*where is a good place to spend the night?*"

The lady whispered to me, "*get out of town.*"

After I preached the sermon, we "got out of town."

That night another Unitarian minister in Mississippi was shot in the back and almost killed.

Two years later in 1966, **Dr. Greeley** became President of the IARF.

He began a friendship with **Founder Niwano** that led to Rissho Kosei kai joining the IARF in Boston in 1969. Later, Niwano and Greeley jointly founded the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP).

In 1969, I co-founded the U.S. Chapter of the IARF. In the 1970s I began serving the UU Church of Berkeley, California. My induction sermon was given by Huston Smith, author of THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS. Our continuing friendship with Huston, Kendra, and other friends in California is a special blessing. From our base in Berkeley, I attended the 1975 IARF Congress in Montreal, the 1978 Congress in Oxford, and the 1981 Congress in Holland. For the summer of 1981, I exchanged pulpits with Frank Walker, minister in Cambridge, England. Our Berkeley choir stopped to sing in Cambridge and then at the IARF Congress in Holland.

Later they would sing at the glorious 1984 IARF Congress in Japan, where we learned, "*MICHI WA KO KOKARA, .. the way begins here. ...*"

At Tsubaki Grand Shrine, we stood under the waterfall for MISOGI !

At Hiroshima, we listened to *Hibakusha*, survivors of the Atomic Blast.

We were reminded, we are all "*Hibakusha*," called to witness for peace,

to pass on the holiness of our planet to the next generation. I wrote,

*“Peace on earth let it be.  
Let the mountain come down to the sea.  
And the joy we will share  
When there’s peace everywhere.  
Peace on earth, let it be.”*

The Japan IARF Congress set such a high standard, we were challenged in hosting IARF 1987 at Stanford University in California. The worship: Shinto, Buddhist, and at the Stanford Chapel, was awesome.

There, we sang the song, *SPIRIT OF LIFE, COME UNTO ME,  
SING IN MY HEART ALL THE STIRRINGS OF COMPASSION.* ...  
It has become part of our IARF heritage, translated into six languages.

The German Unitarians followed this with a great 1990 Congress in Hamburg, Germany. A few months before the Berlin Wall had come down. Catholic Theologian **Hans Kung** opened the Congress by saying, *“There will be no peace in the world until there is peace among religions.”*

As we witness the present wars of religion: we see how true this is. After Hamburg, we travelled with the Berkeley Choir as they sang in Hamburg, Prague, Vienna, and in Romania where we renewed our partnership with a Unitarian Church in the Homorod Valley.

Aware of our common bond with the Unitarians of Eastern Europe, on returning to America, we co-founded the U.S. Partner Church Council, which now also has links to Unitarians in India and in the Philippines.

Let us take the next step, and fill the world with interfaith friendships.

I cherish my friendships with those of other religions. I enjoyed being a Vice President of Tsubaki Shrine of America. I continue to enjoy the wonderful hospitality of Shinto and Buddhist friends. In 1993, we joined in celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions in India and in Japan. At the 1996 Congress in Korea, I was thankful for the efforts of the Shinto Priests to make peace with our Korean Hosts. At the end of the Korea Congress, Chief Priest **Yukitaka Yamamoto** of Tsubaki Shrine was elected IARF President. He survived the jungle of New Guinea, He stood under the waterfall daily for ten years to clear his spirit:

*Harai tamae; kiyome tamae, ... Purify me, wash my soul, all six senses.*

He committed his life to making Shinto Shrines in Japan and America centres of nature reverence. During the 2002 IARF in Budapest, Chief Priest Yamamoto died. His great spirit joins GREAT NATURE. His son

Yukiyasu, keeps up his father’s tradition as Chief Priest at Tsubaki.

There is no suitable waterfall near my home, but several times each week, I take a long walk beneath old trees. Then I stand in the shower and repeat the Tsubaki chant: *Harai tamae; kiyoei tamae; rokkonshojo.*

I close with three events from the last twenty years of my life:

1) After being a mother and teacher, my wife, **Jopie**, suddenly said, “*I want to go to Seminary.*” And so in Berkeley, she travelled three miles each day to HOLY HILL where nine seminaries cooperate in the GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION. This led to her being with me as a minister in the Berkeley Church, and then moving to England, where she could have a church of her own. At IARF 2002 in Budapest, she became President of the IALRW (International Assoc. of Liberal Religious Women) and a Trustee of the IARF. She is much in demand to conduct weddings. and has co-edited a book of religious poetry.

2) In 1995, I joined Jopie in England and began a part time ministry at a church south of London. I became active in the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), and became their “ambassador” on over a dozen journeys to Eastern Europe, India, and Japan. I have prepared several services on Unitarian Martyr **Michael Servetus**, who was burned at the stake by John Calvin in 1553. Servetus discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood. He found holiness in the breath. He found rigid creeds divisive. He found the breath of the Holy Spirit, “*inspiration,*” in faiths outside Christianity. I find him a spiritual ancestor in our struggle to bring peace between religions. As I joined one million in London marching to oppose British and American Invasion of Iraq, I felt a kinship with **Niwano, Yamamoto, Greeley, and Servetus**. I am thankful most Unitarians I serve in Horsham also oppose this war.

3) After I arrived in England, **Dr. Marcus Braybrooke**, the President of the World Congress of Faiths, [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org), invited me to join. As a trustee of the WCF, I enjoy over two dozen friends of other faiths, from Muslim Imams to **Rabbi Jackie Tabick**, the WCF Chairman. I have learned the difference between faith and belief. <sup>1</sup> I have organized three conferences on “**Faith as Trust – Fideology.**” Too much interfaith dialogue is blocked by talk of THEOLOGY, a word which leaves out Buddhists, Jains, and Humanists. FIDEOLGY, the practice of Trust, is a task for every human being..<sup>2</sup>

*||||| We all seek our separate peace,  
but we have to make peace together. |||λ||*

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<sup>1</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief, The Difference Between Them, One World Press, Oxford 1998.

<sup>2</sup> For articles on Fideology: Faith and Freedom, 2005, Harris Manchester College, Oxford.