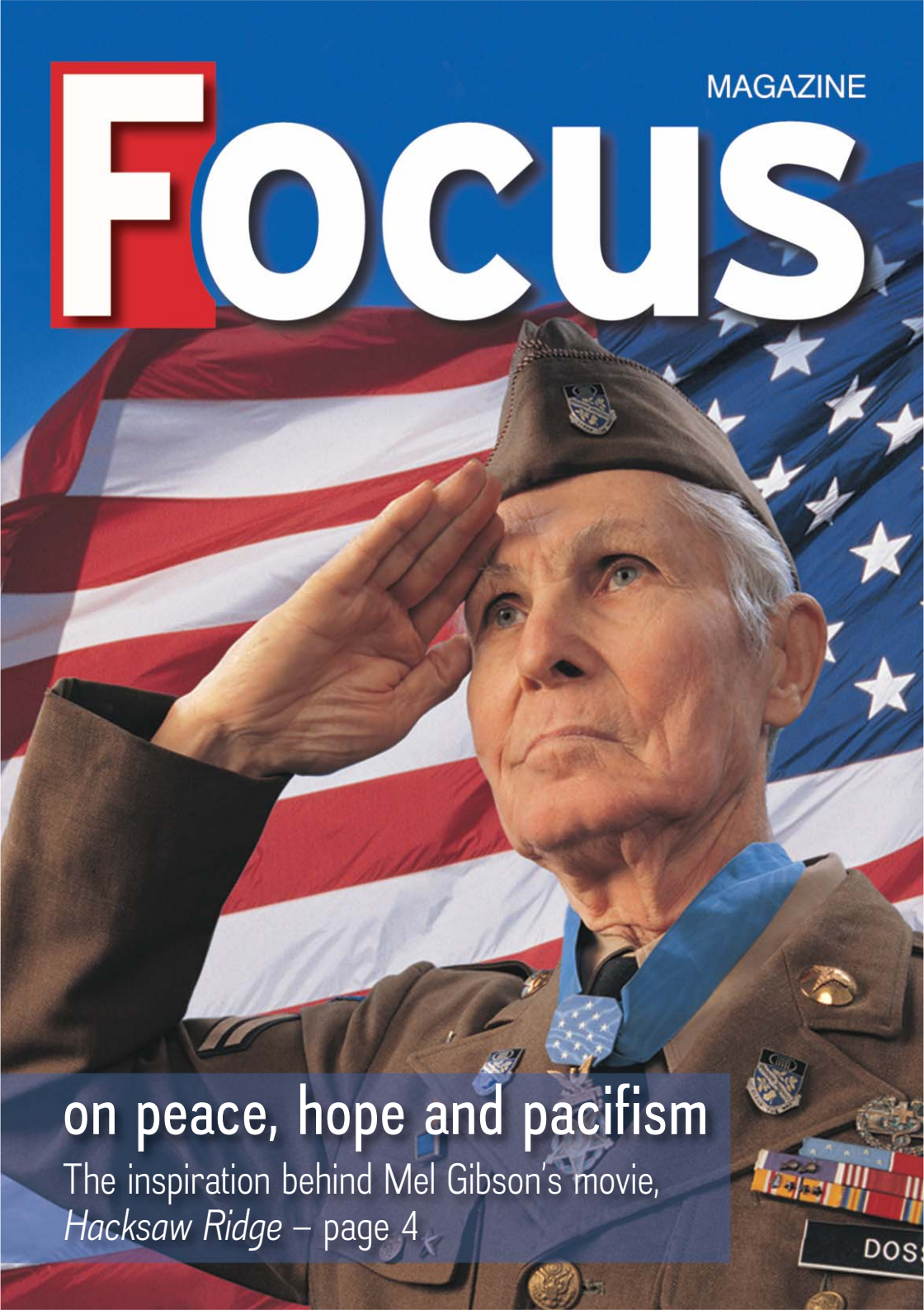
MAGAZINE

Focus



on peace, hope and pacifism

The inspiration behind Mel Gibson's movie, *Hacksaw Ridge* – page 4

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Introducing this issue . . .

FOCUS magazine is committed to the examination of themes that our readers may find relevant, perplexing and encouraging. One hundred years on from the introduction of the Military Service Act – and therefore conscientious objection – we look at the important topics of non-combatancy; pacifism and passive resistance; surviving and resolving conflict; and the ultimate prize of peace.

Our cover story is about Desmond Doss, arguably one of the twentieth century's bravest men. Under the direction of Mel Gibson, his phenomenal story has been turned into a movie with the title *Hacksaw Ridge*, which is scheduled for release on 4 November 2016.

In this issue we also tell the powerful stories of others who have literally '*walked through the valley of the shadow of death*' and lived to share their experiences.

We take this opportunity to remind you of *International Conscientious Objectors' Day,* which is commemorated around the world on 15 May, and of the *International Day of Peace* that is held on 21 September. The latter date will also be the day on which a new Peace Garden will be opened at Stanborough Park, Watford. The venue will be open to the public, providing a quiet place for those who wish to reflect on peace, their personal loss and related matters.

With this brief introduction we wish you a worthwhile read . . .

The Editor

Desmond Doss:
The makings of *Hacksaw Ridge*

by Victor Hulbert

How can a book so inspire a man that he will spend the next 40 years trying to turn it into a movie? *The Unlikeliest Hero* is the simple courageous story of a war hero who refused to fight, but, as a war medic, saved hundreds of lives. That story somehow caught the imagination of a young Canadian, Stan Jensen. Although he had no experience in publishing or media, he determined that his life passion would be to help tell what he saw as a life-changing story. He even moved to LA to be close to Hollywood, hoping to make contact with someone who could help him fulfil his dream.

The name of the medic: Desmond Doss. And after many convoluted twists and turns, and ten years after Doss's own death in 2006, a major blockbuster movie, *Hacksaw Ridge*, has transformed Jensen's 1970s read of *The Unlikeliest Hero* into a cinema release that takes a very different look at the battlefield. *Hacksaw Ridge* covers the war experience of a principled young man who was willing to serve his country – but unwilling to do so with a weapon in his hand!

Doss took scorn and bullying from those fellow soldiers who despised his Christian pacifist principles. Nevertheless, when the time came, he saved their lives. He served on the bloody battlefields of the Pacific theatre of World War II, becoming the first conscientious objector to be awarded the American Congressional Medal of Honour. In one of the most famous battles – the one which gives the film its title – Doss carried 75 injured men, one by one, over the edge of a 120-metre-high escarpment to safety below. Similar valour continued in subsequent days as Doss repeatedly put himself directly in the line of fire to help the wounded. Not even his own wounds stopped him, and he continued to treat the casualties even as others applied first aid to him.

You can be a hero and still stand by principle.

His citation reads, 'Through his outstanding bravery and unflinching determination in the face of desperately dangerous conditions Pfc. Doss saved the lives of many soldiers. His name became a symbol throughout the 77th Infantry Division for outstanding gallantry far above and beyond the call of duty.'

Exciting reading – but how do you transform that tale into a blockbuster movie – particularly when you discover that Doss doesn't watch movies himself and doesn't like the theatre?

That is where providence – or fortune – led Jensen into the path of screenwriter/producer, Gregory Crosby, grandson of legendary singer and actor, Bing Crosby – he of 'White Christmas' fame. By this time Jensen was store manager for a Christian book centre in Glendale, California and Crosby was there for an in-store demonstration.

Jensen, recognising an opportunity, approached him with a copy of the book, asking him to read it because, as he said, 'I always thought it would make a great idea for a movie.'

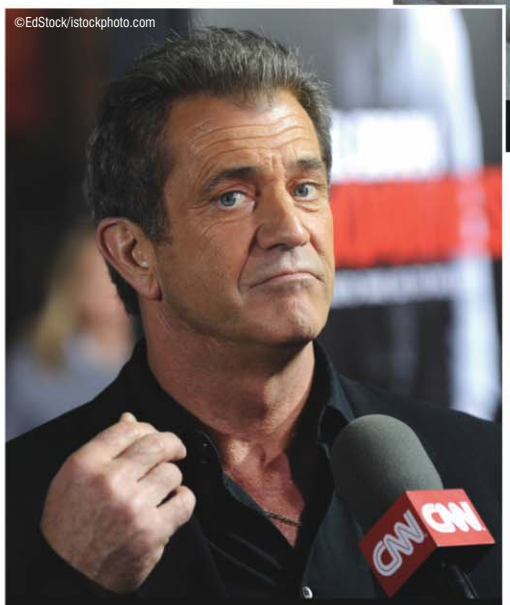
Crosby recalls that Stan seemed like a really nice guy, so he said, 'Sure' – but that was about it.

Such requests come with the territory for those in the movie business. 'I get infinite people approaching me to read their scripts or story ideas, so I didn't think too much of it at the time – although, I must admit that the concept of Desmond Doss being the first conscientious objector in history to win the Congressional Medal of Honour intrigued me, so

indeed, I did take the book home and put it on my already overly-cluttered desk.'

And that is where the book stayed for many months until, one Sunday, Crosby decided to tidy that desk and discovered the book buried under paperwork, notes and other submissions. 'Two hours later,' he recalls, 'I was literally reading the last paragraph as my wife and son returned home and walked into my office, alarmed that I had tears in my eyes, goosebumps all over my arms. Concerned, my wife asked, "What's wrong? Are you alright?" I said, "I just read one of the greatest stories of all time – and it's true, every word of it!" '

Doss receiving the American Congressional Medal of Honour from President Harry Truman



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Gibson said he found the story of the 'army medic who wouldn't touch a weapon but yet who wanted to be part of saving lives in the worst place on earth' to be 'inspirational'. He added, 'To walk into the worst place on earth and not have a weapon and walk amongst it and do his job as a Corps medic and save so many lives, it's remarkable.'

From then on the project should have been easy – except for one major hurdle – Doss himself did not believe in movies. Indeed, he had no interest in anyone making a movie about his life, Jensen recalls. 'Desmond didn't believe in Hollywood or even going to the movies for that matter. He felt it was an evil and irresponsible industry that promoted immoral and unhealthy lifestyles, and all that tinsel town really cared about was making money at the expense of the common man.'

Interestingly, as a long-time movie-maker, Crosby identified with Doss's viewpoint – at least to an extent. Crosby is interested in what he calls 'movies that wake up the sheep'. He saw the Doss story as exactly that, a film that would make the viewer ponder what is really important in life. He says, 'Ever since I was a little kid, I've always loved watching Frank Capra movies, and I only ever wanted to make features and TV shows about real people and events that made a difference in the world – stories throughout history that have shown how to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. *Hacksaw Ridge* had my name on it, and I was determined to make it happen.'

After many weeks of research, including what it was about Doss's religion that made him tick, Jensen and Crosby finally met with the man himself – at an annual get-together with fellow war veterans and Medal of Honour recipients in Los Angeles.

Entering a lobby packed with hundreds of veterans and their families, Crosby and Jensen spotted 'this humble, gentle hero' talking with a young soldier. 'Then, seemingly led by some higher power, Desmond shook the young man's hand with a big smile, then looked my way, and made his way over to me and Stan as though he recognised us as lifelong friends,' Crosby recalled. 'We had never met him, yet Desmond somehow knew it was us, as if he was being divinely guided. It was a goosebump moment for sure, and I'll never forget it.'

That led to a long and fruitful meeting including deep discussions on life, family, morals, religion, and eventually the big question, 'Could we make a movie of his life?' Doss gave the standard reply that he had given to many other movie-makers over the decades. 'I don't want to be glorified for what I did in World War II.' He added, 'For me, it is between me and God, and duty to my country.'

For Crosby, it was time to take the plunge, heading back into Adventist Church history. 'I told him I understood, then I asked him what was one of the first things his church bought way back in the day. He looked at me kind of funny and said, "A printing press – is that what you mean?" I said, "Exactly! And why did pioneer Adventist Hiram Edson loan the church money to buy that printing press?" '

Doss explained that the Adventists wanted to tell their message to the world and that a printing press was a great way of reaching people though newsletters and publications. That led to a discussion on the value of books – both those great Christian publications, but also 'dark, negative, satanic books' that Doss would clearly never read.

'I think you're blaming the medium, instead of what's being produced in the medium,' Crosby argued. 'We have a chance here to bring a story to humanity that can make a real difference in the world – to share the powerful message, especially for kids, that it's okay to be who you are, to walk your own path, and that it doesn't matter what other people think as long as you're doing what's right in your heart.'

The rest is now history. The movie has been made, *Hacksaw Ridge*, directed by Mel Gibson and starring Andrew Garfield as Doss.

What makes this film different to all the other war movies out there? Talking to the *Hollywood Reporter,*[1] Gibson said he found the story of the 'army medic who wouldn't touch a weapon but yet who wanted to be part of saving lives in the worst place on earth' to be 'inspirational'. He added, 'To walk into the worst place on earth and not have a weapon and walk amongst it and do his job as a Corps medic and save so many lives, it's remarkable.'

For Jensen, seeing the movie is a dream come true – but he wishes it had come earlier, even before the Iraq War. 'It is counter culture. A film like this can give people hope that it's OK to take a stand. You can be a hero and still stand by principle.'

He concludes with the dilemma of all those opposed to war and violence, but who recognise that we live in a less-than-perfect world. 'If you are a citizen of a country you may have to fight for that country. If you are a citizen of a heavenly kingdom you should be a warrior of that country. Sometimes you have to be both.'

Jensen leaves an open question. Doss provides one possible answer.

[1]*http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/mel-gibson-ready-honor-desmond-812094*

What is passive resistance?

by Julian Hibbert

Pacifism is generally defined as 'the belief that war and violence are unjustifiable and that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means'.[1] We should not, however, let the *Oxford Dictionary* fool us into thinking that pacifism is as simple as that quote may sound!

The concept embraces a spectrum of possible positions: ranging from a. absolute pacifism, which holds all violence, killing and war to be unconditionally wrong; through b. conditional pacifism, which regards the pursuit of war or force as wrong, except in extreme circumstances; to c. pacificism, where peaceful conditions are preferred to war, unless war becomes necessary to advance the cause of peace. From this one can see that a proper discussion of pacifism inevitably becomes quite complex.[2]

Pacifism and resistance

While it is true that pacifism calls for 'all disputes' to be 'settled by peaceful means', this doesn't imply that all pacifists automatically avoid offering resistance against social and political injustice. To the contrary, there is a long history of passive (non-violent) resistance associated with this particular viewpoint.

One interesting example dates back to late-nineteenth-century New Zealand, where it was used as a strategic tool to resist the British confiscation and occupation of traditional Maori land, which was subsequently given to European settlers.

One of the forces behind this non-violent resistance was Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, who, in 1865, refused to retaliate against the soldiers who burnt down his village and confiscated its adjacent land. He later inspired his Maori warriors to 'stand up for their rights without using weapons' or resisting arrest. For example, on one occasion in 1881 he persuaded 2,000 of them to invite the 'battle-hardened' British soldiers sent against them into their village to enjoy typical Maori hospitality.[3]

His influence spread, and soon the Maoris were meeting settler incursions into their land 'by civil disobedience' and 'passive obstruction'. Passive obstruction apparently 'appealed to the Maoris' sense of humour and proved very difficult for the Government to counteract'. It involved such action as the ploughing of local roads and those pastures forcefully acquired from the Maori, along with the annoying removal of the freshly placed government survey pegs![4]

Did 'Te Whiti-ism' work? Yes, it seems to have prevented large-scale bloodshed, saved lives and drawn some sympathetic attention to the Maori cause.

Little more than a decade later passive (non-violent) resistance was to demonstrate its power again, with far-reaching consequences. The basic rights of thousands of Indians living under British rule in the Cape Colony and Natal, and in the adjacent Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, came under threat through a variety of unjust laws from 1885 onwards. Their freedom of movement, their employment opportunities and their voting rights were severely restricted.[5]

Initially things looked bleak for them, until a young, slightly built and bespectacled Indian lawyer, Mahatma Gandhi, stepped up to launch a form of passive resistance that by 1906 was officially known as satyagraha. This philosophy, based on the Sanskrit and Hindi term for 'holding onto truth', led some to speak of satyagraha as 'truth-force', the 'determined but non-violent resistance to evil'.[6]

Satyagraha requires its participants to fully commit to the truth and correctness of their viewpoint, avoid all violence (even in their thoughts), be transparent in their intentions, and avoid all trickery or secrecy in their tactics. Those tactics included such civil disobedience as the burning of discriminatory identity documents; the blocking of railway tracks; and mass protest marches.

Gandhi later employed similar tactics in defiance of the oppressive British 'salt' laws back in India (1930-1931). This sparked off a widespread campaign of civil disobedience that ultimately involved millions of ordinary citizens. The Viceroy's response involved brutal beatings, some deaths, and so many arrests (60,000-plus) that the prison system almost collapsed.[7] (See box.)

Was this non-violent resistance successful? This is the candid appraisal given by the Global Nonviolent Action Database: 'The Salt Satyagraha has become an iconic campaign within the history of non-violent struggle not because it accomplished its short-term goals – it did not – but because it delegitimised British rule.'[8]

Others have followed

Such examples of passive resistance have inspired many around the world to seek social and political change the non-violent way. Among the best-known of these is the American Civil Rights Movement (1950s and 1960s), during which Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, and others extensively used such techniques. One example was the Montgomery Bus Boycott sparked off by the refusal of Rosa Parks to move when a white man tried to take her seat on a bus. The cumulative pressure of such non-violent actions was effective in securing long-overdue civil rights for black Americans.

Was He the model pacifist?

Historically, many seem to have drawn inspiration for their pacifist attitudes from the example of Jesus Christ, whom they see as having set the benchmark for how socio-political change should be achieved in the face of stern opposition. The nagging question, however, is whether they fully understand just how radical His example really was?

The world into which He was born was a harsh and violent one, where opposition was usually crushed with ruthless force. Among those around Him were many who desired a similar fate for those in power. How did He relate to that? His position was crystal clear: 'Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." ' (John 18:36, NIV-UK.)

He went even further in demonstrating His utter aversion to violence: ‘ “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.” ’ (Matthew 26:52, NIV-UK.) Peter had seriously injured one of those who came to arrest Jesus for a crime of which He was innocent, but, according to Jesus, even that did not justify an aggressive response!

Others would, without hesitation, have followed Him down the path of civil disobedience. A prime opportunity could have been organised against the Roman tax system. Thousands could easily have picketed the tax collectors’ tables while the traders snuck through for free. But Jesus would have none of it.

He was openly challenged over the payment of tax: ‘Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?’

His response was just as challenging:
‘ “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

‘ “Caesar’s,” they replied.

‘Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” ’ (From Mark 12:13-17, NIV-UK.)

Interestingly, and contrary to expectations, Jesus doesn’t appear to support such passive resistance. In fact, His teaching clearly indicates that the government of the day is entitled to collect its taxes, and that we should pay them willingly.

Regarding the expectations of the state, Jesus introduced something else that must have raised some eyebrows: ‘If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.’ (Matthew 5:41, NIV-UK.)

What does this mean? The word translated here as ‘forces’ is a technical term used to indicate the Roman practice of requisitioning local supplies or labour whenever it suited them. So Jesus is effectively saying, ‘Even if they require something from you that you would prefer not to give, give it and be willing to do even more than they expect.’ This answer would certainly have shocked the ‘activists’ of

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Christ’s day, but we must not read into it what is not there. He has already clearly said, ‘Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’ Caesar would get what was due him, but there could be no compromise on any of God’s requirements!

Pacifist or Peacemaker

From our brief observations about the life and teachings of Jesus, it is clear that He was not identical to the typical passive-resistance-promoting pacifists of today. I would go so far as to suggest that Jesus would be better described as a Peacemaker than a Pacifist: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.’ (Matthew 5:9, NIV-UK.)

Certain pacifists, specifically those who see themselves as promoting passive resistance, cannot simultaneously claim to be peace-makers. Once you commit yourself to provo-cation of any kind you essentially become an adversary – part of the problem, not the solution.

The role of the peacemaker is unique. He (or she) is there to reduce friction and conflict, promote reconciliation and secure lasting peace. Perhaps it is time to suggest that our real need is for fewer pacifists and more peacemakers!

[1]*http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pacifism* [2]*http://www.iep.utm.edu/pacifism* [3]*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pacifism* [4]*http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/te-whiti-o-rongomai-or-erueti-te-whiti* [5]*https://en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_South_Africans* [6]*http://gandhi.south africa.net/* – see also: *http://www.britannica.com/topic/satyagraha-philosophy* [7]*http://www.history.com/topics/salt-march* [8]*https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/Indians-campaign-independence-salt-satyagraha-1930-1931*

The Salt March

The British had taken control of the salt trade in India, allowing no one else to harvest or distribute this vital commodity, with offenders facing severe punishment. In March 1930 Gandhi decided to defy this legislation, setting off with 78 others on a 240-mile journey to the coast where he vowed to take a ‘pinch of salt’ from the salt flats there without paying tax. As he passed through village after village on his 24-day trek, thousands joined him.

‘When Gandhi broke the salt laws at 6.30am on 6 April 1930, it sparked large-scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians. The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitudes towards Indian sovereignty and self-rule and caused large numbers of Indians to join the fight for the first time.’ (*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_March*)

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Activists beware . . .

‘In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the uses of passive resistance in many conflicts around the world became more overtly strategic and less concerned with the moral character of the tools.’ (*http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/passive_resistance.aspx*)

Hope after horror

by Victor Hulbert

Nobody chooses to be a refugee. War, persecution, oppressive regimes – there are many reasons why there are currently 60 million displaced persons or refugees in the world. Each one has their story. Each one wants to survive. Each one wants a better life. Each one lives with hope.

Hope! That is something Francine Karekezi needed. A Tutsi, she ran for her life during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Today she lives in Austria. Her tale is horrific.

Francine grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist. She was a committed Christian, but that did not stop her community from being attacked. The boys and men were all shot. The killers said the women and girls should be 'hugged' with machetes as they did not have enough bullets.

'When they moved towards us I was the first one,' she recalled while publicly telling her story for the first time. 'My neck had to be cut off but I had the reflex to block it. That's why I have scars on my left arm.' Her mother jumped on the man who was trying to kill her, screaming, 'You are not going to kill my daughter in front of me!'

Francine ran, heading towards a nearby Red Cross hospital that was already a sanctuary for her sister. It was barely 50 metres but became a desperate race. She was caught on the barbed wire fence, and even as she ran the militia shot at her. Her mother, severely injured, staggered along behind. Someone threw a grenade but thankfully it didn't go off. Amazingly they made it over the high wall and into the safety of the compound. And that is where they remained for the next three months, protected by Red Cross workers who kept them hidden and lied to the militiamen about them.

Sadly, the end of the genocide was not the end of her ordeal. When she left the hospital compound all she found was horror. 'Everything that made me what I am – my family, neighbours, friends, everything that was Tutsi around me – everybody was just killed. Everybody was gone.'

That horror led her to another question: 'Why me? Why did I survive?' She has no easy answer and for many such survivors the very fact of being alive can lead to feelings of guilt. However, for Francine survival gave her the strong feeling that she had to do something very positive with her life, to do something for God. The first step was to find healing for herself and forgiveness for those who committed such horrible atrocities.

'Healing, with time, is just there,' she says. 'Forgiveness, that must be our decision.' That forgiveness is important for her. 'Forgiveness helps those who forgive. It was a tragic thing that happened, not only to those who were killed, but those who killed. I look at it through biblical lenses. This person is in more trouble than those he killed. Those people who killed during the war went through awful things that they wouldn't have gone through had they not killed. They have to carry that guilt.' She concludes: 'It never crossed my mind that I should hate them.'

That is very important for Prince Bahati too. Following the genocide he found himself hosting a radio show called *Reconciliation*, on the Christian channel, Voice of Hope. 'I had to throw out all the rules of good journalism,' he said, 'simply listening and letting people from both communities tell their stories.'

The time on the radio taught Bahati something about healing. He especially remembers a call he took from one of the killers. After several long conversations he arranged a meeting between the killer and the surviving family of those he killed. 'It was a very moving and tearful experience,' Bahati confessed. The family were more than willing to forgive. They just wanted to hear the words, to receive the explanation. 'Bringing people together like this is what Christ can do,' Bahati adds. 'It gave me the real motivation and purpose for airing that difficult radio programme for so many years.'

While today's refugees are looking for hope and a future in Europe they are passing through the very countries that almost cost Dejan Stojkovic his life during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Dejan is a Serb, but grew up in a home where he was taught not to take sides, but to take people at their face value. That can be a


Dejan and Deana Stojkovic

challenge when your country is at war with your neighbours. He remembers taking a train to Novi Sad in northern Serbia. One of the passengers started cursing the Croatians. Dejan says, 'I thought this was a good moment to share my belief and conviction, taking into consideration that my best friends were from Croatia and Bosnia. I told him, "People are people to me until they show that they are not." '

This time round he was a teenager. The next time, when war returned in 1999, he was old enough for conscription. This was a real challenge for him, both because of his Christian belief in the sanctity of life, and because he had friends whom his government now considered to be 'the enemy'. Despite the bombings and the difficulty of living life in an air-raid shelter, Dejan knew that, even if he thought it to be a just war, he could never shoot to kill. He decided to leave his country, crossing the border into Bosnia in an under-taker's hearse. There he experienced kindness, but felt he was a burden to people, living in other people's houses and farms. Today, married to Deana, another refugee, and as the father of a newly born baby girl, he looks back on his own experiences and those of his wife.

'It makes me look at today's refugee crisis through very different eyes,' he says. 'I know what it is to be a refugee, even to be looked down on and scorned because of what my country is going through.' Since his experience in Serbia he is also scornful of the propaganda – on both sides of the fence.

'I started telling you a story about Serbs because as these wars took place you probably took sides as we usually do,' he said. 'Depending on which news you watched you formed your opinion and it was easy to see that we were portrayed in the media as the nation which deserved all that happened to us.' Dejan takes another view. 'The fact is that war is never good. All sides committed terrible things to each other but we ended up with the world marking us as the lowest of all.'

That has been the case until the recent European refugee crisis. Until recently, he says, 'It was almost impossible to find anyone to say a good word about Serbia. But this crisis has shown the other face of the Serbian people. One picture that touched my heart is the image of a Serbian police officer and a smiling Syrian boy.[1] I can summarise that picture in one word: compassion.'

Francine, Dejan and Deana no longer live in the countries of their birth. However, all three have learnt the meaning of hope, and now share the compassion and love of God with whomever they come in contact with – whether that contact is a former enemy, or simply the next wave of refugees, or a hurting person who crosses their path.

[1] *http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-09-10/serbian-police-officer-and-smiling-syrian-boy-show-europe-how-welcoming-refugees*

They also served . . .

by Julian Hibbert

FAU Section Sanitaire Anglaise 14 at Dunkirk 1916
©Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

Desmond Doss represents a particular type of conscientious objector, those who are willing to serve in their country's armed forces, but strictly in non-combatant roles. There are other types of objectors who refuse to be associated in any way with their country's military establishment. They won't assist in non-combatant roles because they see this as freeing up others for deployment to fighting units.

During the early months of World War I something unusual happened: an initiative by a group of young Quakers led to the formation of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU). These young men foresaw that the casualties of this 'total war' would soon overwhelm the army's ambulance services. With this in mind, they set up a voluntary ambulance service committed to '*participating in a non-violent way*'.

At first, neither the army nor the British Red Cross '*wanted to involve a group of independent and pacifist volunteers, but the situation changed dramatically when the Belgian army collapsed in late October. The FAU was provided with equipment and supplies, and . . . left for Belgium.*'

These courageous volunteers were in the thick of it well before they reached France. Just a few miles out to sea they encountered a torpedoed British cruiser, rescued its crew, and took them back to Dover. They then set out again, arrived in Dunkirk, and '*worked for three weeks in the military evacuation sheds, looking after several thousand wounded soldiers until they could be evacuated on hospital ships*'.

Driven by the swelling numbers of casualties coming back from the trenches, the FAU's role rapidly expanded and its ranks soon included many non-Quakers.

The FAU volunteers also began assisting injured and suffering French civilians, which drew them to the attention of the French army medical corps, and this led in turn to them being asked to staff and run some of the French ambulance convoys under the designation *Sections Sanitaires Anglaises*. It wasn't long before the Friends Ambulance Unit was at work in both civilian and military hospitals; by 1915 they were running ambulance trains and '*in early 1916 they had two hospital ships*'.

By the end of the war about 1,800 people had given service in the FAU and 21 had been killed while helping the wounded on the Western Front. '*They had driven over two million miles and had transported 277,000 sick and injured people*.' (This excludes the work done by their Italian unit.) In the end, it was not just men who were involved. The records show that '*one hundred and two women served in the FAU . . . 54 of whom served abroad*'.

What more is there to say? Such courage surely speaks for itself!

Source: *http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/252*

Conflict resolution 101

By Helen Pearson

Conflict is like fire – hot, exciting, shooting in all directions, dangerous – but also warming and powerful. It draws you in. Watching fictional conflict in films and TV dramas can be exciting; being involved in real conflict on a personal level often makes people feel powerless.

When we watch a good movie, we enjoy following the stages of a conflict. We usually understand what is going on; we know what is at stake. But when we encounter conflict on a personal scale in our families, with our friends or at our workplace, things are usually less clear-cut. Conflict can come as a surprise. But even if we see it coming, it may make us feel quite vulnerable.

In my work as a counsellor and trainer, I have learnt that family-level conflicts often remain unresolved because few of us have been taught about good conflict resolution. In our families and schools, we have not really talked about why conflicts arise or been given tools and strategies to solve the conflicts which do. Conflict-resolution skills are like cooking. You learn – or do not learn – the basic skills in the family.

Think about the families you know best. How do the people in them instinctively approach conflict? At one end of the spectrum are those whose instinctive belief is that the best way to deal with a conflict is to 'have it out', to 'give someone a piece of your mind'. They are the 'fighters'. In other families, at the opposite end of the spectrum, 'flight' is the most likely approach. In these families, voices are never raised; conflict is brushed 'under the carpet'. For 'flight' people the motto is: 'Let sleeping dogs lie.'

Neither of these tools is the 'best' way to go about conflict resolution. It is true that 'having it out' can clear the air and the two sides can get on with their lives. Sometimes, however, 'having it out' spontaneously means that people say things they don't mean and cannot 'unsay'. People are wounded, and if the scars from those wounds don't heal they can create or intensify a renewed conflict later.

'Letting sleeping dogs lie' can also be a useful strategy. Time can heal. New understandings can develop without a confrontation. The opponents can find new ways of looking at each other and the wider world. Sometimes, though, unacknowledged hurt and injustice fester and develop like gas in a slowly inflating balloon – until one day the balloon goes up! Feelings of being ignored or slighted can go deep until, one day, a still conflict emerges.

So if there is no 'right' way to deal with conflict, why is it important to think about whether our families are 'fighters' or 'frighters'? The important thing here is to know oneself, to be aware of what one's instinctive responses are likely to be. Knowing our likely relational responses helps us to stand back and ask what other strategies we might use.

In the old days of celluloid when a film was made of thousands of pictures all shown very fast, it was possible to slow down the film and see an image of each little movement. If we slow down the film of our lives and see the small pictures which constitute our response, then next time there is a conflict we may find that we have choices. We may see that on a *particular* occasion we needed to approach the conflict in a *particular way*, while at another time the response needed to be quite different: the point being that I am *choosing* my response rather than offering a *reflex reaction*.

But before we say more about possible responses to conflict, let's think about what conflict is. A definition I often use comes from Kirsten Zerger, Director of Education and Training at the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

She says, *'A conflict is an expressed struggle between two or more* ***interdependent parties*** *who* ***perceive incompatible goals***, ***scarce resources***, *and* ***interference from the other in achieving goals.***'

There are a number of important words in this definition. The first is *'interdependent*

parties'. Without mutual dependence, there is no conflict. No relationship, no conflict. Reconciliation is always about improving relationships. Not necessarily about deciding who is 'right', but about restoring connection. Not necessarily about becoming close friends – although restoration of intimate relationships is, of course, the goal of many family reconciliation efforts.

The second important word in the definition is *'struggle'*. Struggle implies focused energy. An important question to ask in every relationship is, 'What is my energy focused on here?' What do I really want out of this relationship? What might the other person want that they are not saying? Are our needs and wishes compatible?

The third important word in this definition is *'perceive'*. Perception, knowing how people see and value things, is a core issue in conflict. What are the perceptions of each party about themselves, about the other, about the available resources? Are these perceptions accurate? Have the perceptions been articulated and checked recently?

Resources are always significant in conflict. Individuals may be like countries at war, fighting over scarce material resources – money is a favourite. Invisible resources can be even more significant. Sibling rivalry, for instance, is frequently about parental attention. Partners and spouses may fight about affection, levels of commitment, unequal responsibilities in the home – the list is endless. It's always important to ask, 'What resources are we both seeking?'

Finally, and often most importantly in this definition, are the words, *'interference in achieving goals'*. One person wants something and the other is using or abusing some sort of power to prevent them from getting it. Once again, invisible goals and the invisible exercise of power are the most significant and the most difficult to identify and admit. One partner aims for social success leading to professional success, and that seems to require socialising for the couple. The other partner's goal is for more rest and/or privacy. Goals conflict.

So, if you're someone who wants to create good relationships, how should you start to deal with conflict? Here are a few simple questions to ask yourself before you talk to the other person in 'your' conflict and then some practical strategies to use as you talk.

Before you speak together get some clarity in your own mind.

1. Ask yourself how much **time and energy** you are prepared to give to the other person. How important are they to you – and why? Explore what you really want to come out of this attempt to resolve conflict. Be as specific as you can. 'A quiet life' is not specific enough! 'I'd like my spouse not to bring work home more than one night a week' is a clear request.

2. When might be a good **time and place** to talk? Many of us know that when we are tired and overwrought we say things that, in the cool light of day, we regret. We know that we didn't really mean them. Finding a more neutral and mutually agreeable time and place to talk can be helpful. That probably means waiting until both parties are a bit quieter.

3. Ask yourself, 'Am I ready to **listen** to the other person?' Time yourself in an ordinary conversation. How long can you silently listen to someone? In conflict situations, most of us want to tell our story, put our point of view, explain our position. Think about how you want to be heard and give that sort of hearing to your opponent.

When the other person speaks

Listen and keep listening. Pay attention not only to what is being said, but also to how it is being said. Listen to the tone of voice, the assumptions, the perceptions. Listen to what is not being said. The teenage son of a mother I know was complaining that his mother had not treated him fairly in something that she had done. The arguments were put at length. She could not see the injustice but something else began to dawn. Finally, she said to him, 'Do you think that I am paying more attention to your sister than to you?'

'Yes,' was the muttered answer.

'So do you think I love your sister more than I love you? Do you really believe that?'

'No, of course not!' He sounded almost surprised that he had found the root of the problem himself. A hug followed and the argument was dropped. Sometimes honest listening can help both parties to understand how they feel and the effect they have on each other.

When you speak

Pay attention to your own tone of voice. Be straightforward and positive.

Watch your language. Take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings and actions. Say, 'When we don't have time to talk, I feel. . . .' Not, 'You make me feel. . . .' Use 'I' language, not finger-pointing 'you' language.

Desert the moral high ground! Be ready to talk to the other person with respect, especially if it is someone you see as your junior. Explore and ask questions in a way that is out not to score points, but to understand.

Desert the moral low ground! No matter how much you may think you have been wronged, don't turn yourself into a victim. You are the equal of the other person. Grovelling just perpetuates unequal power relationships.

Don't mindread and don't expect the other person to read your mind. Say what you need and want. This is the time to say something like, 'I'd like us to have half an hour just to be together and talk at the end of the day.'

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list of strategies. But knowing ourselves, being clear about our needs and wants, and listening well to other people can generate greater understanding and improve all our relationships. A helpful goal is the kind of reconciliation Stanley Hauerwas describes: 'Reconciliation occurs when my enemy tells me my story in a way to which I can say, "Yes." '

Fourteen soldiers in God's army

by Victor Hulbert

Many of the conscientious objectors – the infamous 'conchies' of World War I – were despised and severely treated over their political or pacifist positions. There was a small group, however, whose concerns went beyond this. Here is a brief glimpse into the trials some of them faced.

One group of fourteen Seventh-day Adventist men chose to endure beatings, starvation, and the dreaded 'crucifixion' punishment during World War I rather than work on Saturday, which they understood as the Biblical day of rest and worship. These British soldiers laid down their tools at 4pm on Friday to prepare for their Sabbath.

But the sergeants were ready for them, armed with sticks, revolvers, and boots.

Severe beatings followed. Then, battered and bruised, these conscripts were roughly thrust into prison cells, irons tightly clamped on their wrists, digging into their flesh, their hands behind their backs.

The ordeal was only beginning for these 14 young men who had been drafted a year earlier from their theology studies at London's Stanborough Missionary College, a forerunner to Newbold College. They would continue to face the brutal consequences of refusing to work on Sabbath during World War I.

Prison 'had to be worse than the trenches simply to discourage deserters', said Garth Till, whose father, Willie, was among the 14 prisoners.

Similar stories of faithful Adventists who stood firm on Sabbath observance and refused to bear arms are only now coming to light after 100 years. More than 65 million soldiers fought in World War I. More than 8.5 million died, and 21 million others were injured. Historians have described the 1914-1918 war as horrific: the effects of modern weaponry combined with outdated tactics.

For their part, however, Adventist soldiers experienced a different kind of horror at the hands of their own countrymen. Determined to keep the Sabbath and not carry weapons, they were beaten, starved, forced to clean toilets to a shine without equipment, and punished with the dreaded 'crucifixion', which saw soldiers shackled in irons and painfully strapped to a gun wheel or some other object for hours in the hot sun.

After the war, many Adventists refused to talk about the experience, even to their families. But details of their courage and devotion to God are slowly emerging through the discovery of rare letters, a handful of published articles, and interviews with surviving family members.

Adventist delegates gathered in London for a major church business meeting on the same 1914 weekend that the war started had little idea about the trials that young Adventist men would face. In special prayers the delegates pleaded that '*the forces of strife may be restrained in Europe and that the lives of our brethren and the interests of the cause may be divinely guarded*', according to a special 100th anniversary issue of the ***British Advent Messenger*** published in 1992.

The delegates did well to pray

As World War I raged on, the British Government needed thousands more troops to fight in the trenches, and about 130 Adventists ended up being drafted from 1916 to 1918.

Among the first to be called up were the 14 students from Stanborough. The young men were conscripted into the 3rd Eastern Non-Combatant Corps at Bedford Barracks on 23 May, 1916, and soon dispatched by ship to France.

Despite the non-combatant status of their military unit, the Adventists faced trouble even before they docked in France. On the ship they were handed rifles but they refused to carry them.

Upon reaching the French port of Le Havre, the sergeant separated the Adventists from the rest of the group and forced them to stand on one side of the dock. Then he ordered the tallest and strongest of the Adventists, whom he perceived to be the ringleader, to carry large rocks from one end of the dock to the other. After the soldier completed the task, he had to carry the rocks back.

The sergeant, however, quickly softened his stance on orders from a superior, a colonel, who visited with the Adventists one evening and inquired about their former occupations and religion.

'On learning that we were Seventh-day Adventists, the officers inquired what were our peculiar beliefs and objections to warfare. Turning to our colour sergeant, the colonel (commanding officer) said: "See that these men are excused duty from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday," ' soldier H. W. Lowe wrote in a letter dated 28 May, 1916.

'What relief these words brought to us all!' Lowe said. 'Bear in mind that we were granted the very thing we desired before we had asked for it. We believe God has been extremely good to us all.'

The next 18 months passed smoothly, with the Adventists working mainly as stevedores, unloading ships on the docks at Le Havre and elsewhere.

But a new young officer took charge in November 1917, and he declared that Sabbath duty was mandatory. When the Adventists refused to work, they were placed under court martial and sentenced to six months of hard labour at Military Prison No. 3 in Le Havre.

'The prison routine was very rigorous and obviously geared psychologically to control a tough lot of men,' Lowe was to write many years later.[1]

At the prison gates the guards promptly confiscated all the prisoners' Bibles. But one of them managed to hide a copy of the Gospel of John, which the group divided up into scraps of paper that they tucked into their caps.

Guards not blessed with milk of human kindness

The Adventists were isolated from each other, forced to work long hours at double pace, and faced severe punishment if they fell behind, Lowe said.

'The armed guards were not blessed with the milk of human kindness when administering these punishments,' he said. 'On some occasions a man would be tied to a wheel in crucifixion fashion for hours in the sun. All prisoners dreaded what they called "crucifixion". '

Writing 40 years later to a young man who asked about the experience, another Adventist prisoner, Worsley W. Armstrong, said: 'I will not go into the details of the horrible treatment we received, but finally each one of us was cast into a small cell, approximately seven feet by four feet, with iron walls and a concrete floor. It was midwinter. There, after punishment, our hands were placed behind our backs and locked with what were called "figures of eights". This was very painful.'

Armstrong developed a heart condition in prison, and he lived with the serious consequences of his incarceration for the rest of his life.

A third Adventist prisoner, Alfred F. Bird, died prematurely in 1944, partly as a result of ill health caused by this spell in prison. His daughter said in an interview that the marks of the irons digging into his wrists could be seen until the day he died.

It remains unclear how Adventist authorities in Britain learned about the mistreatment of the Adventist prisoners. The alert might have come from a chaplain who conducted weekly worship services at the prison. He heard shrieks from the cells as he passed the prison one day, stopped and asked to see the Adventists. His request was denied, and he wasn't allowed inside the prison to conduct these services again.

When Adventist leaders in Britain appealed to the War Office about the treatment of the prisoners in January 1918, about three months after their imprisonment, authorities replied that the matter had already been investigated and the guilty officers had been reprimanded or demoted.

A meeting between Adventist leaders and a general investigating their complaint spurred the early release of the 14 from military service a month later.

Albert Penson, one of the 14, said they were marched out of the prison 'with the lightest hearts in the world – unbeaten and unbroken, although scarcely recognisable to each other'.

'They gave us three days' rations and our personal belongings and almost drove us from the prison under rifle and bayonet escort,' he said in an article published in 1974.[2]

After a hearing by the Central Tribunal, the Adventists were released from the army and then from civil prison, transferring to Knutsford Work Centre. All 14 were free men by July 1918. The war ended on 11 November, 1918.

Many of the prisoners went on to hold leadership roles in the Adventist Church and became strong spokesmen for the rights of conscientious objectors when conscription re-emerged as an issue in World War II.

Their first Sabbath in prison

Those fourteen young Adventists in Military Prison No. 3 never forgot their first Sabbath there, the day they prepared by putting down their tools at 4pm on Friday.

According to a 1957 letter by Armstrong, here's what happened:

'When the Sabbath morning came, I remember hearing the door of the cell to my right being opened and the sergeant giving instructions to one of our young men to go to work. I could not hear his reply, but I did hear him leave the cell and the door was bolted.

'The same thing happened to the youth on the other side, and I was left by myself. I heard other doors opened and bolted in the same way, and finally the door to my cell was opened, and I was commanded to go to work.

'I refused to do this in a courteous way, explaining once more the reason for my refusal. I fully expected to be thrashed and beaten. . . .

'But to my surprise the sergeant was quite affable. He told me not to be a fool; that all the other young men had come to their senses and they had all gone to work as good "Britishers" should, and that I would only get into further trouble if I was stubborn.

'This news, of course, surprised me, and I could hardly believe it, but I remember making the statement that whatever my brethren might do, I must remain firm to the truth of God, and I endeavoured to get some sort of spiritual understanding into the mind of that gross sergeant.

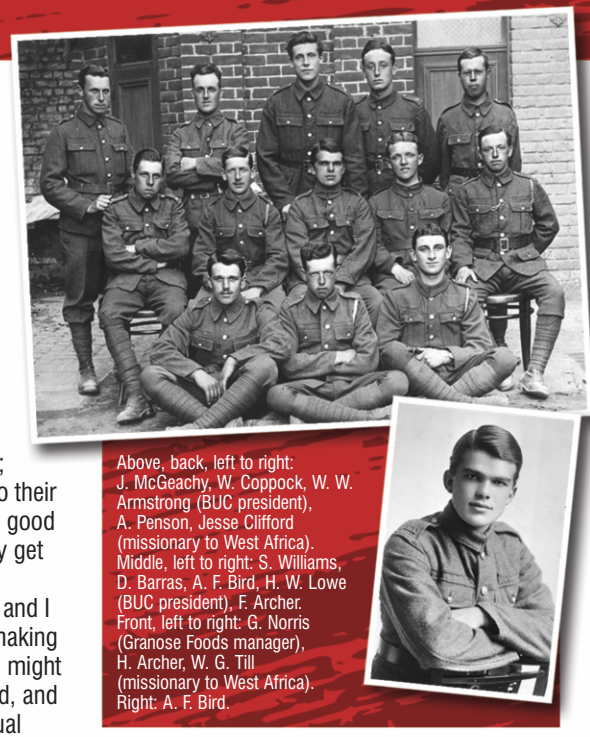
'I learned later, however, that all our young men in the cells remained faithful.'

The sergeant's attitude abruptly changed when Armstrong refused to work, and the inevitable beating followed. But that was not the end of the story.

Armstrong said: 'A short while afterward, a little way down the corridor I heard somebody whistling one of our well-known hymns – although I cannot remember just which one it was. I was surprised to hear this because to whistle or sing was counted as gross insubordination. But to my surprise I heard a voice singing with the whistling, and it was only a question of seconds before many other voices were singing this hymn, and I found myself spontaneously joining in the singing of that good old hymn.

'The singing of that hymn brought wonderful comfort and strength to us as we were there in that prison.'

It also had an effect on the sergeant and other non-commissioned officers who gathered in the corridor and didn't know what to do.



Above, back, left to right: J. McGeachy, W. Coppock, W. W. Armstrong (BUC president), A. Penson, Jesse Clifford (missionary to West Africa). Middle, left to right: S. Williams, D. Barras, A. F. Bird, H. W. Lowe (BUC president), F. Archer. Front, left to right: G. Norris (Granose Foods manager), H. Archer, W. G. Till (missionary to West Africa). Right: A. F. Bird.

They became subdued, and, Armstrong said, 'We finished that hymn in an atmosphere of absolute quiet.'

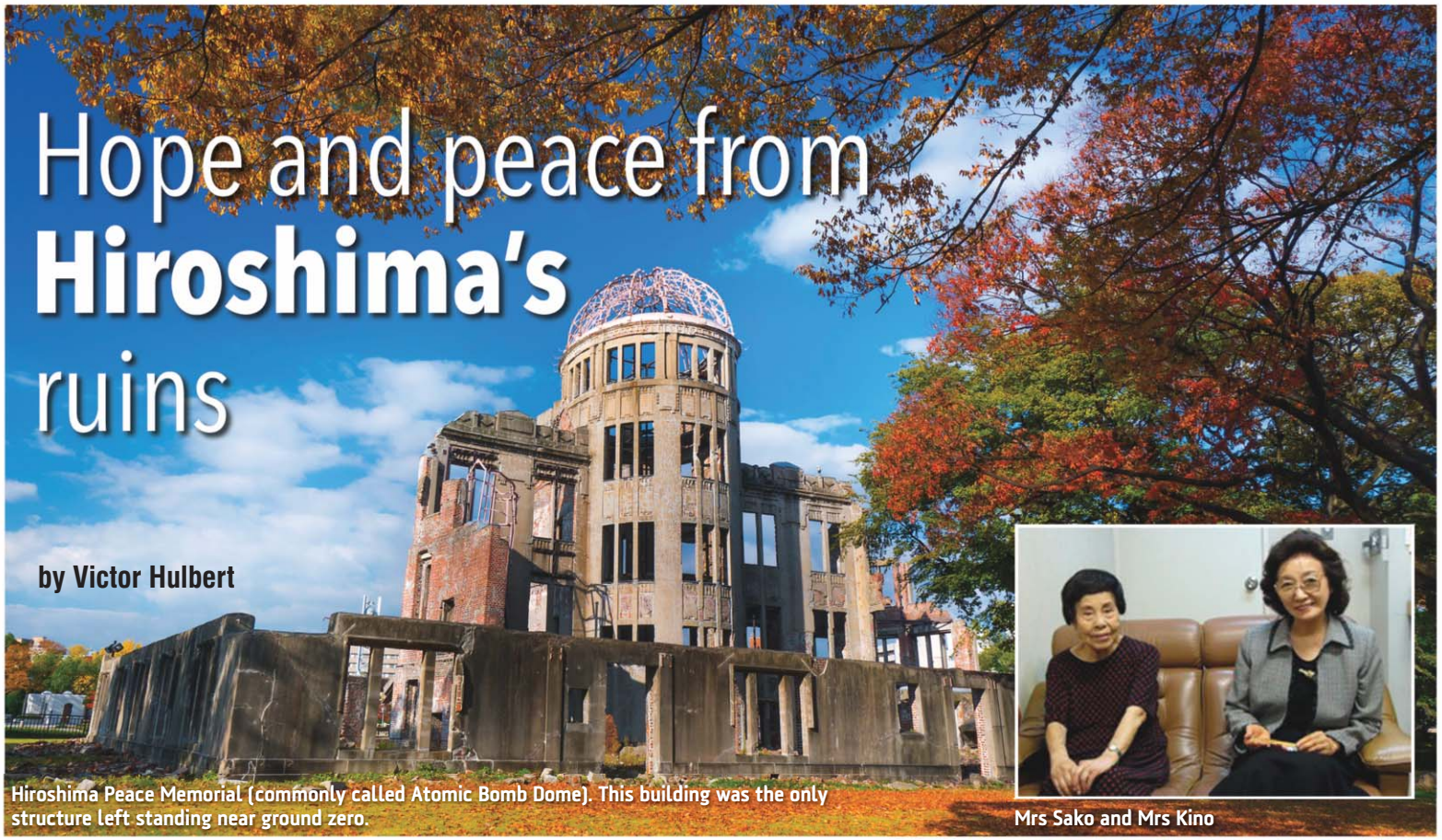
While much of the horror of the prison has faded over the years, that moment remained. Even 40 years later Armstrong could state with clarity: 'There was something in the hymn itself as well as the spirit in which it was sung which affected those brutal men, for brutal they were to the extreme. And although we did experience considerable persecution subsequently, I felt that these men had far more respect for us after they had heard our singing.'

Victor Hulbert has conducted extensive research into the Adventists who were drafted during World War I, and, as he worked, he learned that one of the 14 prisoners, Willie G. Till, was his great-uncle. More information about Hulbert's research and a related documentary film, A Matter of Conscience*, can be found at the website:* adventist.org.uk/ww1.

[1]Article in *British Advent Messenger*, 1973
[2]*British Advent Messenger*

Hope and peace from Hiroshima's ruins

by Victor Hulbert



Hiroshima Peace Memorial (commonly called Atomic Bomb Dome). This building was the only structure left standing near ground zero.

Mrs Sako and Mrs Kino

The little paper lanterns float down the river in serene beauty. Over a period of hours many thousands float by. It is a moving experience standing in the twilight, watching a scene so peaceful, but with a lurking memory of the horror, death and destruction that it commemorates.

The festival is *Toro-nagashi*, the floating of paper lanterns down the Motoyasu River in downtown Hiroshima. This year the event is especially well attended. The few remaining *hibakusha* (A-bomb survivors) gather with tens of thousands of local residents, tourists and pilgrims to remember the dead and to pray for peace.

It's still hard to believe, even 70 years on, that on 6 August, 1945, a single bomb detonated 580 metres above the centre of Hiroshima instantly killed 70,000 people – and within a few months had killed that many again. Yet there is hope for the future in retelling such stories from the past.

Seventh-day Adventists have long had a presence in Hiroshima. Just outside the central area they run a well-respected school which is part of a beautiful church centre. That is where I met Mrs Sako and Mrs Kino, both *hibakusha*.

Mrs Kino was in her late twenties in August 1945. She lived about 4km (2.5 miles) from the epicentre of the blast and missed the main effects of the detonation. Trained in first aid, she spent her time helping those whose bodies were scorched by the searing heat blasts. Many had their skin sliding off their arms like undercooked pizza topping, while others were lacerated by broken glass. Her story is one to stop you sleeping at night. Yet she did not tell it in a sense of bitterness. She spoke of hope. She spoke of how God had protected their Adventist community so that not one life was lost. She spoke of the help that she and her church family were able to provide to the survivors.

Mrs Kino told me: 'I knew God's promise in the Bible that although many fall I will [be saved]. Indeed, I think, I can feel the promise of that fulfilled for myself. I think many things happen in the world, but I think the most important thing is, just forget about fighting, but if we become close to each other, hand in hand, and believe in peace, I think that will bring a bright future.'

Mrs Sako was not so fortunate. She was a 17-year-old schoolgirl, seconded by the military to help demolish buildings to make fire breaks in a city built principally of wood. When the *Enola Gay* flew overhead and dropped its solitary bomb she was only 1.5km (0.9 miles) from the epicentre.

She told me how she saw a great flash. A mixture of blue and orange. How she was thrown over a two-metre-high wall where she landed, blinded by the blast, tucked between the wall and a water tank. She could not say how many hours she lay there, but after a time her sight started to return, so she crawled out into a scene of absolute devastation. All the soldiers and the men that were there at the time of the blast were gone. The houses were just flattened. There was just nothing.

Mrs Sako survived due to the love of a father who never gave up on her. The first aid posts refused to treat her, telling her father that they had to help those who had some chance of surviving. She suffered for weeks with breathing difficulties, severe burns on the exposed parts of her body, maggot-infested wounds and radiation sickness.

'Since then,' she says, 'I really dislike war. I hate war. I really don't want my children to experience what I experienced. I really try to do my best to prevent the thing that happened.'

Mrs Kino and Mrs Sako are exceptional people. With what they have gone through it would be understandable if they continued to hold hurt and bitterness in their hearts. Instead, they hold forgiveness.

Mrs Sako married when she was 21. Despite the risk of mutation or deformity she bore a son. Thankfully he was perfect, but it started her thinking about religion. She realised that she needed something in her life. An explanation for what had happened. She looked around at different religions, starting with her

traditional Buddhist and Shinto roots but also looking at various Christian churches. Eventually she received an invitation to an Adventist evangelistic meeting. According to her it was in those meetings that she 'found the thing that did not change. Everything around me may change, but I believe in a God who does not change.' That made the difference for her and she became a leading light in the Hiroshima Adventist church. She states, 'Definitely I think my faith taught me forgiveness. My father was a Buddhist and it is the atomic bomb that led me towards Christianity. I asked my father if I could become a Christian. My father said, "Well yes, Christianity teaches love. Buddhism teaches compassion. There is no objection from me." '

Despite the events of her horrific past, Mrs Sako has found a hope for the future. She has been made whole by her faith in a Creator God. She states, 'The first time I went to church after the evangelistic series the subject was Genesis. I fell in love with the story of Genesis, of creation, and especially the idea that we are special. That we are in God's image. That makes all people special to me. That encourages me. I really treasure that God is my Friend and the church is a support.'

I visited Hiroshima to report on a tragedy. I left the city with a story of hope. Life is surely full of surprises.

Mrs Kino and Mrs Sako are now deceased but have left a lasting legacy. See more at: *http://adventist.org.uk/news/news-archive/buc/hope-in-hiroshima-seventy-years-on#sthash.qbq0vRK6.dpuf*

Adapted from an article first shared in *Adventist Review*, August 2005


Artists 3D impression of the Peace Garden

A special new Peace Garden to commemorate the experience of First World War conscientious objectors will be opened on 21 September in Watford.

Quiet courage commemorated . . .

by Victor Hulbert

Is there value in looking back on events and experiences that happened one hundred years ago? Are there lessons to learn from the past, or is it just a pointless exercise? Some might scorn such retrospection. Others might fall in with the Christian poet, Steve Turner, who wrote, 'History repeats itself. Has to. No one listens.'

Turner makes a pertinent point. What if we listened? What if the tragedy of conflicts past could teach us crucial lessons to help avoid them tomorrow? Wouldn't it be better to spend our time and energy around the conference table to prevent war rather than to sue for peace afterwards?

In today's conflict-ridden world there is much to learn from those greats of the past who chose to walk the road of peace with quiet courage rather than aggression. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr spring quickly to mind, but there are less illustrious ones too. What about the thousands of quiet heroes during World War I and other conflicts, the ones who spoke up for the value of life, who instilled moral values and principles in those around them, and who looked for a brighter future even in the midst of horror?

Yes, it is worth looking back and learning these lessons. As George S. Patton once said, *'Prepare for the unknown by studying how others in the past have coped with the unforeseeable and the unpredictable.'*

Christians generally learn from the combined heritage of Scripture and of history. That is what led up to 20,000 British conscientious objectors during World War I to choose prison rather than take a human life, to stand for their faith and moral values 'though the heavens fall'. That is what turned Desmond Doss from being a scorned and ridiculed Seventh-day Adventist medic in World War II into a heroic recipient of the American Congressional Medal of Honour. It is what makes us admire Francine Karekezi and many like her who share forgiveness, healing, and hope for the perpetrators of genocide.

It is an attempt to capture and remind us of those lessons of history that has led to the construction of a special Peace Garden in the grounds of the Seventh-day Adventist Church UK headquarters at Stanborough Park, Watford. The garden is principally intended to commemorate the stand taken by the Adventist conscientious objectors of World War I, along with other 'quiet heroes' like the Watford Quakers and the many others imprisoned for their pacifist beliefs. The construction coincides with the hundredth anniversary of the introduction of conscription.

Many of the Adventist conscientious objectors actually lived around the Stanborough Park area just before the outbreak of the Great War, and it is entirely fitting that this simple garden should become a place of tranquillity to remember their strong convictions and their courage. Hopefully it will also be a place for anyone to sit, relax and reflect on their own busy lives and the moral choices they face.

World War I started over a hundred years ago. World War II has come and gone, as have wars in Vietnam, Korea, the Congo, the Balkans and so many other parts of the world. The Peace Garden is also there to provide a space of quietness to pray for those caught up in current conflicts: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, Somalia, and, sadly, so many more. It also provides a quiet space to pray for the conflicts we face in our own lives, our families, and our environments.

The garden, open to all, will be a standing testament to those who value peaceful solutions to problems large and small. It will re-emphasise Jesus' continuing promise from the then-troubled world of the first century: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27, NIV).

Editor's note: The Peace Garden is located at Stanborough Park, St Albans Road, in Watford. Please feel free to visit it, but bear in mind that it may be used from time to time for commemorative events.


The new Peace Garden under construction — *Photo: Victor Hulbert*

What will your message be?

by Ian Sweeney

For many people, 21 September may not be a date that holds any special significance. In 1981, however, the *International Day of Peace* was established by the United Nations General Assembly and it chose 21 September as the fixed annual date to remind the world to devote itself to the ideals of peace – both *within* and *among* all nations and peoples.

The date was originally chosen to coincide with the opening session of the UN General Assembly, and the first *Day of Peace* was observed on 21 September 1982.

In preparation for the 2015 *Day of Peace*, the UN Secretary-General made this plea: 'I call on all warring parties to lay down their weapons and observe a global ceasefire. To them I say: stop the killings and the destruction, and create space for lasting peace.'[1] Ban Ki-Moon called upon the world to make room for peace by starting with one day! Sad to say, even though the UN Secretary-General was only calling for one day of peace, it is highly unlikely to ever be achieved.

Calls for peace are not new. Some 2,000 years ago, Jesus, during His first recorded public address, made the following statement: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' (Matthew 5:9, NIV.) As the founder of the world's largest religion, Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who are 'peacemakers'.

Now, I am aware that the accusation is often made that 'religion is the cause of war'; however, Jesus emphatically said that His followers ought to be peacemakers! Every day when we watch, read or listen to the news, we are told of the casualties and consequences of war. This is surely, then, as good a time as any to re-examine what Jesus meant by calling on His followers to be peacemakers.

The UN is calling on the world to cease hostilities on 21 September, but peacemaking for Jesus is more than the cessation of hostilities or the absence of war. Warring parties may stop firing their bullets or missiles at one another, but, while that is commendable, the catalyst for hostilities to resume may still be present where factions still cherish hatred and distrust.

For Jesus, peacemaking extends into the realm of our attitudes and feelings. In fact, in that same speech He made at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus also challenged His audience to examine their preconceived ideas when He said, 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven . . .' (Matthew 5:43-45, NIV-UK). His meaning couldn't be clearer: the 'sons' or followers of God are not only to be engaged in peacemaking activities: *they are to actually love those people who may hate them passionately!*

The word that Jesus used in Matthew 5:9 for peace comes from the Hebrew word '*shalom*'. While the word '*shalom*' is used as both a greeting and a parting, at a deeper level it describes peace as comprising harmonious personal relationships and uninterrupted goodwill between people.[2]

The peace/*shalom* that Jesus spoke of describes not only *what is absent* but also *what is present*. For Him, the absence of war is not enough to ensure peace ('*shalom*'), but the presence of happy, harmonious relationships is. Indeed, if there are good relationships between people it is self-evident that there will not be any reason or necessity for war – as people do not go to war with people they actually love and care for.

It also needs to be said that Jesus pronounced a blessing upon His followers who *were peacemakers*. He did not pronounce a blessing upon those persons who *were peace lovers*. A peace lover is not the same as a peacemaker. Peace lovers will avoid scenarios of conflict to maintain their own peace, but a peacemaker will intervene in an arena of conflict between warring factions at risk to their own health and safety. *Peacemakers recognise that peace is not gained through evasion or avoidance, but through intervention.*

Peacemakers are people who actively work towards their peace goals! Peacemakers may operate on national and international levels all the way through to the interpersonal level, just between two people. Peacemakers focus on restoring fractured relationships.

Followers of Jesus become peacemakers because He, as their leader, set that example for them. In fact, among the many and varied titles that Jesus is given is 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6). When His birth was announced to the shepherds in Bethlehem the angels cried, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' (Luke 2:14, KJV.) In one of Jesus' final conversations with His disciples He bequeathed to them His peace: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. . . .' (John 14:27, NIV.)

The story of Jesus dying upon the cross describes Him being a peacemaker, trying to reconcile humanity to God, bringing us back into a harmonious, loving relationship with our Creator. Indeed, some of the final words of Jesus upon the cross were to His Father as He prayed for His enemies who had placed Him there: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34, NIV.) Jesus is history's supreme example of a peacemaker! And so, today's peacemakers will do everything possible to be like Jesus, passionately striving 'to produce right relationships between man and man' (William Barclay, *The Plain Man Looks at the Beatitudes*, page 94).

This year the International Day of Peace on 21 September may not result in a cessation of hostilities across the globe, but it will certainly remind us of the need for peace. In the lead-up to last year's Day of Peace, more than 1,000 staff from the UN Secretariat building stood in its grounds and spelt out a message which could clearly be read from above: '**WHAT R U DOING 4 PEACE?**'

What will *your* message be?

[1]*http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/*
[2]*http://www.jewishdictionary.org/hebrew-words/shalom.html*

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