WTB Monthly Meeting November 5, 2017 Jowonio School 3-5 pm

About 28 women gathered for this meeting about the origami paper cranes and how they became a symbol of peace in the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing. Tables were arranged end to end in two slightly bent rows around a TV monitor. Japanese music was playing as we entered; Japanese tea was offered along with a lovely assortment of refreshments.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 PM. Immediate Past President Betty Lamb warmly introduced President Sue Savion, noting that Sue is an educator, an activist, and a woman committed to women’s issues. Sue began the meeting with the Bahai Prayer for peace. Our Mission Statement and Safe Place Declaration were read. Before introducing today’s program, Sue made several announcements:

* Eve Tamela’s obituary and a thank you note from Betty Lamb were posted in the meeting room.
* Interfaith Works has a calendar including dates of religious holidays from all faiths which can be purchased.
* WTB has been approved to hold an Oasis Class to inform others about WTB and its mission. A single 1 ½ hour class is proposed. Let Sue know if you are available to help lead the class.
* On Wednesday Nov. 15th InterFaith Works will dedicate a display of religious symbols representative of faith traditions on its Interreligious Council. The Golden Rule as interpreted by many faiths has been chosen to represent WTB as a tangential part of this display.
* Starfish International seeks sets of books for its students in The Gambia. Sue’s friend and fellow author Bruce Coville is donating sets of his books which we can give to Starfish. WTB Advisory member Yassin Sarr Fox heads Starfish and can transport the books.
* On December 10th WTB will hold a meeting at the Gage House from 2-4 pm. The program will include a tour and an opportunity to dialogue with the Gage House’s Girl Ambassadors for Human Rights.

Sue introduced our presenter, Diane Lansing, a retired art teacher for Liverpool Central Schools, who has a long involvement with the lovely origami cranes that have become a symbol for universal peace after the Hiroshima bombing. Over 140,000 people were immediately killed in Hiroshima, although this number rises to 297,000 when those-like Sadako-who died from exposure to atomic bomb radiation are included. What is important about hearing Sadako’s story is that the tragedy becomes more palpable when one can put a human face on it, rather than an abstract number, however large. This is very similar to what we are doing at WTB: by meeting face to face with others who have different “labels” from us, we begin to see beyond our differences to our shared humanity. By sharing our stories, we can see our similarities. Stories bring us together. Diane was so moved by Sadako’s story that she began folding paper cranes herself; she has taught her students and many adults how to make them in many different settings. Diane carries origami cranes with her at all times and hands them out as a thank you for random acts of kindness given to her by strangers. As you fold each crane you imbue it with a special wish. After the 2011 earthquake/tsunami in Japan, Diane made and sold “baby crane” earrings to raise money for the Japan Society’s Japanese Earthquake Relief Fund. She has been to Hiroshima three times—the last time in 2012 to hand deliver 2000 paper cranes. If WTB makes 1000 cranes, Diane promised to personally hand deliver and dedicate them in Hiroshima!

Accompanying herself on guitar, Diane sang the haunting song “I Come and Stand” based on a poem written in 1948 by Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet. The narrator is a child who has died in the Hiroshima bomb blast and who pleads: “All that I ask is that for peace/ You fight today, you fight today/ So that the children of this world/ May live and grow and laugh and play.” This moving song is what catalyzed Diane’s involvement with Hiroshima and the paper cranes.

We then watched a video “Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.” Briefly, Sadako was two years old when the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima August 6, 1945. Ten years later she developed leukemia, “the atomic bomb disease.” The Japanese have a legend that the crane lives for 1000 years, and whoever folds 1000 paper cranes will be granted a wish. While Sadako was in the hospital she folded 1300 paper cranes, folding in each her desire to get well. Sadly, Sadako died at age 12; her classmates and school children from 3200 schools in Japan raised the money to build the Children’s Peace Monument to honor her and all the children who died as a result of the atomic bomb. A statue of Sadako holding a crane above her head stands in Hiroshima Peace Park; the inscription reads: “This is our cry. This is our prayer. For building peace in the world.” Thousands of paper cranes are displayed near the monument.

Now it was time to learn to fold origami cranes ourselves. Diane passed out square pieces of origami paper, model cranes, and pamphlets with directions for folding origami cranes.

As supplies were being passed out, Sue Savion congratulated Joan Burstyn, WTB Advisory Board member, recently honored by Art Rage Gallery for her lifetime achievements and activism. Joan expressed her concern about the danger of nuclear war today in the face of the North Korean situation.

Diane walked us step by step through the 26 step process of making our own paper crane. She said the three most important things to remember about folding paper cranes are: the paper must be perfectly square; you need to make precise folds; you need to make very firm creases. Making the cranes was really fun for everyone and challenging for some of us. We collaborated, each helping her neighbor; Diane tried to get to everyone whose crane folds were askew and assist them. At the end of the meeting, we each had made an origami crane imbued with our special wish for peace.

Diane had hoped that we would be able to make three origami peace cranes in order to feel confident enough to make them ourselves at home. Unfortunately we ran out of time. So Diane would like to make this dual offer:

1. Diane will carry origami paper with her to every WTB meeting/event in the future. During the socializing time she would be glad to work with one or two women at a time leading them through the 26 steps of making an origami crane.
2. If anyone would like to invite a group of 4-6 women to her house and has a table big enough for us to work on together, Diane would be glad to have a “making cranes circle” in which she will go around and help whoever needs help. Eventually, we can fold cranes while we socialize-- just like an old fashioned knitting circle.
3. In the meantime, anyone who would like to practice making canes at home should try the following video: how to make an origami crane <http://origami.org.uk/origamicrane>.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Bova, WTB Secretary