Summit Monthly Meeting’s Contribution to the Peace Ribbon Around the Pentagon - August, 1985

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1982: Justine Merritt, a fifty-nine-year-old former high school teacher in Denver, Colorado, who learned needlework from her grandmother and mother, is inspired to tie a Ribbon around the Pentagon in Washington, DC, USA from the theme; "What I cannot bear to think of as lost forever in a nuclear war", and writes about it to friends on her holiday card list.

A plan began to emerge among a group of close friends to encircle the Pentagon with a ribbon of panels on August 4, 1985 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As news of the idea spread, thousands made panels. Motifs ranged from family portraits to butterflies, abstract designs, and, especially, children. Themes dwelt on a concern for wholeness and relatedness (between nature and humanity, among peoples of different races and ethnicities, and between the personal and the political).

1985: August 4th: More than 20,000 people marched on Washington, D. C., surrounding the Pentagon and other buildings with a 15-mile long ribbon of panels they had sewn in protest of nuclear armament.

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Maine landscape, Pine trees represent members of her family – Deb Haviland as did her mother.
World – Roy Darlington
Peace Doves – Penny Brome
Sunbirst & Heart – Love Lois
Sunrise behind Mountain– Claire Kissil
Swirls of Light – Eleanor Smith
Ribbon is held by Chris Nugent, Claire Kissil, Su Zivi, Gabi Bailey -2005

The panels of the peace banner were made by various friends to wrap around the Pentagon in Washington DC in August 1985 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the United States dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The theme of these grass-roots “Peace Ribbon” was “What I could not bear to lose in another war” and the response from individuals and groups all over the country was beautiful and inspiring.

A group of us travelled to DC on a bus and tied our panels together with those of thousands of people from all over the US. The “ribbon” was much longer than was needed to surround the Pentagon, and stretched over a wide area - someone with better Washington geography than mine could probably tell you where all we went! As Cindy observed, it got disappointingly little press coverage for such a huge turnout.

At the end of the day, we gathered our panels and brought them back to the meeting house, but mine was never found - it had a lengthy dedication on the back, suggesting that it would carry a prayer for peace wherever it went, and I often wonder what became of it. I have photographs of it but no way to scan them into an email.

I believe the “Metamorphosis” panel was Asa Watkins, and Margaret Heyboer’s was “plain and fancy” and I think the Menger-Hammond girls did the one with the (upside-down) “peace signs” (I do apologise if I have mis-identified anyone’s work here!)

I think of Deb Haviland as the “mother” of this project, but perhaps only because she did most of the driving of the bus to DC. I do remember that we got lost on the way out of the city and I was so impressed with the Quakerly calm way that everybody dealt with that situation!

It was a very small mini-bus, and was shared with the Drew Bookgroup, to which I still belong. Deb H. and Susan Chase (who was also on the bus) were crossover people who belonged to both groups. The bookgroup panel is still in Susan’s house and comes out and is celebrated from time to time.

I remember an overall feeling of JOY and celebration about the whole event, despite its solemn memorial significance.

- Liza Savory

I made a panel, Kirsten and Lenore did, and so did my mother. I only remember my mother's because there was a strange story to it. There was a small stall in some mall in NJ where they would take a photo and print it on various objects. I bought a tea towel with an image of Kirsten and Lenore and sent it to my mother as a gift. My mother used the towel to make her piece of the peace ribbon. My whole family and my mother went
to the march in DC. For some reason, the organizers had cut the ribbon in pieces. I never understood why. I always liked the image of "wrapping" the Pentagon in the peace ribbon which was my understanding of the original plan. In any case, we got to DC and the ribbon was in pieces. There were several hundred thousand people. It was wonderful. I looked up and saw K&L's smiling faces on a perfect stranger who was marching with my mother's ribbon on his back. As for my piece - I don't recall what I did. I think I made something with fabric painting or batik.

- Eve Menger Hammond

Bill and I went to the Ribbon March and carried banners that day. We too fondly remember those who were with us. All the banners were tied together as we carried them. It was huge.

Ever optimistic for Peace, we remembered that there seemed to be little media coverage of the event. Despite that, it was heartening to see so many people from all over the country participate in the event.

- Cindy Kwalwasser

It was interesting to read Liza’s and your memories about the peace ribbon, and to know this remnant of it is getting some more use. I don’t think I have anything significant to add. I’d forgotten that some of them were ultimately hung at the meeting. My panel was one that we couldn’t find at the end of that day in Washington so I don’t know where it ended up. It was a great thing to be involved with at the time and one of my favorite memories is of taking all the meeting and book-group panels out to somewhere in rural NJ which was the gathering place for this area and seeing 100s of colorful panels laid out all over the grass and hanging from tree branches on a beautiful sunny day.

- Love, Susan Chase

**Peace Ribbon witness for 2000th US service person died in Iraq – October, 2005**

*For a Dark & Windy Night: Candles & holders from Christmas Meeting, set along the curb witnessed to a steady stream of cars in both directions.*

*For a Windy Twilight before Vigilers gathered: Calvin helped me put up the Peace Banner (from the Gathering Room) flapping in the breeze.*

*Both clerks of Peace & Social Action were there to witness and talk to vigilers who joined us from Madison - after seeing the notice on MoveOn.org.*

*Robin, as Communications Clerk, with long distance coaching, got our Meeting Sign lit up and arranged for our inclusion in a front page story in the Morris Daily Record.*

Yes I agree, this is a wonderful living history that we should record somewhere. I was delighted to share with Calvin and Carson the Meaning or Theme of the banner — all the children have looked at it and recently Emily Liss-Andrews suggested that we make another banner — but it will now take on new meaning for me to know you were all symbolizing “what you would not want to loose”. Also I think it a gift that one piece ended up with someone else...

- Jacky Burns [co-clerk of Religious Education]
How wonderful it is to have this kind of exchange and the memories and background it demonstrates. Is there some way, somewhere we can collect these memories? A CD plus written record in a binder that permits our history through memories to be shared? I know we are preserving our minutes and we generate memorial minutes. We also have the White’s photo album of the groundbreaking for the meeting house. But what about such things as Liza’s and Claire’s archeological dig?

- Robin Whitely

Not only is this a wonderful history to be recorded by Meeting, but it might also make a delightful news story that would present the peace work of Friends to the general public.

- Margaret Carne

What is most exciting to me is the buzz of interest that this seems to have stirred in meeting (which is why I wanted you to post your memories more widely!) It is lovely to see people responding to a piece of meeting history, but even more, to a piece of outreach work that involved so much of the meeting as it was in those days. When I have time (ah me, when!) I mean to try “Peace Ribbon” in my browser, and see if there is any kind of official history of the event. As Cindy observed, it got disappointingly little press coverage for such a huge turnout. Problem is, apart from email, I don’t like the computer much, and don’t find much time to spend sitting at it, but one of these evenings, I will.

The spontaneous grass-roots effort that grew into the 1985 Peace Ribbon project is still alive and if you haven’t already heard more than enough about it, you can find out more at:

http://www.theribboninternational.org/history.html

- Love, Liza