

Little Sticks in the Wheel of Hate and Revenge

**“Let’s tell the stories, that put their little sticks in the wheel of hate
and revenge”**

This booklet was first written for the participants in the international symposium
“Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace”
5-11 august in Järna, Sweden
www.kulturhuset.nu/storytelling

By
Karsten Mathiasen

Fredsforlaget
Faxe 2007

ISBN 87-92070-00-1

I was not able to participate in the symposium, but I found the time to make this document for the participants in order to share stories with them. We are some Danish storytellers, who have formed a conspiracy! A conspiracy about finding those “stories which put their little sticks in the wheel of hate and revenge”. The famous Danish storyteller, Vigga Bro, is the author of these words.

I am a circus clown and a reconciliation worker. I have held the first title for 25 years, the other I got recently from Jacob Holdt, (www.americanpictures.com) when I entertained the children at the opening of his “Ghettogether” photo exhibition and 60th birthday. Take a look at his website for great peace inspiration!

While making this booklet in the busy summer time, fighting to keep circus tents to the ground in strong storms, clowning in heavy rain and having a very good time, I have not had the time to write my personal stories about forgiveness and being forgiving. My career as a naughty boy, and twice divorced, has certainly given me a great many of these experiences....

I have founded my own grassroot think tank: “Think Tank for Forgiveness” with the website www.tilgivelse.dk. “Tilgivelse” is the word for forgiveness in Danish. If you “Google” this word, my website pops up as the first of a quarter of a billion! Making this document for you is also a long-desired step towards making an English version of my website.

Ahmed Abdullah

The first story I will present to you is the story about Ahmed Abdullah. In 2003 my ex-wife found an article about him and said to me: "Here is something for you!" And it really was! (Article in the Danish COOP magazine Samvirke Jan. 2001, by Else Lidegaard) For a couple of years, I had been working on finding stories about reconciliation and forgiveness, and Ahmed's story was amazing. I thought, "If this man still fights for reconciliation and forgiveness, there is still a chance for the world!" I could not rest until I got his phone number via the UNWRA, and I was so happy to talk to him and find out that he had maintained his standpoint despite even harder conditions for the Palestinians.

I invited Ahmed to the third (and until now last) storytelling festival, I arranged in Faxe in 2004. I had my dream fulfilled to walk around my farm hand in hand with Ahmed, and I am very proud that my 14 year-old daughter wrote the following text about his visit (as a school exercise in English with the theme: "A Hero").



Ahmed Abdullah, February 2006, a couple of months before he retired as school leader. Throughout his time as school leader, he regularly gathered his 1500 students to speak to them about forgiveness. "Forgiveness is the spirit of Islam", he always says. He is fighting for peace by peaceful means, among others boycotting Israeli products to force the Israelis to respect the human rights of the Palestinians.

A hero

Introduction

To me a hero is a person who helps, and comforts those who need it, without asking anything in return. A hero is someone who cares about people, animals and the nature. I think a true hero is a person who believes in peace and no revenge. A hero should be able to forgive. I do not believe in action heroes and superstars. Because they are not true heroes, but the person I am going to tell about, is a real and true hero...

The situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians

The situation could be compared, to how the Indians were treated, when the white people came and took their land, and made them live in small reservations with bad land. When the Second World War ended, the Zionists (a Jewish organisation) wanted to gather all the Jews

in Palestine, the land they claimed, "God" had promised them. But there was a "little" problem: there was already someone who lived there, the Palestinians. The consequence of that you will learn more about in the following...

Ahmed Abdullah ´s story

Ahmed was born in 1947. He lived in a little ordinary village, with 250 people. The people had a quiet and peaceful life, until the day when Israeli soldiers attacked the village, and they had to flee. Ahmed ´s dad died before they got out, and on the road away from the village, there was thrown a bomb down on them from a plane. The bomb killed Ahmed ´s two brothers and five sisters, and the six months old Ahmed was hard injured. When the dust had laid down, his mother called for her children, one by one. No one answered. After that she became unconscious.

When the rest of his relatives, had come to themselves, they had thought Ahmed ´s mother was the only one, who was still alive. They brought her to a hospital, while they brought Ahmed and his brothers and sisters to a graveyard. They buried the girls first in one grave and they had already laid Ahmed and his brothers in another grave. But when they were just going to close the grave, one of them touched Ahmed by accident, at one of his wounds. Luckily Ahmed let out a cry of pain. Surprised and happy over, that he was alive, they took him up and laid him aside, while they buried the others. Then the Israeli soldiers attacked again and in the hurry to get away from them, everybody forgot about Ahmed.

Ahmed was found later, and first he was brought to his aunt, but she did not know how to help him. His wounds got infected, and he was finally brought to a hospital, but all the doctors could think of to help him was to amputate both of his legs, to save his life. Ahmed was lucky that one of his father´s friends got him to another hospital, where a doctor agreed to look after him, while the friend sneaked back to the village to get some of his belongings. They never saw him again afterwards.

In the meantime Ahmed ´s mother was in a hospital in Gaza. She was dieing. She refused to take any kind of treatment or medicine. She did not feel she had anything left to live for. She had lost her home, her family, everything. She thought all her children were dead. But when she found out that her youngest child was still alive, she left the hospital right away, completely empty-handed. The only thing she brought with her was a scarf with silver coins. The coins she used to pay the doctor, who had helped Ahmed.

To survive his mother -and Ahmed when he was old enough - had to collect animal stools, to sell to the people who had land. They did not have anywhere to be. It was first when UNRWA, (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) was established in 1950, they got some help. UNRWA gave them a little tent. It was not much, but to Ahmed and his mother it was a castle. Before they had gotten the tent, they had slept under a tree.

Ahmed ´s mother started to wash clothes for rich people. But in the end of the day she was always very sad, she cried a lot. Ahmed could not understand why, so when he got older, he asked her why she was crying. She answered that she had lost her home, her husband, her whole family but Ahmed, and that made her sad. But to lose her identity was different. Once she had been the mayor´s daughter and married to a man, who had his own piece of land. People had known, and respected her, but here she was nothing. Later his mother started to work in the citrus fields.

Ahmed started in school when he was six years old. He did well there, and when he had finished school, he started in UNRWA teacher´s college. Now he is a school leader in an UN-school in Gaza. The same school he went to as a kid. Ahmed is married, and he has five daughters and three sons. In that way he gave his mother her family back.

Even though Ahmed has lost so many things, he is not speaking for revenge, but for peace. In Gaza everyone lives close to each other. The streets are small, and there is no space. People are poor, because there are no jobs. They cannot go outside Gaza to work. They are living like in a prison! Still Ahmed is talking about forgiveness as the best and only solution. He says, "Forgiveness is the spirit of Islam." And once a week he gathers all his 1500 students and talks to them about forgiveness. One of Ahmed's messages to the world is "Forgive, because if we continue to say eye for an eye, we will all get blind."

Ahmed's visit

Last summer in 2004 Ahmed came all the way from Israel to Denmark. My dad (Karsten Mathiasen) had read about Ahmed in an article, and he was fascinated by Ahmed's story. He found a way to get in contact with Ahmed, and they became friends. My dad invited Ahmed to come to Denmark, in the occasion of "Faxe Storytelling Festival," in which the subject was forgiveness. Ahmed agreed to come. The festival paid his ticket, but even though Ahmed was lucky to get permission to leave Israel. The 50 km he had to travel to get out of Gaza, was the hardest part of the journey.

To meet Ahmed was a special thing, because here I was, talking to a person who had suffered so much, that it was hard to imagine. It made all the small problems most people in Denmark have, to seem stupid. Ahmed speaks English very well; I could understand everything he said. I had of course heard about the situation in Israel, but there is a big different from hearing something on the news, to hear it from a person, who is sitting next to you. Ahmed told me that he had never been truly happy, because of all the misery in his country. Then I asked him if he had not been happy when he had seen his children for the first time. To that he answered by writing on a paper...

*I will pay half of my age to make a crying child smile.
I will pay the remaining half to a rose not to die.
War, disease slavery, poverty, discrimination must have an end.*

*What ever your load,
what ever your gain.
There will always be sunshine after the rain.
Maybe you stumble,
maybe even fall.
But God always rescues out of it all.*

He loves his children, but he is sorry that they have to live in a time with war.

Ahmed told his story, and told about forgiveness to "Faxe Storytelling Festival." Some people were crying afterwards, everyone was deeply touched. You could not have listened to his story without feeling hope for the future.

Ahmed Abdullah is a hero because even though, he has been through so much, he still has -and gives hope. He has been able to forgive the murders of his family, and he encourages others to do so to. Ahmed Abdullah is a hero because his greatest hope is that one day the Israelis and the Palestinians can live side by side in peace.

Zinaida Mathiasen

The potato exercise

At my web www.tilgivelse.dk you will find many exercises and examples of meditations for forgiveness. Sorry I have not got resources to translate it all. Here is the only one I have got in English:

Forgiveness as a gift for ourselves

A teacher once told each of her students to bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes to school.

For every person they'd refused to forgive in their life's experience, they chose a potato, wrote on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag. Some of their bags were quite heavy.

They were then told to carry this bag with them everywhere for one week, putting it beside their bed at night; on the car seat when driving; next to their desk at work

The hassle of lugging this around with them made it clear what a weight they were carrying spiritually, and how they had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget and keep leaving it in embarrassing places.

Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty slime.

This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity!

Too often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, and it clearly is for ourselves!!

Gerald G. Jampolsky

If you want to work with exercises for forgiveness, I will recommend Gerald G. Jampolsky's book "Forgiveness - the greatest healer of all". (Beyond Words 1999) It's my favourite book about forgiveness. Lots of exercises and case-stories with examples of instant healing by forgiving : "Suddenly my ex-husband does not hurt my back any more!". The story I most often tell from this book is The Story of Joey, (p. 10-13) which Jampolsky quotes from Yitta Halbertstam and Judith Levethal's book, Small Miracles: Extraordinary Coincidences from Everyday Life, which clearly illustrates the process of forgiveness. I paraphrase it here:

The Story of Joey

There was a young man named Joey, who at the age of nineteen left home and turned his back on the Jewish religion. His father was extremely upset with his son and threatened him with total rejection if he did not change his mind.

Joey did not change his mind, however, and all communication between father and son ceased. The son wandered throughout the world to find himself. He fell in love with a wonderful woman, and for a while he felt that his life had meaning and purpose.

A few years went by, and one day in a coffeehouse in India, Joey ran into an old friend from his hometown. His friend and he passed the time of a day, and then his friend said: "I was so sorry to learn about your father`s death last month."

Joey was stunned. It was the first he`d heard about his father`s passing. He turned home and began to re-examine his Jewish roots. His girlfriend and he split up because she was Jewish, too, but did not want to have anything to do with her Jewish tradition.

After a short stay home, Joey travelled to Jerusalem and found himself at the Wailing Wall. He decided to write a note to his deceased father, expressing his love and asking for his forgiveness.

After Joey wrote the note, he rolled it up and tried to fit it into one of the holes in the wall. In the process, another note fell out of the same hole and landed at his feet. Joey reached down and picked it up. Curious, he unrolled the note. The handwriting looked familiar. He read on. Amazingly, the note was from his father, asking God to forgive him for rejecting his son and expressing deep, unconditional love for Joey.

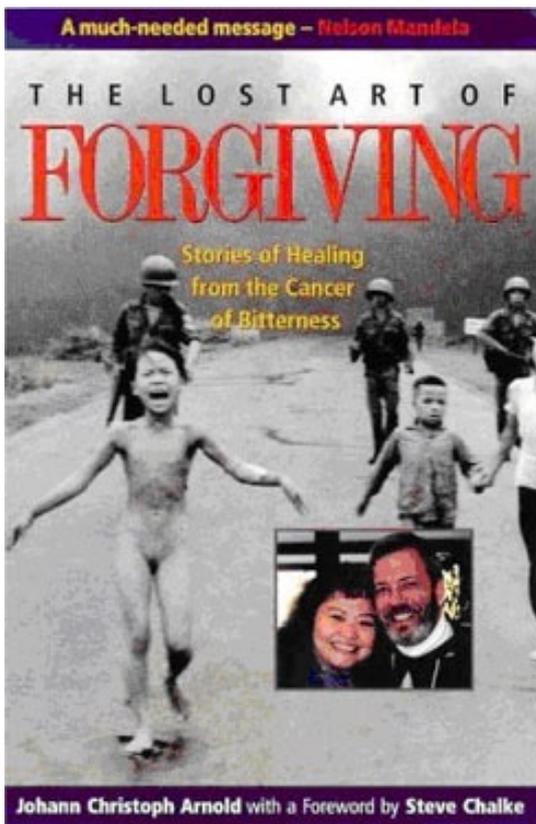
Joey was thunderstruck. How could this possibly happen? It was more than a coincidence - it was a miracle. As difficult it was for him to believe what had occurred, there was the note, written in his father`s own hand, irrefutable proof that this was not just a dream. Joey began studying the Jewish faith in earnest. A couple of years later, back in the States, a rabbi who was a friend of his invited him to dinner. That night at the rabbi`s house, Joey came face-to-face with his old girlfriend who had left him years before. She, too, had returned to her Jewish roots.

And, yes, Joey and his girlfriend were married soon afterward.

Time and again we hear stories in which the process of forgiveness wipes clean the slate of a painful past. It is not always easy to accept the fact that a shift in perception can apparently produce such miracles, removing the blocks to our awareness of love. But Joey`s story indicates that not even death can stand in the way of this process. It is as if the reality of the incident that once caused us such grief vanishes and is replaced by the love that was always there - and will always continue to be there forever and ever.

Victim forgives American soldier

Jan Oberg told me about this book. In my generation we all remember this photo from the war in Vietnam. I love this story about this little girl forgiving the helicopter pilot John Plummer, who had been haunted by this picture for 24 years.



From the chapter **Forgiving Ourselves** (p. 117-119)

John Plummer lives the quiet life of a Methodist pastor in a sleepy Virginia town these days, but things weren't always so. A helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War, he helped organize a napalm raid on the village of Trang Bang in 1972 - a bombing immortalized by the prize-winning photograph of one of its victims, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, shown on the cover of this book.

For the next twenty-four years, John was haunted by this picture, an image that for many people captured the essence of the war: a naked nine-year-old girl, burned, crying, arms outstretched, running toward the camera, with plumes of black smoke billowing in the sky behind her.

For twenty-four years his conscience tormented him. He badly wanted to find the girl, to say that he was sorry - but he could not. At least as a country, Vietnam was a closed chapter for him; he could never bring himself to go there again. Friends tried to reassure him. Hadn't he done everything within his power to see that the village was cleared of civilians? But still he found no peace. He turned in on himself, his marriage failed, and he began to drink.

Then, in an almost unbelievable coincidence, on Veterans Day 1996, John met Kim at the Vietnam Memorial. Kim had come to Washington, D.C. to lay a wreath for peace; John had come with a group of former pilots still searching for freedom from the past. In a speech to the crowd, Kim said she was not bitter. Although she still suffered immensely from her burns, she wanted people to know that others had suffered even more: "Behind that picture of me, thousands and thousands of people...died. They lost parts of their bodies. Their whole lives were destroyed, and nobody took their picture." *)

Kim went on to say that she forgave the men who had bombed her village, and that although she could not change the past, she now wanted to "promote peace". John, beside himself, pushed through the crowds and managed to catch her attention before she was whisked away by a police escort. He identified himself as the pilot responsible for bombing her village twenty-four years before, and they were able to talk for two short minutes.

Kim saw my grief, my pain, my sorrow... She held out her arms to me and embraced me. All I could say was "I'm sorry; I'm sorry" - over and over again. And at the same time she was saying, "It's all right, I forgive you." *)

They met again later the same day, and Kim reaffirmed her forgiveness. They have since become good friends, and call each other regularly.

Has John found the peace he was searching for? He says he has. Although his emotions are still easily stirred by memories of the war, he feels that he has now been able to forgive himself and put the event behind him.

John says that it was vital for him to meet face to face with Kim, to tell her that he had truly agonized over her injuries. All the same, he maintains that the forgiveness he has received is a gift - not something earned or even deserved. It is, finally, a mystery: he still can't quite grasp how a two-minute talk could wipe away a twenty-four-year nightmare.

*) Christian Century, February 19, 1997, 182 - 184.

The so-called war on terror

I wrote a book about the background for the *so-called* war on terror in anger and despair of the Danish participation in the attack of Iraq.

In the book I say that our western "civilization" seems to be a mistake. I love the story, where Ghandi was asked: "What do you think of Western Civilization?". Ghandi answered with a smile: "That would certainly be a good idea!".

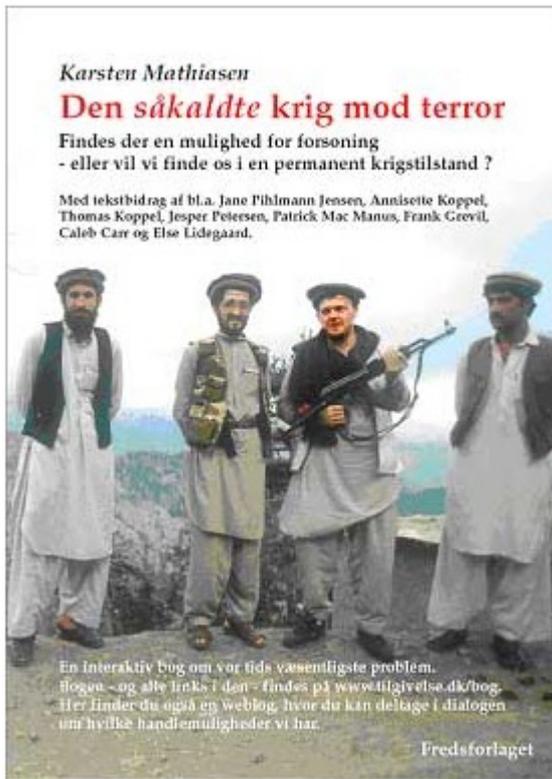
It seems to be an enormous task to change our civilization into a non-violent direction. The good thing about this task - however laborious it seems to be - is that it is a very interesting and very joyful work.

The so-called war on terror creates more and more terror. It is an act of treachery against the democracy it is said to be fought for, and it is an act of treachery against Christianity, humanity and the charter of the United Nations.

Writing this book about one of the most terrible human created catastrophes ever, and ending it up presenting a wide range of stories of the possibilities for forgiveness and lots of examples of suggestions of what to do to strengthen the peace movement has given me a great relief.

Now I sleep better than I have done for many years!

The front page photo shows the Danish minister for internal affairs, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, as young mujahedeen in Afghanistan 1988. (I hope the gun was not loaded!) He was in Afghanistan in order to support a mujahedeen school project with 600.000.- d.kr. Photographer: Joergen Stjerneklar.



Garba Dialo comments on my book "The so-called war on terror" with the subtitle: Are there some possibilities of reconciliation, or will we accept permanent warfare ?

Dear Karsten,

I have finished reading your Book "Den saakaldte krig mod terror" and I have the following comments:

It is a very well written and informative. It reminds me of reading Chomsky's books and watching Michael Moore's films. You have managed to trace the roots and nature of the real terrorism, which has been terrorizing the vast majority of the world population, back to Columbus's journey into America in 1492. You rightly exposed the horror of genocide of indigenous people in the Americas, Australia etc, slavery and colonial genocide in Africa. You went through the cold war logic and the roots of the western created crises in Afghanistan. The role of Denmark as US tail is also clearly exposed.

I think it is healthy to write and read such a book and that it should be read by all, especially young people. The problem is the alliance of political, economic, media and military industrial complex makes it very difficult to penetrate the wall of censorship and media filters that makes it possible for politicians to repeatedly lie to the public and get away with it. You remember the Iraq's WMD and Anders Fogh's speech in the Danish parliament and many other lies. The media owners are the same as the corporate owners. The final and only goal of the corporate owners is to maximize the profit of their companies. It is not to inform, enlighten or educate the public. The public is just a buying-consuming tool to be fooled into buying more.

The way out of this vicious circle is to reach out and build global networks of individuals and groups to slow down and turn the global march of the greediest into a world in which people, plants and all the other creatures live in interdependent harmony.

Good luck and many thanks for your good ideas.

A poem

One of the most beautiful reactions I received in response to my book, is this poem or prayer about being forgiveness:

A reader wrote to me:

Dear Karsten.

You are right! One gets really angry, and the feeling of powerlessness of all the abuse of power that happens is really great. So the one and only act is to turn to forgiveness. I wonder if forgiveness is prohibited according to the anti terror legislation?

A good prayer (in English, because it is the language of the Angles) (I hope there is also Chinese speaking Angles! - Karsten's comment)

I **am** forgiveness acting here
Casting out all doubt and fear
setting men forever free
with wings of cosmic victory
I **am** calling in full power
for forgiveness every hour
to all life in every place
I Flood forth forgiveness grace

It is said, that if repeated 99 times a day, it should give karmic cleansing.

With love

Anne Stockmar

For my Scandinavian readers I bring a translation, which is made with a lot of help from my friends Uffe Jonas and Ann Mari Urwald. Thanks!

Jeg **er** tilgivelsen, som virker ind,
og fjerner frygten fra dit sind,
sætter bundne sjæle fri
på den kosmiske sejrs sti

Jeg synger inderligt med hjerte og mund
om tilgivelse i hver en stund;
til alt liv på hvert et sted
gi´r jeg bølger af tilgivelse med

Another result of my book project is that I managed to establish a local peace group. At the last meeting before summer holidays, 30 people gathered together on my smallholding. One of the key people in this peace group "The Peace People" is Erik Lau Christensen, one of the app. 25 Quakers in Denmark. I first met him in connection with the Danish Peace Academy. He is a great inspiration and collaborator. He recently gave me the book **Chicken soup for the soul... Stories for a better world**. I have chosen one story from this book, describing the development of **the spiral of terror** and an example of peaceful response. I would like to add the information, that the American hatred Against Libya was also fed by the Libyans taking control with their national oil resources. The highlighting of some lines are mine:

The Last Day of My Life

Do every act of your life as if it were your last.

Marcus Aurelius.

The last day of my life as it had been - or could ever be again - began with the ringing of the telephone calling me out of sleep into the morning.

"Hello, Luv!"

"Tony! It's so early. What time is it? Five-thirty!"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you, I miscalculated the time."

My husband, calling from London, was so eager to tell me when to expect him home that night had forgotten the time zones separating us.

"I don't mind. I'm glad it's you."

"I'm taking the last plane out for London today. We should arrive at Kennedy tonight at 8:40. I'll take a taxi home."

"Alan and I could take a cab and meet you, but it is kind of late."

"Not to worry. I'll take a cab. That will be fine. See you soon, Luv."

"Miss you."

"Me, too. Very much. Looking forward to seeing you tonight."

I replaced the phone in its cradle and hugged my pillow. Knowing exactly when Tony was coming home, I relaxed and tried to sleep again. The clock guaranteed another hour before I had to get up. It was Wednesday, December 21, 1988, and Tony had booked a seat on Pan Am Flight 103.

He had gone to England for a week to take care of some family business. He was booked to return on December 20, but had called to say that things were going slower than expected and he wanted to stay an extra day. I had said that would be all right. Our son, six years old at the time, asked me for years, "Why didn't you say no?" But there wasn't any reason, to refuse Tony's reasonable request. I know that; I don't blame myself. But also I know that if I had said, "No I want you to come home Tuesday," he'd be alive. I will live with that knowledge for the rest of my life.

We were waiting for him to call, telling us he had finished with customs and was about to catch a cab, when the phone rang at nine o'clock. It was Tony's cousin in England telling me that there had been a terrible accident with one of Pan Am's planes, and the family was desperately hoping that Tony somehow had missed his flight. This was how I first learned that my husband and the father of my child was dead - not from authorities, not from the media, but from a relative who wasn't even certain that Tony had been a passenger.

I sent my son to sleep with a story that his father's flight had been delayed for mechanical reasons. I needed to confirm the truth, and I needed time to let it all sink in. As soon as I saw the town of Lockerbie, Scotland, Burning on the eleven o'clock news, I intuitively knew that it had been a bomb, not an accident. And though I didn't know any of the details yet, nor

how many people had been killed in the plane and on the ground, I knew I wasn't alone. This hadn't happened just to my family. We were connected to a vast tragedy.

I was raised to regard revenge as a primitive response to injustice because **revenge fuels the cycle of retaliation**. Then a terrorist's bomb ripped my husband's life from him, tore him from our embrace, and this belief travelled from my brain, where I had entertained it, into my stomach where it lodged like a stone-cold truth. I wanted and needed many things: my husband to be restored to me, to howl my pain, to comfort my child, to receive solace from my friends and family, but I never for one moment wanted or needed to inflict this anguish on another human being. **I could not believe that anyone who has ever been plunged into this abyss of pain would ever want to create another widow or orphan in the world.**

Alas, this is not a universal truth. In most places in the world, revenge continues to be the reason that individuals or governments attack one another. **The cycle of revenge and retaliation is, I believe, what killed my husband: Apparently, the Libyan government conspired for two and a half years to destroy an American plane in retaliation for the U.S. government's bombing attack on Tripoli in April 1986. The U.S. attack, in turn, had been justified as a direct response to Libyan agent's deadly bombing of a German disco popular with American military personnel. Libya justified the bombing of La Belle Disco because the U.S. Navy had attacked a Libyan ship in a dispute over Libyan territorial waters.**

Watching our secretaries of state and defence reassure the American public on the night of the bombing raid on Tripoli in April 1986 that our "surgical strikes" had hit only military targets, Tony exclaimed prophetically, **"Don't they know we're going to pay for this?" It would be Tony and 269 other men, women and children who were to pay.**

What I did hunger for was justice. The thought that the men who were responsible for the conspiracy - those who had funded it and those who had assembled the bomb and concealed it inside an unaccompanied suitcase - were free to go about their lives and might not ever be held responsible for their heinous crime was unbearable.

Because my husband had been murdered by terrorists who tried to hide from the consequences of their crime, I could channel my righteous anger against them and against the ineptness and indifference in the aviation industry and our government. Many other relatives of those who died on Pan Am Flight 103 responded to their losses in the same way. We sought out one another and formed an organization within two months. From the beginning, our mission has been to offer emotional support to one another, to find out the truth about what had happened to our loved ones and to work to improve aviation safety and security. One of our most significant achievements has been as a powerful lobbying force with close ties to the U.S. State and Justice Departments. It has been gratifying to see Libya apparently get out the business of terrorism and begin to comply with the U.N. sanctions of 1991. Our work, which is still unfinished, has enabled me to meet people of goodwill in the highest levels of government in this country and abroad. It has enabled me to feel that I am not powerless.

And because Pan AM Flight 103 was blown up by terrorists from the Middle East, I have become a member of the Dialogue Project, a group of people concerned about the continuing conflict in Israel and Palestine. Jews, Muslims and Christians, Americans, Israelis and Palestinians, we meet one afternoon a month to get to know one another as individuals, to learn about one another's history and pain, and most important, to support those individuals and organizations in Israel and Palestine who seek non-violent solutions to the dilemmas that prevail in that region. I do this not only for myself as a Jewish woman, but to honour Tony, a Catholic, who was as passionate a supporter of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a nation of their own as he was a hater of the terrorists' rationale for murder as a political tactic.

"We may not succeed in making peace in the Middle East," a new Muslim friend and neighbour told me recently, "but we are at peace with ourselves."

Helen Engelhardt

Earth Peace Network

Another member of our peace group, The Peace People is Anna Adhemar who has set up the "*Earth Peace Network*" here in Denmark. The purpose of this group is to work to support peace on this planet by working from an explicitly spiritual fundament - initiating activities that aim to a raising of humanity's consciousness through active prayer and the ceremonial planting of peace poles. They will be walking around the island of Bornholm in September (150 km) as an active prayer for world peace. Check out their website at: www.earthpeace.dk

A FEW MORE LINKS:

What considered me more than anything else when I wrote my book, was telling stories to substantiate that forgiveness and reconciliation is not only necessary but also possible to end the crazy so-called war on terror.

In my book and on my web I recommend for example these links to give hope and enable better networking. The list is by far complete:

The Quakers Report of Counter-terrorism

<http://www.quaker.org/qcea/briefings/terrorism/Counter-Terrorism%20Report.pdf>

Effective Counter-Terrorism
A Critical Assessment of
European Union Responses
Quaker Council for European Affairs

There is no way to peace along the path of safety, for peace must be dared, it is itself the great venture, and can never be safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to mistrust, and this mistrust in turn brings forth war. To look for guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1934
Commentary on Psalm 85: 9-13

Produced by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

This report builds on a series of briefing papers compiled by the Quaker Council for European Affairs on the European Union's response to terrorism. The report seeks to put this into a broader

critical framework of responses to terrorism which is based on the Quaker testimonies to peace and equality.

The report was researched and written by Matthew Taylor, Programme Assistant.

....

Publication Date: February 2007

A translation in Danish is almost ready. Please contact Erik Lau Christensen, lis.lefeldt@pc.dk
After skimming the report, I think it is very valuable since it may be taken seriously by the decision makers.

With Forgiveness Project:

When I was writing my "terror-book" I had to go through a lot of awful stuff. Luckily I was cheered up by my daily message from With Forgiveness Project. And often it was simply amazing how directly the messages hit on my need for facts. The project was started on the fifth anniversary of 9/11.

www.withforgiveness.com

Susyn Reeve, M.Ed. is a great lemonade maker, fun grandmother and the co-creator, with **Dr. Sheri Rosenthal**, of WITH Forgiveness, an international multimedia project designed to illuminate the path and provide the tools to embody compassion and unconditional love for all beings in service of peace.

The Forgiveness Project

Awareness, Education, Inspiration

The Forgiveness Project works at a local, national and international level to help build a future free of conflict and violence by healing the wounds of the past.

By collecting and sharing people's stories, and delivering outreach programmes, The Forgiveness Project encourages and empowers people to explore the nature of forgiveness and alternatives to revenge. Check out this web! And check out the Second Forgiveness Festival.

Johannesburg,

Lots of stories about forgiveness and reconciliation.

www.theforgivenessproject.com

Last year, 2006, I wrote a letter to Marina Cantacuzino, founder of 'the forgiveness project' to network. I sent her the article about Ahmed Abdullah, and she answered:

Dear Karsten,

Thank you very much for your email and telling me about your work.

There are lots of similarities and links here. I also read your daughter's article which was excellent. I did not know about Ahmed Abdullah. I am currently trying to set up a more interactive part of the website where putting other's people experiences of forgiveness and meeting 'heroes' would fit perfectly.

I will hold on to this thought about Ahmed.

Many thanks. If you're ever in London it would be nice to meet.

Your Festival sounds great too. Next year I will go to Johannesburg for a second Forgiveness Festival.

Many thanks for getting in touch

Marina

Crossing Borders

Garba Dialo is leader of Crossing Borders, one of the hopeful initiatives for dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

Crossing Borders (CB) started its activities for Middle East youth and educators in October 1999. It developed out of the Learning to Live Together in the Middle East project. This project started in 1994 as summer seminar that was held in Elsinore between 1994 and 1998 for Arab and Israeli educators, teachers and journalists from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Tunisia. CB was registered in Denmark as a non-profit NGO in 2004, and is located at IPC in Elsinore.

Crossing Borders is a non-governmental and not for profit organisation based at the International People's College in Elsinore, Denmark with branches in Palestine, Israel and Jordan.

The primary aim of Crossing Borders is to provide impartial dialogue space and skills training for youth and educators, with special focus on the Middle East, to fully participate in the development process of their societies. The other core activity of CB is the publication and distribution of the bi-monthly Crossing Borders magazine by and for Arab and Israeli youth. The methods and principles of Crossing Borders are based on ongoing dialogue, equal participation, shared ownership and concrete and joint output with learning elements of immediate and long term benefits to the participants and their communities.

www.crossingborder.org

The Parents Circle

www.theparentscircle.com

It is, as far as we know, a world precedent that bereaved families, victims from both sides, embark on a joint reconciliation mission while the conflict is still active.

Consisting of several hundreds of bereaved families, half Palestinian and half Israeli, The Families Forum has played a crucial role since its inception in 1995, in spearheading a reconciliation process between Israelis and Palestinians. The Forum members have all lost immediate family members due to the violence in the region.

Storyteller Noa Baum

Storyteller Noa Baum, an Israeli who began a heartfelt dialogue with a Palestinian woman while living in the United States, weaves together their memories and their mothers' stories. She creates a moving testimony illuminating the complex and contradictory history and emotions that surround Jerusalem for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

www.noabaum.com

Parents to 9/11 victims work for forgiveness:

When Greg was killed I thought I would never forgive the people who murdered my son, but I have come to see forgiveness as more than a word; it's a context, a process. I don't forgive the act, but trying to understand why someone has acted in the way he has is part of the process of forgiving. Forgiveness is being able to accept another person for being human and fallible. This help free us from bitterness and anger and allows us to work to create something positive from the tragedy and turn our grief into action.

We really never know how life will change us. The best is to be open to all ways of healing. Working for peace has kept me from becoming bitter. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said, "To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest." Forgiveness can be describes as realizing that we are unable to create a better past. Once we accept that fact, we realize that we do have the ability to create a better future. And that's why working for peaceful solutions is so important - even necessary - for the survival of the human species.

As Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "The past is prophetic in that it asserts that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows. One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means."

www.peacefultomorrow.org

Jews rebuild Palestinian houses

ICAHD is a non-violent, direct-action group originally established to oppose and resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories. As our activists gained direct knowledge of the brutalities of the Occupation, we expanded our resistance activities to other areas - land expropriation, settlement expansion, by-pass road construction, policies of "closure" and "separation," the wholesale uprooting of fruit and olive trees and more. The fierce repression of Palestinian efforts to "shake off" the Occupation following the latest Intifada has only added urgency to our efforts.

As a direct-action group, ICAHD is comprised of members of many Israeli peace and human rights organizations. All of our work in the Occupied Territories is closely coordinated with local Palestinian organizations.

Since its founding, ICAHD's activities have extended to three interrelated spheres: resistance and protest actions in the Occupied Territories; efforts to bring the reality of the Occupation to Israeli society; and mobilizing the international community for a just peace. Our activities include:

Resisting the demolition of Palestinian homes. ICAHD members physically block bulldozers sent to demolish homes. We also mobilize hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians to rebuild them as acts of resistance. In addition to its effectiveness as a means of raising awareness of the workings of the Occupation, house rebuilding has proven an effective vehicle of grassroots peace-making.

www.icahd.org

The Danish Peace Academy

Det Danske Fredsakademi: www.fredsakademiet.dk A lot of articles about peacemaking and non violence. And a lot of peace songs to download. Look and listen! This web has many thousands visitors from all over the world every day.

TFF The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research

Jan Oberg, Leader of the TFF, is the most hardworking and inspiring peace researcher I ever met. (I did not meet Johan Galtung yet) He and the associates of the TFF have, over the last 20 years, truly put a lot of little sticks in the wheel of hate and revenge! One of the good stories is about Burundi.

The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research

Vegagatan 25, S - 224 57 Lund, Sweden

Phone: +46 46 14 59 09 o Fax +46 46 14 45 12

TFF@transnational.org

At this web you will find many links to websites about forgiveness and reconciliation:
www.transnational.org

"Created in 1986, TFF is an independent think tank, a global network and a homepage for peace by peaceful means. It inspires a passion for peace from the grassroots to the corridors of power."

Burundi

A good story out of Africa, in the wake of war and genocide. It is little known but probably one of the most remarkable peace processes in the past few years. TFF has been engaged on and off in the heart-shaped country with 7 million people since the year 2000.

We do conflict-analysis and mitigation, peace education courses, skills training and - above all - we have set up a Peace Coalition with 13 leading NGOs: the Amahoro - Peace - Coalition. We assist them in strengthening the peace process from the bottom up and empower thousands of Burundians.

Together with them we are working to establish an Amahoro Open Centre. It will be a community and peace education centre in one, the first of its kind in Burundi. It is taking shape in 2006; we are doing fund-raising for it and hope to establish it in 2007. It enjoys the full personal support of the President of the Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Speaker of Parliament and of the UN Head of Mission.

We also work directly with single NGOs in the Coalition, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other parties. And we hope to extend the Coalition to work with like-minded organisations in the Great Lake Region.

This project is supported by TFF Friends and their donations and by the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy.

Peace One Day

July 2007

Dear Friends

I founded Peace One Day in 1999 to document my efforts to create an annual day of global ceasefire and non-violence with a fixed calendar date. In 2001, POD achieved its primary objective. United Nations General Assembly resolution (A/Res/55/282) was unanimously adopted by UN member states, formally establishing an annual day of global ceasefire and non-violence on the UN International Day of Peace, fixed in the global calendar on 21 September - Peace Day.

With the Day in place, POD's main aim is to raise awareness of Peace Day 21 September. POD is a non-profit organisation, impartial and independent of any government, political persuasion, corporation or religious creed.

Last year on 21 September, 27.6 million people from 200 countries did something for Peace Day. I hope you'll make your own commitment for Peace Day and log it on this website. By working together there will be Peace One Day. We look forward to hearing from you.

With thanks and best wishes
In peace

Jeremy Gilley
www.peaceday.org

The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance

As storytellers for peace we are part of a worldwide movement! **The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance** is a typical example of what is going on - totally ignored by the mass media...

<http://www.forgivenessday.org/>

The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance is a non-profit, tax exempt educational foundation dedicated to evoking the healing power of forgiveness worldwide. As an essential part of that mission we are also seeking to establish the first global holiday, International Forgiveness Day, celebrated on the first Sunday of every August (August 5, 2007). See our invitation and program for this year's Celebration. You can also participate by sending us a Message of Forgiveness between now and August 5, 2007.

Our Mission

The mission of the Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance is to celebrate the healing power of forgiveness worldwide through the establishment of the first global holiday, International Forgiveness Day, to be celebrated annually by every country on the first Sunday of August, in or before the year 2010. See the last 4 years of our Celebration of International Forgiveness Day.

The Alliance's goals also include:

-Employing the Internet and other media across the world to promote universal awareness of Forgiveness Day

-That practicing forgiveness contributes to:

..better health,

..stronger, more lasting and more loving relationships,

..greater abundance, prosperity and financial resourcefulness,

..a more real and lasting sense of self worth and purpose,

..a deeper sense of connection and security in the world,

..a more heightened feeling of freedom, joy and laughter on a daily basis.

Supporting all peoples of the world to include the attitude, practice and healing process of forgiveness into every aspect of their daily lives;

-Portraying forgiveness as a process that requires the support of others as individuals move through any shock, grief, anger and fear that is related to the hurt they are forgiving; encouraging and assisting in that process; and being compassionate to those who are reluctant or refusing to forgive;

-Implementing specialized forgiveness training's to assist counselors already in the work of healing; employing the use and distribution of specialized materials in forgiveness; developing a forgiveness curriculum which will lead to certification of students as "forgiveness counselors";

-Collaborating and assisting in the development and publication of careful scientific studies on the value and healing power of forgiveness;

-Assisting in the networking of "Dial 311" Hotlines specializing in forgiveness to prevent violence, abuse, molestation and other harm;

-Facilitating the training and employment of forgiveness counselors in the process of conflict resolution.

Robert W. Plath, Founder

World Peace Clowns

At a workshop I said to Patch: "Give me a hug!" And Patch Adams gave me a hug. It was the best hug I ever got!

Patch Adams tour of Russia

The healing through humour tour of Russian hospitals and orphanages.
www.worldpeaceclowns.org

We are a sort of grassroots, impromptu International Clown Troupe that believes where ever there is a hardship or disaster, **SEND IN THE CLOWNS.**

We are taking off for Russia with clown, activist, physician, and founder of GESUNDHEIT! INSTITUTE PATCH ADAMS MD (Played by ROBIN WILLIAMS in movie called Patch Adams MD) On this annual tour of Russia there will be more than 35 clowns gathering from all over the World to bring hugs and laughter to children in orphanages and hospitals.

YOUR DONATION IS NEEDED TO HELP SOME OF THESE CLOWNS ATTEND THIS CAUSE

And we are so thankful for your donation that we will send you a clown nose of your own.

All clowns involved in this group are not paid for their services, they are donating their time.

World Laughter Movement for Peace

Laughter yoga exercises are very good for warming up an audience! It opens your hearts. I have had the pleasure to be trained by dr. Madan Katari, who founded the first laughter club in Mombay. The laughter movement he founded is movement for peace and forgiveness.

www.worldlaughtertour.com

We promote a worldwide movement for health, happiness and peace. We encourage everyone to tap into the benefits of positive laughter & humour, which are natural pathways to mind-body, mental & physical health.

PLUS, we teach Good-Hearted Living(tm), a method that changes attitudes:

From tuning in to the negative to tuning in to the positive;

From rigid, intensional (black/white) thinking to flexible, extensional thinking;

From self pity to gratitude;

From selfishness to kindness;

From harboring resentments to compassion and forgiveness;

From guilt and stress to joy, pleasure and relaxation.

The laughter movement I Denmark: check out www.latterinstituttet.dk

The Middle East Peace Orchestra

The Middle East Orchestra is playing the music which makes the ideal soundtrack for the international movement for forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

The Middle East Peace Orchestra is a unique collaboration between various ethnic groups of musicians, all connected to the Middle East, playing concerts for peace. Initiated in 2003 by Henrik Chaim Goldschmidt, the principal oboist of The Royal Danish Orchestra, the orchestra is build up with Arab and Jewish musicians playing the treasure of music from both the great traditions. The musicians come from all over the world and are all hand-picked virtuosos representing the best of their tradition and furthermore they all have the courage to engage in this project. The music performed has elements from Jewish "Klezmer", from Middle Eastern "Makam" and from the classical Arab music. The Orchestra has been received with the greatest enthusiasm from both audience and press, since the very first concert in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, October 2003.

http://www.copenhagenartists.com/artists/biography?a_id=v9xd7ag8jU7xxD29QFpf

The musicians are professionals at a very high level. Please don't ask them to play for free, even for the most idealistic purpose. For booking worldwide please contact:

www.Copenhagenartists.com

Rasmus Steen

Manager Assistant

Phone: +45 4449 2900

Mobile: +45 2244 5405

Email: ras@copenhagenartists.com

See updated tour calendar

See broadcast from TV2Lorry on October 5, 2007
from the site www.peacemusic.dk

The battle of the river

October 2005 I spent two weeks in Kenya attending a seminar with the Amani People's Theatre (ATP). (<http://www.aptkenya.org/> please listen the opening tune!) I had a great time. The theme for the seminar was Forum Theatre in peacemaking and reconciliation processes with theory, exercises and practice in villages. There were many highlights during these two weeks! One of the highlights for me was that the organizer had asked me to create a show, and I made a participatory magic/clown/ventriloquist/puppet show in Swahili with the lovely kids singing and dancing. I performed the show in villages and at a hospital. Another highlight was the stories we were told!

Imagine me, sitting around the fire with African friends, on the bank of Lake Victoria with hippopotamus splashing around in the distance and listening to this story, which for me is the essence of "storytelling as a pathway to peace". The storyteller is one of our fine teachers at the forum seminar, Amollo Maurice Amollo.

There where once two villages that stood either side of a deep valley through which a river flowed. And for some reason, that has long since been forgotten, these two villages fell to quarrelling. Although it is said that in one village they keep sheep whilst in the other they keep goats. The quarrel became so fears that a battle was promised. It was however decided that instead of sending all the men from the villages down to the rivers to fight, just one warrior would be chosen from each village. And so it was that on the appointed day, the two warriors came down from the hillsides and met on an island in the river. A bugle was sounded and the fight began. All through the morning they fought and whilst each suffered wounds neither warrior could vanquish his foe. At least the sun began to settle and the second bugle sounded.

The two warriors stopped their fighting and without taking their eyes off each other, laid down their spears, swords and shields; they took off their armour and still without taking their eyes off each other began to light a fire for warmth. The warriors sat by their fire and stared, silently, into each other's eyes. At last, the night darkened and the fires burned down to glowing embers.

Then the first warrior spoke and said to the other. "Why do you fight?"

The second warrior replied:

"I fight for my child, I fight for my daughter, she is two years of age and is in the village with her grandfather and uncles - but tell me, why do you fight?"

"Because in my village, the children are looked after by the fathers and it is the grandfathers who tell children stories" replied the first warrior "That is strange for in my village, it is the mothers who look after the children and the grandmothers who tell the stories - what stories do grandfathers tell in your village?"

And so the warrior started telling all the stories that grandfathers told in his village until they were all told. And then he asked: "What stories do grandmothers tell in your village?" And then the first warrior began to tell all the stories that grandmothers tell until they were all told.

As he finished, the sun rose over the horizon and the bugle sounded. Without taking their eyes off each other, the two warriors rose up, buckled on their armour picked up their swords, spears and shields and faced each other in silence. Their eyes locked together one final time. At last, both warriors turned away from each other and walked back to their villages without striking a further blow.

For it is said that if you truly listen to the stories another man tells, you cannot then harm him.

You can find the story in this book from Amani People's Theatre: From playing to learning to change: Theatre in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Amollo, M. Amollo.

In the chapter "The Narrative Genre in Peace Building". (p. 66 - 70) Amollo discuss the possibilities in the narrative genre. I quote:

Luo Oral Narrative

The battle of the river as told by members of the Luo community of Western Kenya, captures the crucial role that the narrative as a genre plays in conflict transformation and peace building. It is in no way, our aim to make claims that narratives can explicitly bring development or resolve conflicts. The purpose/objective of this section is to demonstrate the potentials and possibilities inherent in the narrative as a medium of communication.

The narrative form can be particularly suitable for grassroots communication because of its self-sustaining potential, its entertainment function, and its flexibility in overcoming language barrier. Its huge capacity for popular participation in message and planning remains unique particularly in the African setting. Like other forms of performance art, folk narratives can be used along with newer channels and recording techniques for conflict transformation, peace building and replication in other situations.

Community theatre privileges narratives in communication development decisions and policies. This is so because narratives have as their central aim, the work of transforming orders prevailing in reality.

The narrative genre and the contemporary theatricals are thus part of a single unbroken tradition with many chores, strains, and dialogues connection them.

Having managed to locate narratives (verbal arts) within the space of other performing arts, my concern here then becomes one of discerning the place of narratives/verbal arts in conflict situations and peace building. Suffice it to say, narratives can indeed be great catalysts for development, and in many ways an intermediary in the process of conflict resolution. However, this assertion can only best be perceived and framework. This of necessity calls for a sort of backward glance.

(...)

Narratives in the perception are privileged in communication development issues and matters of conflict because of its very democratic nature. A narratives' performance session defies autocratic tendencies in the sense that the oral performer and his audience are all equal participants. There are no passive participants in the strict sense of the word. The narrator deliberately gets out of the way to ensure that the members of the audience are fully involved in the performance. Several communications are utilized to ensure this: songs, questions, riddles, connections and motivations.

For our purposes then, can we transpose this framework into the domain of conflict transformation, as we know it? At APT an attempt has been made to come up with a kind of model. APT refers to such a model as Narratives Communication for Development Model. This model obtains its framework from certain practical experiences the organization has tested and used over the years.

Amollo, M. Amollo.

One last comment

As storytellers, actors, clowns, dancers, painters, sculptors and musicians etc. we have a great job to strengthen the struggle for peace by peaceful means. Directly, by taking part in happenings and events and indirectly, by cheering up the hard working people in the world wide movement for peace and forgiveness. I agree with Laid Back singing this morning in the radio: "Only love can change the world"

Love

Karsten



For Iraq also, please!

One picture says more than a thousand words.



One picture sometimes says more than a thousand words. My masks showing Danish prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen as Mr. Bush`s ventriloquist-puppet have cheered up thousands of people at peace demonstrations and other manifestations of solidarity. (Creator of the mask: Ilse Pereiltz) Making fun with authorities is very healthy. It may be the first step towards forgiving, so you are not blindfolded with anger.

Invitation

I have space in my Farm House Peace Center for people working with "Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace". If you need some days of retreat, please contact me. The conditions are that one must be prepared to share kitchen and bathroom facilities and take part in the household.

Also if you have a good story, you want to share with me, send a mail. Make clear if the story is only for my personal use, or also for my web-site and my next book.

What a wonderful resource stories are! Like love. The more you give, the more you get! My peace group, *The Peace People*, plans to make a peace camp probably the first week in July 2008, also at the Farm House Peace Center, in the most beautiful nature in Denmark, close to beaches and woods. A week of sharing. At low cost. If you are interested, please contact me at:

cirkus@bella-donna.dk

The Farm House Peace Center
Karsten Mathiasen
Hugkrogen 6
4640 Faxe
Denmark

Websites (in Danish):

www.cirkusbelladonna.dk (Circus pictures)

www.tilgivelse.dk (Forgiveness)

www.gavtyvehistorier.dk (Trickster Stories)

Thanks!

Thanks to everyone who helped me make this booklet!



About the author:

Born in Jutland 5th of April 1952, 21.30

Occupations: Studied social sciences at Roskilde University for five years.

Worked as a scaffold worker in Copenhagen for ten years. "Rent-a-tent-owner" and circus clown for 17 years. And much more. The last seven years more and more occupied by storytelling, specially storytelling as a pathway to peace.

