

02-07-09 Peer to Beringen 25 km

After a completely free rest day on July 1, we say goodbye to our hosts Annette and Martin at the library of Peer. They have made us feel so welcome and comfortable. I am driving again today so all I can say is that both the walk and the van meet at the spot for lunch arranged by the map people. It is a nice park with a small pond for swimming which a handful of walkers take advantage of. At the end of our lunch hour we are



met by a large contingent of a local walking club who will escort us to Beringen where we will have refreshments. Our host for Beringen, Dimitri, works for the city and has arranged the reception, the accommodation, and a dinner at a restaurant where we will meet officials of the city. It is a pleasant departure from the norm to be welcomed by city officials and given such generous hospitality. Jon

03-07-09 Beringen to Bekkevoort, 30 km

We walk for a nuclear free future.



04-06-09 Bekkevoort to Beauvechain, 27 km

Today's walk is pleasant but long, so we are very happy when we arrive at Simon and Barbara's house. We have heard that he is an architect who knows solar and other alternative techniques so it is

surprising that we don't find any solar installations on their house. We learn that they only recently purchased it, and that it is so old that they have been restoring it first. It is a pleasant building surrounded by gardens. In the back is a fire circle and long tables set up for the party planned for that evening. Simon has erected a make-shift shower with the hose which we are glad for because it was hot today. Pretty soon guests start arriving with dishes filled with food and Simon grills a bunch of meats. It is so nice to see broad smiles on the faces of the French walkers. This is the first night in the French speaking part of Belgium, and it has been a long time since French was the first language spoken. So we party late into the night around the fire singing songs and telling stories. Jon



05-07-09 Beauvechain to Chaumont-Gistoux 17 km

When we leave Simon and Barbara's house this morning we think it is going to be a pleasant walk of moderate distance. The walk itself is beautiful but turns into one of those walks which seems to never end. We finally reach the home of Tessy and Guy, a beautiful place with permaculture gardens, dry toilet, and a swimming pool you would not





belongs to Mayor's for Peace, so after we pitch our tents we walk into town for a reception hosted by the mayor, and then eat a delicious supper prepared by local friends. It's rainy so we move dinner into a church. Afterwards we return to Tessy and Guy's for a fire and more socializing. Jon

believe. It looks like a pond, is filled with rain water, and the filter system is a series of pools with plants that metabolize the micro-organisms like in grey water systems. This accommodation is special for us because Tessy is Marc's Aunt, plus she is responsible for finding most of the accommodations in Belgium. Chaumont-Gistoux



06-07-09 Rest day



Today we have the option of going to the



alternative community la Baraque in the village of Louvain la Neuf. In the afternoon we hold our regular rest day circle where the highlight is Jun-san telling the story of Sadako and the peace cranes in Japanese. Afterwards we have a lovely dinner prepared by Divina and Etienne.

Jon



07-06-09 Chaumont-Gistoux to Tervuren

It is so hard to leave the home of Tessy and Guy. They have been such gracious hosts for two days, and their place is just gorgeous. I stay back when the walk leaves to finish up some work and I'm driving the van today, so I have nothing to report about today's walk except that I heard that Aristide may have attracted the attention of some local police by swimming in the town fountain. As always things turned



out fine and they all made it safely to tonight's accommodation, more or less. We are staying in a small Steiner school where Tessy's granddaughter is a student. Her daughter Laurence is our host and they have provided us with a delicious soup and cake. Jon



08-06-09 Tervuren to Brussels and NATO

We pry ourselves out of the small Steiner school where we slept last night to begin our final day of walking. Our host had told us the space would be tiny and thought we would feel like sardines packed in so tightly. She was right, but the good will of our walking community makes the experience pleasant. It is surprising how rural the walk to NATO feels given that we are coming into Brussels, but our route must have skirted the urban areas. Thank you Jean-Marie and Duncan, our map people. When we finally approach the cluster of huge buildings in the vicinity of the NATO headquarters, we are greeted by Pi Nocchio, a clown army type character who lampoons the close relationship between big business and the military. After lunch and a circle to discuss our action at NATO we are escorted by the Brussels police and Pi Nocchio to NATO headquarters. They segregate us four lanes of traffic away from the gates on what they euphemistically call the free-speech area. What a sham. The head police guy is actually quite charming, and he has negotiated a meeting with Robert Scelel, a deputy spokesman for NATO. Mr. Scelel comes out and six of us walk over to the gate to make our presentation of a thousand peace cranes and a statement we have written for the occasion. When we rejoin the main group,



dissatisfaction with our location is expressed. How can a silent vigil have any meaning in the midst of all that traffic? So we decide to move to the gate. As we cross the lanes of traffic we are approached by flanks of police and we all meet in the middle of the four lanes where there is a grassy median. Well OK, we continue our silent vigil face to face with the police. In a little while they decide that's enough democracy for one day, and we are informed that if we do not return to the free-speech area we run the risk of twelve hours of detention. With some misgivings the bulk of the group decides to comply, but when we get back to our designation we realize that Jun-san and several supporters have stayed behind and are drumming and chanting on the median. Several of us try to return to support them, but the cops physically prevent us from doing so. We are curious to see which one of those cops will be brave

enough to arrest Jun-san. Our curiosity is answered when the charming head guy crouches down to talk to her. It turns out he speaks Japanese, and he approaches her with appropriate humility and respect to request that she stop drumming. It seems even Jun-san can be charmed, so after she thanks each cop individually and shakes each of their hands, she returns to the safety of our designated free-speech area. Another potentially explosive confrontation between Nipponzan Myohogi and the forces of evil has been avoided, and we decide that NATO has been sufficiently chastised so we head off to find our final accommodation.

Luckily Alexis, our host at the squat where we will stay, arrives and escorts us the rest of the way to the squat. Of course it rains. When we get to the front door, it dawns on us that we have just finished the walk from Geneva to Brussels. Holy cow! Mama Mia! Whoo Hoo! We hold a little celebration in the



street which no doubt improves the relationship of the squat with its neighbors which we later find out has been tenuous at best. We enter and climb a flight of stairs to find a magnificent room with couches and tables and stuff that seem small by comparison. People are practicing circus routines and music and it is one of those unique mixtures of

time, space, and culture that happen on a walk. An extraordinary confluence of people and place that feels routine to those of us experiencing it. Maybe we are all just exhausted. We move gear, eat, and have a circle to discuss our action at the European Union Parliament tomorrow before we collapse.



9-06-09 Brussels: last day of walk!

We woke up in this large room in the squat in Brussels. We have been told by Alexis that it is not technically a squat since they pay rent, but we still call it a squat and it certainly has the feel of a squat. At yesterday's circle we discussed how we would get to the European Union Parliament (UEP) appointment we had for 10:00 am today, and those of us who intended to walk had to leave by 8:00, so we were a little rushed. Jun-san asked for a short circle because she was leaving the walk that morning, and Nakayama wanted to say something to the whole group while she was still here and could translate his Japanese. After he told us how much the walk meant to him, we said goodbye to Jun-san, and then we gathered the front banner and flags and took off for the EUP on the busy streets of Brussels. We

thought it should take about an hour since it was only about 4 km. As we walked we started to notice the presence of Belgian police watching us. Sure enough, in a little bit they stopped us and told us we would need to roll up the flags and front banner. For us it was hard to believe that after having walked the entire way from Geneva to Brussels and carrying the flags and banner through many different cities, on this last day of the walk we were being told we couldn't do so. We argued and persisted and complained and tried to persuade the officers that it was our democratic right to carry the banners, they said we couldn't proceed if we didn't agree to lower them. So we complied. But the offense angered some of us so we began chanting and singing and



generally being more militant about our message as we marched toward the EUP. So the police stopped us again. Now they wanted us to stop chanting. It has become an *us vs. them* battle, and we are angry. They informed us that if we don't comply there is the possibility that our meeting will be cancelled, so again we comply, and continue walking quietly. Again we are stopped! It seems now that the security forces at EUP have found out about our action yesterday at NATO and our *manifestation* in the streets of Brussels today, and they have cancelled our

meeting, except for the possibility that a small delegation of us may be allowed to enter to meet with the member of the EUP (MEP). Sophie left to negotiate with the security people while we held a circle and decided that we will not allow them to split us up like that and that if we cannot all go in, then none of us will go in. Sophie returned with the news that Isabelle Durant, the Vice President of the EUP and a Green MEP from Belgium, with whom we had a meeting scheduled at 11:00, has agreed to come outside and meet with us in the park. After Ms. Durant talked and answered questions, we gave her a thousand peace cranes that we have folded on the walk, Noe explained the meaning of the cranes and the story of Sadako for the last time on the walk, and we read a statement we have prepared for the occasion. It was encouraging to see how much we agreed on the need to eliminate nuclear weapons and nuclear power and find sustainable energy cycles. We were also greeted by Charlotte



Mijeon, international contact for Réseau Sortir du Nucleaire, and Claude Turmes, VP of the Green Group at the EU.

Later in the afternoon we had our closing circle back at the squat. In the center of the circle we laid out a flag on which people put items that are significant for them from the walk. We passed a “talking stick” around the circle so everyone had several chances to share the meaning of the walk for them. Lots of gratitude and deep emotion was expressed, punctuated by humor. And of course Aristide blessed us with one last short story about the emotional/spiritual life of the pepper mill we are using for the talking stick. One last circle of hugs in the tradition of Footprints for Peace closed the circle and ended another walk.

