

After Hiroshima
Interview transcript

Interviewee: Annette Wallis D.O.B 14/08/1928 (AW)

Background voice: Oscar Wallis, husband of Annette (OW)

Interviewer: Ruth Dewa (RD)

Date: June 3rd 2015

RD: And could you just start by giving me a bit of context of your life around this period? So what you were up to towards the end of the war?

AW: I was um... I was at boarding school, Quaker boarding school as a result of the war, because we lived in London, uh, before the war and at the outbreak of the war as well and in fact our house was uh - did have some incendiary bombs and other things. I certainly have very strong memories of um... of barrage balloons on Parliament Hill and um... yes... search lights catching fighters overhead and things from my bedroom window and anyway my parents thought it was too, too serious to keep us in London and I was sent to boarding school where my siblings already were, although I hadn't wanted to go and they said I wouldn't have to go if I didn't want to... and being a Quaker school... um...our teachers were really, quite a large number were conscientious objectors to the war who were allowed to stay uh, at work in the teaching profession. So that influenced the war considerably... and I was at school almost exactly the war period. From 1939 when I went reluctantly to um, 1946.

RD: Ok brilliant. And may I ask, has your family always been Quakers as far back as you can remember?

AW: Yes and um, actually both sides, with my husband as well. So lots of Quaker heritage there. Less than there is mostly nowadays because... well various not very satisfactory systems were in place to keep Quakers marrying Quakers and so on.

RD: Ok and during the war whilst you were at this school, um, would your teachers comment upon the war often?

AW: [Long pause] I may be wrong about this or it might be just my personality but we weren't as informal with staff in those days as I think schoolchildren might be nowadays and I think it was more to do with assumptions. We simply assumed we came with common ideals and ideas rather than having conversations, because certainly as I got older in the school towards like the Sixth Form um, we were on perfectly good terms with the staff... I mean basically friends in a way but um... I don't remember political discussions particularly.

RD: And when you say that there was an assumption that you were on common ground, I've just thought that because – as this is going to hopefully be reaching a wide audience that might not know anything about the subject um beforehand, would you mind explaining what the Quaker um, view is towards peace and disarmament etc.?

AW: Right well uh, going back right to the 17th century, uh, there was a commitment to working for peace and also uh, that relationships... that it depends considerably on relationships and how you deal with other people and um actually originally quite a lot of Quakers came out of the army, the Commonwealth army in those days. But um it was the inner experience, spiritual experience of uh...of that of God... that's an expression we use...that is in every person. So clearly we haven't an enemy. And they're also strongly founded on, um, the bible and particularly the Gospels and particularly the teaching of Jesus, with um, the message of love your enemies and together with the

equality that goes with the love of God in everyone, then you don't go out and kill them, for your, whatever purpose, you know, but presumably for your advantage. I think [laughs], I don't know what Quakers would make of that summary but uh [laughs] hmmm.

(05:40)

RD: Thank you... and kind of fast forwarding to August 1945, do you remember when you first heard about the bomb being dropped on Hiroshima?

AW: I'm thinking about that, knowing you were going to ask me some questions. I was quite politically aware but not um... but, and remember particularly before that seems like, I think the school must have taken The News Chronicle, that's the newspaper I remember and um I remember those maps of the...when... you know when – Dunkirk, and the little boats, and the whole Normandy venture and uh, and um I remember the big arrows um, uh showing the Battle of the Bulge and all that. So I remember all those quite clearly and so obviously we took a sort of daily interest of how it was happening but I realised and I thought that I remembered the droppings of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki but actually I can't have been at school during that time because it was August so I must have been elsewhere and that must – so all I remember really, and it's not terribly clear, is that it was a new weapon. And I don't think I understood what nuclear power and nuclear energy meant although we had of course had doodlebugs and all sorts of other, horrible, frightening weapons. So... I think it sort of mixed with um, with the subsequent knowledge of what happened in, in Japan and... particular things caught my imagination like the young children going to school you know, at 8 o'clock in the morning, sort of thing, and leaving home with their sandwich boxes on a glorious day and I – I think those made an enormous impression on me and also of course all those people vaporised people, you know, in unimaginable numbers... and it wasn't at all long, in fact, only um in the early 1950s that we met our first Hiroshima survivor who was a Quaker, who became a lifelong friend and who had an enormous influence on the whole family because it led subsequently to our daughter going to Japan to - in fact, going to Japan more than once, including Hiroshima itself – and Nagasaki – and meeting other survivors. But Fumi, this first friend, um, who was a teacher at the Quaker school in Tokyo um, was a terrific influence and obviously we heard a great deal from being very involved with the peace work in Japan.

RD: Um and when you said that you had these kind of resonating images in your mind of the children walking to school etcetera, do you remember where you found out this information from?

AW: [Long pause]. Well, no, it's difficult to pin that down because we were ... we were very peace oriented in both friendships and everything else that I can think of. So, we were very... involved in, in the peace movement from quite young, though I, I'm trying to think how much I did during the university years for instance, you know, actively. That would have been the end of the 40s. I'm afraid it's a little bit of a blur really, my sources [laughs].

(10:19)

RD: Not at all. Um so kind of toward – in the kind of months and years afterwards, did you notice a shift in people um, thinking of this as a new technology and something that could be harnessed for power and actually appreciating how destructive it could be and how dangerous it could potentially be?

AW: I absolutely, certainly, understood how dangerous it could be. Possibly world-ending it was and um, and of course with nuclear power it was somewhat similar with Chernobyl and things and nowadays horrific prospects of, of um, huge nuclear power being used in China without safety checks and um, you name it, you know. But um, in those days long ago I think one of the things...

well obviously we were still being re- I married very young having met Oscar with, not just falling in love but we having very similar values and background and he'd been a conscientious objector in the war too and.... So I married straight out of university and um... we had a fam – started a family quite soon after and one of the things I was particularly aware of was nuclear tests because they were scary. I know they were in the Pacific or um in Australia and places where there were not supposed to be people but of course there were people, you know, there were the people who were living there in Australia, the Aborigines, on the islands, the Atolls, the people who lived there ... but, um... I forget what your original question was. I got carried away... oh dear! [Laughs]

RD: I'm trying to think back as well cos we've gone down different threads... um... I think it was about the shift in people appreciating how –

AW: That's right, that's right. It was. Um... I think that's why I got led off on different trail because we were of course suffering from rationing and all sorts of things in those early 1950s years and um... and restrictions still so, one got not altogether an easy life just domestically. But I think I was really frightened by these tests, nuclear tests, because of something called Strontium 90 that came with the fallout and of course currents, wind currents, could take them all over the world and it went particularly into milk and things and I've got very small children and I was extremely worried and very helpless, you felt, I remember how helpless I felt. And so when the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament started it just felt absolutely re-energising and brilliant to be able to do something. And then we couldn't take, couldn't do the whole of the first Aldermaston march. We took our four children on that first march, on the last day. It was a couple of, uh, nephews as well um, even though our youngest was only a month old and was just getting over chickenpox but we all went and I mean it's, it's very, very memorable to go on that first Aldermaston march albeit only for the last day. And what I remember, it didn't happen subsequently, we went every subsequent year and almost, I remember someone saying to me, see you next year, you know. And that was our sort of protest to the atomic bombings and commemoration of, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But um, I think that first time, people were very, the crowds that collected at the end of the march were quite big crowds on either side of the march, going along were not approving... they were disapproving of this protest, for particularly taking children maybe. Especially children in prams and things you know... we probably had a pram and a push chair... you know [laughs]... small children who were walking. I don't know, that -that's, that's quite a strong memory. That it wasn't approval really. But subsequently it was... you know It's quite a - I mean CND was such a strong movement in those days. Uh... it's not so strong now because it's restricted to people – well people are getting more concerned about climate change and other equally important issues.

(15.53)

RD: I'm going to come back to the – back to the march shortly. But just going back to what you originally said about how you felt re-energised when the CND formed. So am I right in thinking that um, CND was a response to people who had been thinking in this way and had been worried about the nuclear issue for quite some time?

AW: 'I'm sure it was... you know people like Bertrand Russell got involved so... you know, big names as it were, were involved with the Committee of the 100 and all that at the beginning. So I think it got a great deal of publicity. It was probably people like me, you know, a housewife with small children, worrying about her children's health. On... on the very issue of, of um... the effect that nuclear weapons or an accident could have and the multiplication of them as well, it made it such a relief... I mean it was a very good feeling. To be doing something... probably a little bit like the protests against the Iraq war, where the streets were so... so filled that you were in danger of getting squeezed in at the side, you know, so strong was the protest. Not that it worked but um... nor has the current attempts to stop Trident which is completely mad in my opinion.

RD: And, can you just explain to me a little bit more about the concern with the milk? 'Cos I've heard this before but I don't fully understand the ins and outs of it.

AW: Well probably I don't either. I remember particularly, cos we are talking a long time ago, but I don't know that I've remembered it in detail then because I'm not on the science side, I'm on the arts side really so, you know, I never knew quite what atomic energy was except that it was the splitting of the atom and the energy. So I think.... And I don't know exactly what Strontium 90 was except that it was pretty deadly and that it came from the fall out. When...so it was the test, it was the tests producing fall out which by wind currents and so on come your way and well like the accident at Chernobyl where, our daughter was living in Wales at the time and uh you couldn't use the, the meat from the sheep because they had been eating the grass, which would have been poisonous, put radiation um, you know, into the human system if they'd eaten the meat. So those farmers did really badly, you know, unable to um... continue their farming. I don't know whether they're still at an original loss. Um, whether it's been released or whether it's still considered radiation... it probably is.

[Long pause]

RD: So could you tell me kind of, in quite a bit of detail about the Aldermaston March? Speaking to other people I've heard that Sunday was generally the family day 'cos it meant that you didn't have to sleep overnight in a community hall with the children etcetera, so presumably you were travelling to London as a family.

AW: We actually went um... well we didn't do the whole four days you see, so we only... oh I forget where we began.

RD: Oh yeah, so would it have been Reading way?

AW: [Interrupts]. Having thought of it, it must be in my diary somewhere. I can tell you subsequently. 'Cos I keep, not a detailed diary, I mean more sort of family things but hmm. I might look it up and see whether I can find anything on how, on where we actually started. But we would have done that last day's walk from wherever the third day ended. And we would have come down uhh... we would have been living in Welwyn Garden City, so we would have started - started from there. No I don't have an enormously detailed...

RD: Do you remember what the atmosphere was like within the march and the kind of, the other people you came across. Was there any kind of discussion as you walked for instance?

AW: Tremendous solidarity...with all the people marching. No question of that at all. And as I say, the sort of feeling that those watching but unable to take part were pretty sort of askance at ordinary looking people doing these sort of things. Cos it was pretty well the beginning of that sort of protest. You know...

RD: And was it hard work doing this march while you had young children with you?

AW: Well we hadn't quite got into the... I mean it was like the very beginning of the pattern of our family life, which is using a lot of energy and taking some risks and enjoying it and um, well lots of energy; cycling and camping holidays and all sorts [laughs]. So although, so it was right at the beginning, I think it just... Oscar and I had already been keen cyclists when we met and I think it does... I think it was the beginning of how we shaped our lives anyway, and continued to do so. I'm still cycling [laughs].

(22:23)

RD: *That's brilliant!*

AW: [Interrupts]. Oscar's had to give up at 94 but fair enough I feel [laughs].

OW: Well done ma'am. Heh heh.

RD: *And do you remember anything of the - of the music and the songs during the march?*

AW: You know... out of the umpteen marches I've been on and protests, because I've been on so many. I mean basically in terms of my work, I mean I've done bits of supply teaching and other things but basically I've been a peace worker of one sort or another, you know on Quaker peace committees, on – on delegations you know, one of those was to Japan and the other was to Italy and...this is all later than the period you're talking about. But um, again I'm sorry I've forgotten your original question there.

RD: *Just if there was a presence of music and song?*

AW: Well yes. Ah that's why, I was going to say, I get confused over the whole sequence of years in which we had the songs and things so I'm not sure that I could pick out one that we... I mean whether 'Ban the Bomb' had started at that point or not, you know. I do, I do think my attitude to protest comes from this, this Quaker... sense of the value of each life and that I couldn't have done some of the uh...law-breaking at The Gates of Greenham and... the one in Oxford, whatever that one was called, where we sort of went over barbed wire and I don't think I could have done that if they hadn't been in a... in my face context as it were. Cos that took away, in a way it took away the anxiety for me. 'Cos it felt right... it felt the right thing to do. [Long pause]. So we worried less about what the consequences might be.

RD: *So in terms of the act of protesting, would you consider yourself a direct action protestor?*

AW: [Long pause]. I think I'd say yes and no to that. I mean I have... done quite a lot of direct action in the big groups, you know, at Molesworth and at Greenham in particular. Um, but not half as consistently as um... as some people who stayed in camps and you know, lived there for months or years, I have gone on some long walks, you know, one that was ending at Greenham and one that was ending... I think it was the year following the setting up of the Greenham Common camps if I remember. And pushing a granddaughter in a pram – we called it 'the peace pram' [laughs] with um, with my family for that one. That was a women's protest. It always felt incredibly positive to be doing something but... in a way, I also strongly believe in sort of... diplomacy and speaking to people and speaking to people in power who have different views and um... I think you could call it uh, there's a phrase for it... quiet processes. You know, I believe in those uh, um, discussions in the background and the Oxford research groups for instance find out who the leading power behind the big names are that are actually doing things and trying to get in touch with them and... get talking. In the end all the [laughs] everything has to end up with talking, whoever one's enemy might be. I think in the long line of things going on in the world that's always the way things happen, like in Northern Ireland. In the end, however bitter feelings are... people have to talk to come to a solution that brings peace.

[Long pause].

RD: *Speaking of um... talking to people, when you said the – the kind of um perception from these*

people at Aldermaston was hostile, was there any communication between the two or... were they verbal in being hostile at all?

AW: Hostile might be too strong a word... they were probably a bit shocked to see me with a pram and a tiny baby and that sort of thing so I think it might be more... it might have been more expressions on faces. Um, to which one would be fairly sensitive. I mean one had the solidarity of the group one was with but if one is into um... wanting to further, continue relationships... you know making eye contact with someone who's unfriendly is disconcerting so I'm imagining it was that sort of thing looking back really.

(29.37)

RD: Could you tell me under what circumstances you met your friend who was um a survivor from Hiroshima?

AW: Right, well that um, that, she had such a big influence on our lives because um...um...my mother, uh...my father...who has...who I had to talk about quite a lot because of the First World War, because he was a conscientious objector in that war. And...was both on Western Front for two years and in prison for two years, so, you know he was an interesting case study as you might say for my granddaughter when she was doing her dissertation. But, um...my mother after his, my father's death in a climbing accident in 1952, was a year or two later invited to go to Pendle Hill which is Quaker study centre, study and contemplation centre in Pennsylvania in the States, and there she met some Hiroshima maidens, they were called. And they were young Japanese girls who had been schoolchildren aged about 8 or 9 I think at the time of the dropping of the uh Hiroshima bomb... the bomb on Hiroshima I should say. And, um, they...she got good friends with some of them, they were being put up at Pendle Hill and probably elsewhere, in order to have operations to remove some of the scars and so on. Uh, courtesy of the American government. I can't remember now how many there were, or whether my mother wrote it up, I don't know that she did necessarily. However, a couple of years later, something like that, she was invited to Japan. And by the...by the one or two of the young women...and...by that time my father had died, and she did go, uh to Japan. And had already met Fumi, our friend, uh at the first world Quaker conference after the war in 1952, so they were already good friends, and Fumi probably stayed with my mother in London and so on. And uh, and that visit to Japan, where she travelled around as well, so she learned a lot about Japan but she also...heard a lot about survivors and about um, these young victims who had, I think they had been um... I think they had been in the school gym changing, or changing into gym clothes or something like that, they must've been in a basement part of the school, because they survived. But they had appalling injuries, and I know how much, I mean what comes across to me emotionally again from long ago is um, how much my mother felt for a young man who had his ear blown off by the blast I suppose. It was very miserable, I mean, this is years later that she met him. Because probably he had lost any chance of marriage and everything else, he had a very poor sense of himself...and another young woman, that again she'd met off the Hiroshima maidens in America in the first instance, had had *so* many operations, and was longing for one more that they said would be risky, because you can really only, I think I'm right in saying that people can only take so many operations, and it's risky after that. And...she had one more, again cosmetic removing you know, some ghastly scars I think, and died as a result, and I think this made a big impact on my mother and consequently on me because we were very close, and of course, I subsequently got the chance to go to Japan myself. So I, you know, heard it, heard what...the Japanese peace movement was doing and how strong it was.

(34.51) And of course its economic recovery, which was pretty remarkable at that time was due to not being allowed any weapons or military or...which I think is quite telling you know.

RD: And would you say that, um, kind of in the late 40s you were largely surrounded by other Quakers, or did you have friends and people that you spoke to that weren't necessarily Quakers, and had the view that perhaps, the bomb was a justified way of ending the war quickly, or was it was a positive deterrent afterwards etc.

AW: I never went, I never went with the deterrent idea myself, but you obviously heard it expressed quite often. But...looking back I think I have spent a lot of my time in fairly, uh... fairly like-minded groups, um...and ... although this is just a chance memory of a Swiss friend who was very worried about Russia and the Russian influence near the Swiss border, you know, because of Hungary and so on. Um... he was...quite gung-ho about the need for nuclear weapons and protection against the Russians and so on. So, sort of, you knew...that that was something you couldn't communicate properly on, sort of like really taking different views...it, it prevents a sort of binding friendship in a way... but um, I think I was always game for discussion with people who disagreed. I hope so, that's what it's all about, talking about it. But um...I guess I was a peace worker and war resister above all at a sort of emotional level.

(38.07)

RD: And you mention this, your friend having a fear of Russia. Could you tell me a bit about the Cold War period and whether there was, whether you ever had a kind of imminent fear that... That the bomb would be used again?

AW: I was rather horrified to find subsequently how near accidents came, and how they were missed by, almost by chance rather than anything else. Like in the Bay of Pigs business and so on, um... I think one of the things about working in the peace movement was that you did actually feel very positive all the time, because you were forever trying to alter things for the better, rather than being cower, as it were, feeling fearful. So I think I feel more fearful now where I'm able to do less, with things like climate change and...where our grandchildren are inheriting a world that's pretty dangerous uh... so that I go on being very politically interested with, but a bit more despairing because being very involved in the peace movement made you feel you were trying to do something.

(40.02)

RD: So when you said you got involved in the Peace Movement quite early, would you consider your involvement with CND the beginning of that?

AW: I think we did quite a lot in the CND at the beginning, but obviously in one's local group... we were living in Welwyn Garden City, but I have to say I had a large family as well, I was fairly domestically involved, but having said that, we had two au pair girls when our family was very young, each living with us for nearly a year, which is probably the only help I had, you know. And each of them were incredibly um... um, affected by our views, and have become very remarkable people, I mean, they might've been remarkable people anyway, but uh, strikingly, what I call 'world citizens', and uh, my mother took out something called world citizenship, there must've been something going at the time, cos I don't remember, but she had a sort of international passport that you could get by, which made you a world citizen, and I liked that idea as well.

(41.39)

RD: And could you tell me a little bit about your local CND group? For instance, how often were the meetings and what would they consist of, and how, how did they spread the word and recruit new members?

AW: You know, I really can't, I really haven't got a clear memory of that. I do remember a particular speaker, a young woman...who was giving a talk...I'm sure she was CND...at the Quaker meeting house. And how...her talk made you really, really frightened by the possibilities of what could happen. And I remember not agreeing with that approach, because I felt that it sort of...made you so frightened that it sort of was like you know, rabbit in the headlights sort of thing, that you couldn't act. So I think I preferred something more hopeful and positive than that. I mean, she was probably right, it is as fearful as she made out, all of this was a very long time ago. But um... I mean, it may have been Oscar going to the meetings at the time, uh, although I was really the more politically inclined.

(43.42)

RD: And did you feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement when the Test Ban Treaty was signed in '63.

AW: I certainly did! But then we tried to constantly draw attention to the breaking of the Test Ban Treaty ever since, you know, which was really horrible you know, I mean, renewing Trident...I get...I get so upset about what is happening in the world, and what is happening now, and how little...well, this is bringing politics into it, but how little even the Labour Party was, you know wasn't prepared not to support the renewing of Trident, which is definitely the breaking of that treaty. And...um...we were very involved in...I don't think I'm going to remember the name of it now. Was it called the World Disarmament Campaign? Where we took...where we leafleted all these houses, well there's so many if you lead a life of that sort of protest, um, I don't think I'm going to recall that, I'd have to look at some sort of back diary.

(45.07)

RD: What period was it in?

AW: Well I would say probably that would be the early 80s when we were going to Millsworth and places. Uh, but I'm getting of course worried about cruise missiles. I mean our peace work really began in 1979, really. When Mrs Thatcher got in. Certainly our active Quaker group here, because we were living in Leicester by that time. Um...was very, was very involved, and we were doing peace at all sorts of different levels, also the positive sort of music and poetry side, and art and theatre. Not just protest...

(46.16)

RD: Do you think the signing of the Test Ban Treaty was one of the reasons that the peace movement lost momentum?

AW: I should think it calmed, calmed people's fears, it might well have been, though I do think I mean I, again over a lifetime, I've watched movements come and go, and I remember what particularly involved my mother – I mean I'm now talking a *really* long time ago because I'm talking about uh...the early 20th century, or even the 19th century, end of the 19th century, and...she was so involved in the temperance movement, so you know that...that was, that's an issue that's gone completely off the radar you know um, and I think that does happen to movements, and they have to start over again. And I think... that's what CND is suffering from, the people working in it are still so committed, but they're getting older, and the inspiring new thing is working for equality and justice in a very unequal world and also for, for things like uh...paying attention to climate change and dealing with it as we should, instead of letting things just happen. And I think the new

energy is flowing into those new movements and that's almost the way humans behave perhaps, that... and you often get small groups with some charismatic or very active person, perhaps by personality needing to work in their own group, rather than some, I don't know, under some system that's already been set up. And that's how small groups grow, maybe they can cooperate with others of the same idea, but um... I think I haven't thought about that before, but I think that's what happens... It certainly happened with, well, with different religions and all the changes that we've seen in our time. I actually remember, um, pretty well the first black person I ever met, and that would've been in the 1940s I guess. But what a different country we were then. And I remember too how um...um... Muslim women were hardly distinguishable in Leicester when we first came, but because of all that's happened since then, now it's very very much more clear, because they've had to define themselves, by putting... well, I'm sure they were wearing headscarves but it's, it's sort of divisive, the divisiveness has stopped us being the integrated society we were, and um, and all that...that Western countries have done of course to the Middle East, and the Iraq war and everything else...but the changes have been absolutely enormous over a lifetime. Sort of exciting for the young I guess, with lots of energy. I wouldn't mind tackling it if I was young again.

(50.50)

RD: Just jumping back to um, this threat from Russia, do you remember anything about the Cuban Missile Crisis?

AW: Only reading about it, and feeling...great relief when it was resolved. But hearing subsequently how it came about...that that didn't start a nuclear exchange is so extraordinary you know, and so chancey. As I understand it they had to have three people making the decision, and it was all a misunderstanding, you know the Russians...it was a misunderstanding, that very, very nearly caused a nuclear exchange. You live on the edge of crisis it seems to me, half the time.

(52.09)

RD: But it wasn't so much of an imminent fear for you personally around then?

AW: I don't think so. I imagine its for the reasons that I've...um...said really, that we were just doing as much as one can...in...in not just active peace work of all sorts, that would mean, not just protest, but wider than that. Um, I was involved for a bit in lunchtime diplomatic lectures at, at one of the Quaker houses in London where diplomats, usually of a middle, middle standing you know, not the youngest, and certainly not the most senior figures were invited to lunch and hear a speaker, like Hugo Young, the, the journalist, and uh...and were able to speak sort of off the record and discuss things, and with... so that might give the chance of a young Russian diplomat speaking to an American...in a safe off record setting, and that was certainly done in Northern Ireland by Quakers, so such, such good things were going on at the same time. I...I think personality comes into it, and I think I'm one who...does better facing some sort of disaster when it happens than anticipating it in any way.

(54.28)

RD: And could you tell me a little bit about what your views are of the role of the women in the peace movement. For instance, someone that I spoke to quite early on in the project um, said the women were at the forefront and the driving force because they were so worried about the tests they were doing and the effects on unborn children etc.

AW: Well, again, so much has been in a Quaker setting for me, and...men and women have been treated equally....I mean, not...always totally obviously, but the idea is the total equality of men

and women. So... I haven't thought of that as a separate thing. But I do see, that I think...again, emotionally, knowing what the effects of radiation can do to an unborn child uh...would have more effect on women probably. I expect I've been fairly fortunate in a sense, being so involved... in the Quaker... bases on face, but also support and with things happening everywhere because, there are Quakers in most countries, and so wherever you go, you've got someone holding pretty similar views, or...or being able to talk or certainly being...sympathetic or able to hear what you're saying... but in one or two of the protests we've done, say outside...I can't remember a specific location really, but um... one was sort of, some sort of event with the RAF and I expect we were handing out leaflets or something. But it was surprising how as human beings when you're basing everything on our common humanity, you get on okay with people you know, who are holding very different views or doing very different jobs. And I do remember, I expect it was military police at Millsworth years ago, you know, keeping an eye on the protest going on, who turned up his lapel and had a daffodil underneath it which must have been our symbol for that day you know, a peace symbol, saying you know I'm on your side too actually you know. So I think...that...sort of common humanity of us all.

(58.36)

I remember...this is just, I mean, completely irrelevant but um, I was on on a peace march in London, and we were in a sort of Quaker section of it, I think, or probably from our meeting or something. And we were overtaken by the socialist workers...uh, a...a big group of them yelling out their slogans, so loud and noisy, and suddenly we were caught in the middle of them with our sort of peaceful, different attitude, and it was just so funny. But they were faster than us, so you know, so we heard them approaching, then they sort of took us over and we were part of them, and then they went ahead, it was just such a funny experience it stayed in my mind. Because people do it their way, and our way was different from theirs.

(59.38)

RD: That's something I find really interesting, different religions and different sects and different kind of political parties all coming together and how that worked and...perhaps how some of it didn't work within the peace movement, and especially for the...um, the nuclear disarmament movement, because there are people I've spoken to that believe in nuclear disarmament but aren't pacifists, whereas other people who are completely pacifist. So was there something that you were conscious of, the, the very different groups within?

(1.00.14)

AW: Well I think I was, but it was more brought to my attention by belonging at one point to something called Leicester Ecumenical...Leicester Ecumenical...can't remember its exact title now. Disarmament...Movement, I don't think that's...I haven't got that quite right but anyway it was a long time ago but erm, what I remember about it particularly was that I thought we were joining, I thought I was joining this ecumenical peace movement, imagining that I thought it was the same of our peace witness and that actually it was the same as our peace witness, and our, er, as Quakers, but it wasn't, because it was anti-nuclear specifically, and not anti-war as such. So probably believing in the just – in fact it was a Catholic I'm thinking of particularly – you know, believing in the just war theory and so on. In other words that there are reasons that are considered sufficient for going to war, and that was sort of quite a shock and brought me up short, and showed me how my witness was in sort of fairly protected group, in a way.

RD: What do you mean by this term 'peace witness'?

AW: Well, I suppose it's at all different levels, beginning with how you deal with ordinary people, like say a cold caller at the door. Or someone who seems to be having a violent argument with someone else, to which you are a witness but a very uncomfortable witness. Or to the extreme other end of going out to work for peace, medically if you're qualified, or whatever, you know doing what you're called on to do really, in your life, in whatever way it might be. The Swiss girl who'd been our au pair girl years ago who I felt was very influenced by our ideas, trained as a nurse which she was going to do anyway, went out and did absolutely amazing work in Laos and Vietnam and Tibet, and places, just astonishing you know, but very positive and also very critical, say of some of the humanitarian work being done, but the representative staying in hotels, I remember her particularly speaking about that, I think it was in relation to work in Tibet, because she had to work at some distance, and you know there's sort of like 24 hours it would take to come into Kathmandu, from where she was working. And representatives of some of our charitable organisations were staying in hotels, and, you know the support. And she felt very critical of that, she thought that one should 'live as the people do', and told many stories of what it was like to be the only white person that people had ever seen, and that they'd never seen...you know they watched every move of hers with interest because she was a complete stranger to their ways.

(1.05.34)

RD: You've just got me thinking about perceptions, outside perceptions. Did you have an opinion on the Japanese before the bombs were dropped? For instance I've spoken to people who said at the time because people didn't know about the concentration camps etc in Germany, they thought the Japanese were very cruel and wicked, because of the hardships the prisoners of war underwent in their camps.

AW: I think probably during the war. Whereas Germany, no we didn't know about the concentration camps, we did know a lot about what was happening to Jews. Because my father...we actually lived in Berlin in the thirties. I was obviously a very small child then. But he was following up his peace witness by, well when he was in prison in the first world war he learned German, because it was the language of the enemy, and he meant to go out to Germany straight after the war, and he worked for reconciliation and peace, and subsequently took his whole family out to Berlin, and lot of his work was in fact helping Jews escape from the Nazis. But he believed in, where he saw injustice, being done with the Nazis, which he did on one occasion, he took up their case, because he saw the injustice to them. Again I'd have to read it up to remind myself of the incident, but you know he didn't just support the Jews, he was looking...for the humanity in everyone. But that...obviously the example of my parents and their lives had such a big influence on me that it made me who I am really. But I forget the question you asked me which I have I'm sure got some sort of answer to!

(1.08.34)

RD: Your perception and those around you about the Japanese -

AW: Oh the Japanese. I knew I had something more to say there, because I think if you, certainly in my boarding school years, my idea of Japan was not only this remote and sort of real foreignness, which of course totally changed as I began to know Japanese people and visit Japan, was through things like Picture Post. I remember with horror even now the thought that Americans used Japanese skin off victims to make lampshades and things. I must have read that in Picture Post. Because it sort of made a huge impression on me, man's inhumanity to man, but I've read with great interest since about the cruelties that the Japanese inflicted - I think it just - you know what they went through in things like the Burma campaign and so on. And how some have managed to meet up, some were tortured, have met up with their torturers, I mean it must be rare, but individual people's experience, where they were able to shake hands and meet as human beings. I think the

Japanese felt pretty revolted – the whole war in the Pacific, apart from films that came out. It's funny trying to hunt back so far, because it really is a very long time ago. We knew so much more about Germany, because we had lived there. So we knew the things being said about Germans as a race, or in totality weren't true, because we had so many friends there. And in fact my sister, who is older than me, had wanted to join the equivalent of the, I think it was called the BDN, but it was the equivalent of the Hitler Youth, for girls, and her friends were joining it at school. And I think this was at that point that my parents thought we had best come back to England, because things were getting too difficult. He had been arrested by the Gestapo in any case, but, in no way- and he, I think it was their cleaning lady had found what she thought were suspicious papers, they probably were suspicious, I mean they probably were that he was helping, I mean I don't know what he would have left around, because he obviously had to be very careful about how he, how he helped people- leave the country largely, and get sponsorship abroad for them to leave Germany and so on.

Particularly Jews but also Aryan non-Jews who were politically against the Nazis. Because there were certainly those who were very much threatened. Because even by not tuning in to Nazi propaganda on the radio, if your neighbour heard that you weren't, could be considered worth reporting. I can't imagine how awful it must have been to live there. But my parents were able to keep in touch with some German friends via the Red Cross, sending messages to Switzerland, and they would get forwarded to Germany. So they remained in touch with some of their friends, who of course were working for peace in Germany.

So Germany was far more immediate to me, including the fact that I was ticked off by schoolfriends for saying Be-ethoven rather than Beethoven. I was pronouncing it as I knew it was. Childish things. I think all my life I've found friendship with German people- that have just come my way by chance- quite powerful, because I was there at such a young age. At a pre-political age really.

(1.14.31)

RD: May I ask about your friend Fumi. Was she quite open about talking about her experience with the bomb, because she felt that she needed, possibly, to educate people and raise awareness of it? Or was it quite difficult?

AW: She'd been born in Hawaii. So she was actually an American citizen although she was living in Japan, and there during the war and everything else. She was always very conscious of her American passport, and having been born in Hawaii. Her family- some of her family were certainly in Tokyo at the big bombing that happened there. And also she happened to be in Hiroshima except that she'd left that day to collect wood or something on the day of the dropping of the bomb. But went straight back, I mean because they had no idea about radiation, you know it just wasn't understood. At all. I guess it was understood by some scientists but not by the ordinary people, when the bomb was dropped. So she went looking for her family in the city. And I know that she needed testing for radiation every year of her life actually. She did – she was one of the ones who really survived. I don't know how. But having once- I don't think I probed her story particularly- I just, she was like you might say like a peace comrade, you know we were, she was working in Japan in peace work, and they were big organisations, and I think she worked for a university women's organisation in particular, and she worked in a Quaker school in Tokyo. And I think the same was true of our friend from Nagasaki, who was very active in international- international reconciliation, I haven't got the title quite right. But he certainly went about giving lectures. I'm sure Fumi did too actually. I'd like to ask them. But neither are alive now.

It always seemed to me so awful that after using the atomic bomb, which was largely because Russia was already a growing threat, and that was during the war when they were our allies, they then set off a second bomb on Nagasaki, although, there was no need to use the second, if that was

to bring about the end of the war. As I understand it peace negotiations were already being, Japan had already in a way accepted defeat, and peace negotiations were underway. And it's almost as though America was hurrying to use it while it could, and find out how effective it was. And obviously there'd been great fear that the Nazis would get hold of, that the Nazi scientists would discover how an atomic bomb could be used before it was used by the Allies. To use a second one to try out a different way of doing it, just seemed unbelievable really. And then America took these, you know these nuclear scientists from Germany, never mind whether they were Nazi or whatever, to America, in order to get their expertise. I don't know, you know I'm not very happy about the world really. Well, I am, hehe. Always an optimist.

(1.21.05)

RD: So before the bombs were dropped were you aware of this technology being developed?

AW: Quite likely not. I'm not sure if I've ever thought of that. I think quite likely not. I remember being rather horrified by Oppenheimer. Because that's a very strong Jewish name. And a friend of mine who suffered greatly from, well her family was killed in the Holocaust. She survived in the Kindertransport that came to England. She was called Oppenheimer and somehow the combination of a victim of the war also being the cause, of being able to use the atomic bomb, because they'd perfected it. I mean, it's just a shared name, but, I don't know. Obviously stuck in my mind. My guess is that it came as a shock and surprise. And I wasn't really aware of the science behind it. Except that it was new. Except that it was new.

(1.22.58)

OW: Happy day.

RD: Absolutely [laughs]. Is there anything that you would like to tell me about, or any specific memories of days or events within this period that stand out particularly in your mind?

AW: I think I've covered what came naturally to the surface, thanks to your asking questions, which is a very helpful way of bringing back memories, or confusions!

OW: You've done it very well ma'am.

AW: Well it's very funny because it's been more in-depth than I expected. I wrote a few things down, thinking about it in advance, but I think most of it...I've put 'the war was seen through a child's eyes really', so it was things like the boys...I remember looking out of the window and seeing Bristol on fire. Our school was 15 miles away or something but, incredible sight. Do you know that's what remains with me, incredible sight, not what it might be doing, and next day the boys went out – it was a co-education school – and you know, looking for shrapnel and old shells and things. And we did paper collecting...I think I've covered a lot of it, watching the war in newspapers with their big arrows of advances and retreats and whatnot. Barrage balloons and fighter planes and things that I remember from London. And I remember doodlebugs too, that was horrible because I was going to the dentist and I heard one of these doodlebugs stop and I thought 'What if it's going to hit when I'm having my tooth extracted' or whatever it was. Just such...you see it's just in such small ways. The incredible austerity there was at the end of the war, and rationing, things like that, you know I remember we got a little bowl with our, only about that size, with our week's ration of butter for instance. It was helpful being a vegetarian because we got a huge ration of cheese to make up for all the meat that we weren't getting, but that they probably weren't getting either.

During the war my father was fire-fighting, a fire-watcher, in the East End of London. He was a

friend of Vera Brittan, who was so much in the news in the First World War, because they, and others, set up the committee to stop night-bombing. I mean it was an attempt to stop night-bombing during the war. Because that was, that is particularly cruel because people are so vulnerable in the night, and of course that's why people arrest people in the middle of the night. Oscar who was working on a hospital ship during the war as a conscientious objector, because he wouldn't take up gunnery training, saw the devastation that the bombing of Hamburg had done. And I was devastated by what was done to Dresden for instance, which seemed just sheer vengeance and nothing else, destroying an amazing medieval village- town. I do remember I read the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombs and the headlines about the new weapons and listened about how they'd bring the end of the war. No I'd no immediate idea of what an atomic bomb was. I've really covered a lot of- I mean your questions have led to my covering a lot of the material that I've thought about. Young man who had his ear blown off- but maybe, what remains really is the things that we reacted emotionally to. And that was one of the stories my mother came back with, this poor young man who felt that his prospects of a happy life were ruined by the bomb. And he was a survivor.

I put 'the USA taking the German nuclear scientists' because they were so gung-ho about the new enemy, you know, I mean, in fact, you know modern politics with Blair going into the Iraq war in spite of the millions of people protesting. Then I was just describing what I have for you already about the first Aldermaston march, and the Committee of 100- and Upper Hayford which was the time when I was doing some direct action over the barbed-wire, but which felt perfectly alright because we were going over it in order to hold basically a Quaker meeting for worship on the site, so it sort of felt fine, felt in right order, that we had an expression.

(1.30.27)

RD: So were you ever involved with the Committee of 100?

AW: Ah well, we had a good discussion on it, Oscar and I. Which- because we, we thought, we really wanted to be involved, but we had a large family of young children already at the time, of probably four. And I think I decided I couldn't manage if he was arrested. And Oscar must have agreed. But we certainly considered it. But we didn't...we didn't go and do the sit-in. We did get very involved with Nipponzan-Myohoji. This is a bit later than the period you are specially interested in. But you know they are the peace buddhists. Who had built the Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes and also in London, Battersea Park. They came through Leicester to go to Faslane. And I was so impressed by the fact that people from Japan, monks and nuns from Japan, should come to a country on the other side of the world, to protest about nuclear weapons, and take three months going up to Faslane stopping at various military facilities and things to make their protests, that I thought well the least that we could do would be to go to the final weekend of Faslane. So we took our Land Rover and our family and family and any other friends that fitted in, and went up to Faslane on that occasion. Can't remember what year that would have been. But we became as a result of that very involved with the peace buddhists. That's how I came to go to Japan for the first time actually, to a peace conference. And we decided that we would take a work party to Milton Keynes and help to build the peace pagoda. And I think I wrote an article about that, just for our Quaker, Quaker magazine called *The Friend*. Because that was an incredible experience. And their 'guji' they called him, their head, who was 98 or 99 at the time, but who'd set up this peace movement within Buddhism building peace pagodas all over the world hadn't built any in Europe at all at the time. And they had such faith they just sent one Japanese monk over with no resources, I think he just started just on a, sleeping on a park bench. And he was, he met a young man whose name I can't remember now who was involved with building Milton Keynes, which was new, and who laid- that's how he got the site for the pagoda. The temple had already been built by the time we had got involved but we asked for permission to come for a couple of days, bringing a Land Rover, full again of young people, to help build the peace pagoda. And they hadn't had any offers up

till then from English people. So it was very exciting, and we were treated, well, magnificently you know, but were really allowed to do real work there, quite, quite hard. And Oscar and I subsequently went to help with the Battersea one, so we've remained very, I mean only on the edge of that, but yep, good experience, and that was another Japanese connection of course.

(1.35.22)

RD: Absolutely. And so if you had this drive to want to assist and want to help, how would that translate into the actual logistics of actually knowing where to start, if you see what I mean?

AW: With something like the peace pagoda?

RD: Yes.

AW: Well I suppose writing and saying 'can we come?' Which subsequently led to an extraordinarily difficult decision that I made, which perhaps was the wrong decision. Because we were invited much later by the guji on a sort of trip to Japan to go to one or two Buddhist centres and also to go to Hiroshima, and it was to do with peace of course. But at the time we got the invitation I was actually on the peace march, I think the one that I mentioned where we were taking the grandchildren and the peace pram, and heading for Greenham I think. And you know that was staying, that was like the original Aldermaston march in a way, you know it had been set up in advance, that you stayed here and there in village halls, or with sympathetic, sympathetic people who had sufficient facilities. And I think I was fascinated by being able to go to Hiroshima. But in order to go I had to give up, I couldn't finish getting to Greenham. I missed the last- we'd only got to just beyond Hereford or somewhere around there on our way to Greenham. And I just, looking back- or perhaps well almost immediately knew I'd sort of made the wrong decision. But you should- well I suppose it's- like you should do the work, the real peace work where you are. So what I was doing was on the ground, with, pushing the pram, on our own home ground, where it mattered. Whereas going over to see Hiroshima was sort of like, big experience and very nice thank you.

(1.38.10)

And the same thing happened to me a second time. Where again I had, I mean this was very chance, but I had a big opportunity because it was, I think it was the 800th anniversary of St Francis's death- or birth, I can't remember now – but it was in Italy, in Rome in fact, I mean set up in Rome, by the government who had been celebrating his life throughout the year but somebody realised that his peace witness, St Francis's peace witness hadn't been acknowledged, and they would invite from all the , all the Nobel Prize winners to come and spend three or four days in Rome at government expense. And by chance because of the Quaker job I was doing, Quakers were invited because they had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 along with American Friends Service Committee which is the American equivalent. So it was a combined Nobel Prize with them. And I don't think– if we were in England, in Britain we would have taken that up, that offer of going if we had to pay for it, but the Italian government were setting it all up so they said oh well, might as well accept in that case. And I just happened to be doing a function for them, and I said 'hadn't someone who's able to speak Italian better go, hadn't they better go instead of me' but they said no, so I went to that, but simultaneously while we were getting all this government attention, although I did of course get the chance to go to Assisi and things...or rather I shook hands by mistake with the Pope. Because I'd forgotten the protocol you know. But at the same time a peace march was going down through the lakes of Italy, I think it was a European one, I forget where it had started. I think perhaps, perhaps in one of the Scandinavian countries, but it was going right through to Sicily, to a base probably, an American base or something, but I felt that was the real stuff, you know that's where

people are really making the protests, whereas this government-sponsored stuff which was ok, and nice for the people involved, was just that sort of thing that governments do, you know, not very meaningful really. So that was two places where I didn't think I followed my conscience really, otherwise I wouldn't remember that. Nonetheless they were two big experiences.

In Italy, in Rome that is to say I was all dressed up in proper Lent clothes by most, most of the organisations that accepted the government invitation about St Francis were organisations as was the Society of Friends – Quakers. But there was one, sort of real, one person, you know, who'd won the Nobel Peace Prize himself for [words unclear- large achievement?] - and then during that visit we got to hear that we'd be having an audience with the Pope. And I hadn't got suitable clothes at all. So the wives of Gatwick representatives lent me proper black shoes and a black coat, and a proper sort of manchilla to cover my head so I felt a very different persona arriving while that was being done. Dressed up. But of course, again, it was a very interesting experience to have.

OW: Ok.

RD: Been brilliant, thank you very much.

AW: You can hardly say we've left the world a better place after all this hard work.

OW: Hope you've enjoyed, or gained something.

RD: I have, very interesting.

(1.43.46)