

International Day of Peace and our International Friendship Bell

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of September 13, 2021)

The Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell has become an icon for Oak Ridge. Having been selected as a main item during the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Oak Ridge, it has over the past 25 years taken its place as a centerpiece of Oak Ridge history.

I recently took Alexei Dmitriev, a Russian travel writer, on a tour of Oak Ridge. The Bell intrigued him, and he found the symbolism significant. This happens each time I take someone or some group on a tour of Oak Ridge and include a stop at the Bell.

Kay Brookshire has provided us information about the upcoming International Day of Peace event in Oak Ridge. We have participated in this annual event in the past and are proud to be invited to do so again this year.

The International Friendship Bell and Peace Pavilion in Oak Ridge will serve as a gathering place for activities observing the United Nations International Day of Peace on Tuesday, Sept. 21.

With a featured Music for Peace program presented by the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, the evening will include a "Gardens for Peace" design raked into the gravel karesansui garden at the Bell.

The program also includes comments about the peace garden project and from Peace Pavilion architect Ziad Demian on the tradition and technology in the Pavilion design.

Oak Ridge Girl Scouts, who began organizing and participating in the Day of Peace observation in 2015, will lead singing and present quotes for peace. They will also have activities for children, including raking a small personal Japanese rock garden to take home.

Those attending are invited to bring picnic dinners to the Peace Pavilion in Bissell Park beginning at 5:15, with the program beginning at 6 p.m. and music at 7 p.m.

Pat Postma, co-chair of the International Friendship Bell Citizens Advisory Committee with Alan Tatum, and volunteer rakers for the karesansui garden, a traditional Japanese raked gravel garden at the Friendship Bell, participated in the North American Japanese Garden Association (NAJGA) "Patterns for Peace" raking in five gardens throughout the country for the Day of Peace last year.

They raked a design symbolizing peace created by enamel artist and Hiroshima bombing survivor Toshiko Tanaka in the karesansui garden last year. The garden is alongside the Peace Pavilion housing the 8,300-pound bronze Friendship Bell, cast in Japan for Oak Ridge's 50th anniversary.

That "Patterns for Peace" project was proposed by Martin McKellar, an Asian garden specialist retired from the University of Florida, who trained Oak Ridge's volunteer rakers and serves as a mentor to Oak Ridge's karesansui gardeners.

He was inspired to begin the project after meeting a group of Japanese middle school students who spoke with him while he traveled there and gave him a handwritten note that said:

*"We love peace, but we hate war
We want to have a way to go toward world peace.
Let's work together for world peace."*

This year, NAJGA has a new initiative, Gardens for Peace, bringing together 14 Japanese gardens in North America, including Oak Ridge's Garden, to promote peace on or around the Sept. 21 Day of Peace. Some will rake Tanaka's peace pattern into their karesansui gardens and share its meaning with visitors, while others may display the pattern in unique ways, such as in pathways or water features or lawns.

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The United National General assembly established the International Day of Peace in 1981, inviting nations and people to observe the day of non-violence and cease-fire with education and public awareness activities on issues related to peace.

Its theme this year is "Recovering better for an equitable and sustainable world."

"In 2021, as we heal from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are inspired to think creatively and collectively about how to help everyone recover better, how to build resilience, and how to transform our world into one that is more equal, more just, equitable, inclusive, sustainable and healthier," the UN web site (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace>) announced in describing its theme.

SPECIAL COVID RECOMMENDATIONS: Those attending are encouraged to social distance and to follow current CDC guidelines for COVID-19. ORCMA musicians will be seated separately from those attending, and those with picnic dinners or attending the program are asked to spread out on the grassy areas and benches around the International Friendship Bell so that they are socially distanced. People are strongly encouraged to wear masks if they are within six feet of others. ORCMA asks people to consider leaving or not attending, even if outdoors, if they have experienced symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, fever, or sore throat, or been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Thank you, Kay for the details of the upcoming International Day of Peace event at our Bell. The Bell truly has become a city gathering place since its relocation to the heart of A. K. Bissell Park. I am looking forward to the event and to again visiting with my good friend, Ziad Demian, whose inspiration created the beautiful Peace Pavilion setting where the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell now resides.



The first community gathering at the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell as the new Peace Pavilion was dedicated on September 20, 2018.