



Introduction

What this is all about

This handbook is intended to give a first glimpse into what it would be like to travel to another country in the name of peace, to stand against the violent, to stand by the brave, to take a real and serious stand for justice.

This book started with my three-week trip to Iraq in December 2002 with the Iraq Peace Team sponsored by Voices in the Wilderness. For a Quaker woman who runs programs for frail and disabled elders in the Tenderloin in San Francisco, pre-war Baghdad made for an unusual vacation. But I could not bear to sit safe at home while my country prepared to sacrifice its own young men and women in a war against other innocent people.

My schooling taught me to think as a sociologist and historian; I began right away to think about peace teams and accompaniment projects as an interesting historical development within the peace movement.

When I returned home after the trip to Baghdad, it was challenging and interesting to talk about Iraq with groups of many kinds. Audiences were responsive and eager for information about Iraq, but they also shifted focus soon to the peace team experience itself. Trying to imagine such a venture for themselves, people would ask about the details of the experience. What was the application process? How much did the trip cost? Where did the team stay? Did members know each other before they went? What did your boss, staff and family think of it all? Were you afraid? Do you think it was worth it?

Realizing that I already had contacts with a variety of faith-based and non-sectarian peace activists, I decided to try to pull together a book about American peace teams and accompaniment projects that would answer these questions. My goal is to encourage more people to participate in such activities.

The book draws on the rich demographic and organizational materials already available from sponsoring agencies, including Voices in the Wilderness, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Peace Brigades International, Friends Peace Team and others. It includes references to a number of good studies already in print about this kind of work. (See Bibliography) And, most important, there are many excerpts and quotes from people of all ages who have participated in such ventures in recent years.

In writing this book, I contacted many people personally about their cross-border experiences, and most are quoted in this book. In later chapters, you will learn more about them and the groups they traveled with. This is their story as much as mine.

Iraq Peace Team

Like myself, several others on the Iraq Peace Team were first timers. Paul Chan, in his early thirties, is a photographer from New York City who took a stunning collection of photographs, which have been shown all across the United States. Micah Shristi was in Iraq while his young wife was in Colombia with another peace team. Sixty-two year old Martin Edwards from California was captivated by the people and the problems of Iraq, and shows every sign of staying there permanently: he has married an Iraqi woman. Mary Burton Risely, from New Mexico, was in Iraq during the early war protest, and Wade Hudson, a semi-retired taxi driver and writer from northern California, stayed in Baghdad right through the bombing. Charles Liteky, a former priest in his seventies from San Francisco, spent months in Baghdad, including some harrowing weeks at a potential bomb site, while his wife, Judy, waited patiently at home. Cynthia Banas, a retired librarian from New York, spent many months working in the Baghdad office of Voices in the Wilderness, and also stayed through the bombing.

However, most people on the Iraq team were tried-and-true stalwarts with prior experience on peace teams and accompaniment projects. Steve Clemens' wife and teenage sons stayed behind in their ecumenical Christian community in Minnesota; other times his wife is the one who travels with a peace team. Ellen Barfield, vice president of Veterans for Peace, probably in her forties, left her husband at home in New Jersey again for this third or fourth trip to Iraq. Gabe Huck was a stalwart at the Chicago office of Voices, and he and his wife, Theresa Kubalik had been to Iraq several times when I met them in 2002. Of course Kathy Kelly herself, co-founder of Voices, had been in Iraq for weeks at a time in protest against the economic sanctions two or three times a year since 1996. Elizabeth "Rabia" Roberts and her husband, Elias Amidon, in their sixties, have given up their home in Colorado in order to travel around the world in a constant witness for peace and justice.

Some people with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) commit to annual stints with peace teams in whatever part of the world has a need. Peggy and Art Gish, who live on a communal farm in Ohio and are ardent about peace work, belong to CPT and spend part of every year in this work. Peggy was in Iraq while Art was in Israel in late 2002. Cliff Kindy was coordinating CPT work in Baghdad while I was there, and has done this kind of work in many different places over the years. Alice McMechen from New York traveled with a CPT delegation to Colombia in 2003, and Michele Naar-Obed went with CPT to Iraq in 2003.

Members of Peace Brigades International (PBI) were generous in reports about their travels. Lizzie Brock, from California, is a young woman who has spent a lot of time in Colombia. She put me in touch with Denise Cauchi, another Colombia activist, now living with her young children in Australia. Karen Brandow has traveled with PBI and is using her experience in counseling new team members. Heike Kammer, a young German woman, is now into her fourth or fifth year with SIPAZ in Chiapas after several stints with PBI in other Central American countries.

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) are involved with the African Great Lakes Initiative where Adrian Bishop and his wife, Rosalie Dance, from Baltimore spent the summer of 2003.

Angela Pinchero from Canada and Linda Sartor, from California, wrote from Sri Lankan projects sponsored by the Nonviolent Peaceforce, and David Hartsough of San Francisco has traveled the world in the course of establishing that program.

Carin Anderson and Chris Moore-Backman are young Quakers from San Francisco who have spent many months in Colombia with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and other sponsors.

Tom Cahill, a rugged guy in his late fifties from California, went to Iraq during the war as a human shield. Fran Peavey, despite ever-increasing physical disabilities that now have her using a wheelchair, has traveled to many conflict scenes, most recently to Bosnia with a group of women who call themselves Crabgrass — they will spring up persistently in every nook and cranny! Mary Ann McGivern was part of a peacekeeping presence in Northern Ireland, and Ravi Chand is a corporal with the Marines who very generously shared his perspective on Kuwait and Iraq via his emails to peace activists in the US during spring 2003.

At-home supporters who are quoted in this book include my sister, Emily Boardman; my friends Mary deLap, Donna Lockhardt, Andy Rose and Jeanne Wright; my neighbors Kevin Janssen, Maureen McKenna and her daughter, Kate; and my co-workers Hazel Lau, Fran Post, and John Tinloy. Trich Lachman, correspondence coordinator for CPT member Peggy Gish, is quoted, and there is a picture from the San Francisco Friends Meeting featuring First Day School teacher Bruce Folsom with Simeon Lyman-Levering and Raven Hill.

Iraqi citizens and American soldiers pictured in this book did not offer their names but did give permission to be photographed.