

Rowland Harker

A LIFE STORY

By Robert Hazen
for
The MRA Foundation

INTRODUCTION

I had never met the Harkers until this Spring. As a former LIOJ teacher in 1976 and 77, I have been hearing stories about them for 17 years; stories that reflect their courage and moral strength, their commitment to what they believe is right, their ability to make a home wherever they are, and perhaps most importantly, their love of people. I was fortunate to be able to spend three days interviewing them this past summer in Ashland, Oregon where they now live. I wasn't sure how much we could cover in three days; he would be turning 80 in a few months and I didn't know how long our sessions would last. The longer I talked with him, the more energized he became, leaving me panting to keep up, just as he left so many people in the dust, hiking or running up mountains in Japan over the years. As I continued to talk with friends and colleagues of the Harkers around the world, I was moved by the consistency of people's admiration and respect.


There is not time to do full justice to his story in this short work. There are hundreds of people whose lives were impacted by the Harkers, without whom no story would be complete. To the many people whose voices should be included here but are not because of lack of time, I hope his spirit still comes through. I was able to spend two weeks in Japan last summer talking with people who have known him over the years. It is my intention to share parts of his story, and provide some chance for those whose life he touched to reminisce about him. What kind of a life takes shape when a person so singlemindedly dedicates himself to a cause? The courage to follow his sense of mission, wherever it led, granted him a truly remarkable life, and makes this

such a fascinating story to tell. This short work is a mosaic portrait, created mostly through his words and those of friends and colleagues who knew him.

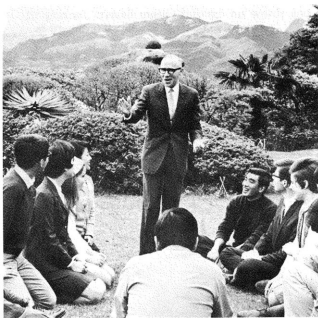
For those of us who did not know him until after 1967, it seems hard to believe that he has not been married to Terttu forever. They seem such component parts of each other's lives. Her words weave in and out of these stories, her presence informs his life.

As he comes to Japan yet again, this time to receive a "Distinguished Service Award" as a symbolic token of a lifetime of dedication to Japan and to others, I hope that all of us can look back on his life and draw strength and inspiration from what he has done, and the kind of person he has chosen to be.

Bob Hazen

How to
Learn
How to
Live
How to
Lead 

Motto of MRA International Traveling School
written by Harker



With early LIOJ students



With Traveling School students on Asia Center roof (1967)



With students of Kagoshima Immaculate Heart College in Singapore on way to exchange program in Australia



Wedding at Asia Center (November 23, 1967)



At Crater Lake, Oregon, two hours drive from Ashland (September, 1993)