

250 ways to make the whole world kin

SUN POST
SEPT 10, 2026

Every Sept. 11 we remember the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. That became the 2003 rationale for invading Iraq to stop Saddam Hussein from creating nuclear weapons. Today most acknowledge that Saddam did not engineer 9/11, nor did he have weapons of mass destruction.

Still, we have similar current rhetoric demanding no nuclear weapons for Iran. I agree. No one should have them. A world free of nuclear weapons would be a great 250th birthday present for the U.S. Iranian leaders chanting, "Death to America" is horrifying, as are our president's threats to destroy Iran.

Sept. 11 is also the birthday of O. Henry, author of the beloved "Gift of the



Larry Johnson

Guest
Columnist

Larry Johnson is a Golden Valley veteran, storyteller and National Chair for the Old Gardening Party. Reach him at larryjvfp@gmail.com.

Magi" story of a poor couple in love. In it, Jim sells his prized pocket watch to buy special combs for Della's hair, while Della sells her magnificent hair to buy a coveted watch chain for Jim.

O. Henry's "Makes the Whole World Kin" is far less familiar. In this one, Raffles prides himself on the ability to silently scale buildings and slide through nighttime windows to steal valuables. He

carries a gun, but always unloaded, because he doesn't want anyone getting hurt. One time he accidentally wakes a man up. Pointing his weapon, he orders, "Stick 'em up." His victim replies, "I'll try, but my arthritis is pretty bad." Surprised, Raffles muses, "You got that too?" They discuss favorite remedies, and finally Raffles buys his unlikely friend the best cure for arthritis.

In a similar spirit of redeemed burglary, President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said every bomb dropped is a theft from the poor. With that in mind, I propose a 9/11 anniversary call to generate 250 ways to "make the world more kin" and end that massive theft. Here are a few to start.

Enforce the ICAN

Treaty. In 2021, nuclear weapons became illegal when a majority of the world's nations signed the international ICAN treaty. The problem is all the nuclear nations refused to sign, disingenuously saying, "We get to have them. You don't."

Walk at the Lyndale Park Peace Garden near Lake Harriet, created after a 1980s tornado uncovered a magnificent rock garden. Mary Lerman, former Minneapolis Park Board horticulturist, got permission to restore the site buried and forgotten during World War II. Working with local activists, Mary navigated the effort through city politics to make the peace garden a popular place for

weddings, as well as events like the annual Hiroshima remembrance. Each year on Aug. 6, when the first atomic

bomb demolished Hiroshima in Japan, people gather at the peace garden statue to "make the world more kin." The statue commemorates the story of Sadako who survived the bomb blast, but died at age 12 from "atom bomb disease" cancer.

Read "The Greatest Battle," written in 1976 by St. Louis Park pediatrician Ron Glasser. My friend Dr. Glasser died in 2022, but his 1971 bestseller, "365 Days," chronicles the year he was drafted to treat casualties from the War in Vietnam. "The Greatest Battle" was not a bestseller, perhaps because it insists that radiation causes cancer. He lauded all efforts to end childhood cancer, then said if we were really serious about it we would abolish nuclear power plants and weaponry. We continue to ignore even more recent warnings, like "The Scientists Who Alerted Us to the Dangers of Radiation," by Ian Fairlie and Cindy Folkers (Ethics

Press International 2024). If you want to pay attention and be serious, check in to nukewatchinfo.org.

Read Caren Stelson's children's book, "Returning the Sword." After the second bomb devastated Nagasaki, Orval Amdahl was sent there and given a souvenir Japanese ceremonial sword. Sixty-eight years later, the Minnesota World War II veteran set out to return that sword to the Japanese soldier who owned it.

The Bible's Book of Isaiah suggests a day when people will be wise enough to end theft from the hungry by beating their swords into farming implements.

Veterans are also among those historically short-changed by war. Maybe we could improve overall care and civilian livelihood for those who serve by employing them at good wages to beat nuclear weapons and power plants into wind-mills.