

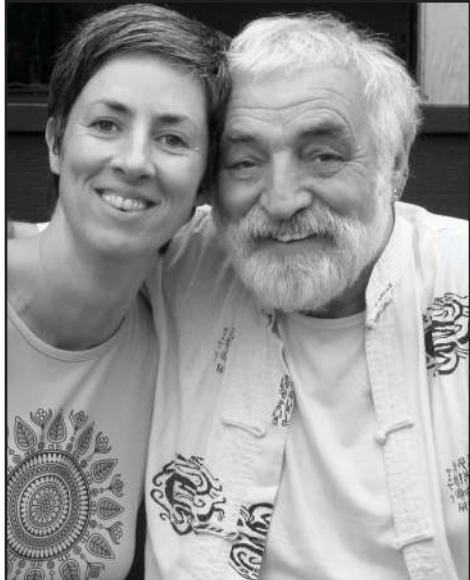
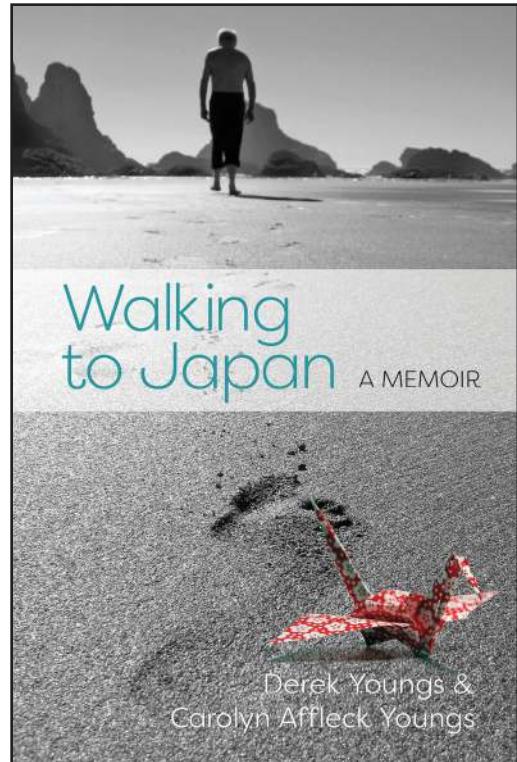
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Walking to Japan, the memoir of Derek "Walker" Youngs, is now in print. Begun in the '90s by Youngs himself, it became a collaboration with his wife, who completed the book after her husband's sudden death in 2011.

As Youngs journeyed on foot through the world on a mission for peace, what started as a manifesto became a mantra. *Walking to Japan* is the touching, insightful and humorous tale of learning to live one step at a time. Now, more than ever, we need this kind of inspiration.

One of the book's chapters, "Father", won honourable mention in the Pacific Northwest Writers Association literary contest in 2016.

Carolyn Affleck Youngs has been giving readings from the book since March 2017, with overwhelmingly positive response.



Author Bios

Carolyn Affleck Youngs, born in 1965 in Vancouver, Canada has at various times been a student of art, music, education, American Sign Language, and psychology. She currently lives in Victoria, Canada and tries to balance her time between walking, choral singing, photography, blogging, editing, writing musical spoofs and practicing ventriloquism. Her pilgrimages include the Camino de Santiago in Spain, and the 88 Temples in Japan. She has walked all the city streets of Vancouver, and dreams of walking across Canada one day. Another day, she'll walk from John O'Groats to Land's End in Great Britain. *Walking to Japan* is her first book, co-written with husband Derek Youngs (1940-2011).

Derek Youngs (1940-2011) was born in an air raid in Yorkshire, England. His first steps for peace were taken on the Great Peace March for Nuclear Disarmament in 1986, from L.A. to Washington DC. He went on to walk 25,000 km in 25 countries over the next 25 years, and founded the Peacewalker Society. He appeared as an international news item in print, radio and television media, and shared his stories of love and learning with people as he journeyed around the world.

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Sample Author Q&A with Carolyn Affleck Youngs

Q) Can you explain about the title of your book?

A) It has been interesting to hear about what other people think it means. Some people understand it right away, but I have to acknowledge that others don't. They might assume it's more of a guide-book, or at least a good deal more about Japan than it really is. Perhaps they glance at the title and mistakenly see Walking "IN" Japan or just not consider that getting to Japan on foot would require walking on water. Obviously this is not possible. So, it's a metaphor. It's about making the impossible possible. It's about how to live your dreams.

Q) As the book's title is a metaphor, how central is the theme of walking in *Walking to Japan*?

A) Well, my husband wasn't known for running, or gardening, or painting! Walking was his chosen method for journeying through life. Or perhaps, as he often said, walking chose him. It brought him closer to the earth, closer to others, closer to knowing himself deeply. It brought him closer to his dream every step he took. I think walking chose me too, and because of this Derek and I were drawn to each other. It's a spiritual practice that we loved to do, alone and together. I've always traveled on foot when within reason, and it's my priority every day. It keeps not only my body feeling fit but it gives my mind some breathing room. It frees me temporarily from habitual thoughts and gives me opportunities to see and touch and interact with new things constantly. It's a kind of intimacy with life that you just don't get any other way.

Q) Can you share another theme from *Walking to Japan*?

A) One of the most important ideas is MORE. When Derek first explained it to me, I felt so relieved. For so long I had been driven by a sense of duty—to the planet, to my community, to my friends, whatever. I think if you have a conscience at all, it's hard not to feel somewhat responsible for making the most out of your life and have the least negative impact. Derek's idea of MORE is like two sides of a coin. It can be both a curse and a comfort to know there is always more in life—more to do, and see, and create and know, more joy, but more pain, more suffering. We can only do so much, and then we have to let go. As spirit learning to be human in this material world, we have to trust this is enough.

Q) What was it like being married to someone who seemed so driven to make a difference in the world?

A) You might think it was all work and no play, but I have never been so happy as when I was with Derek. Although he could be intense, he was incredibly affectionate, warm, and so at ease with himself. I can tend to be anxious and he really grounded me. We were so well matched, with equal measures of seriousness and humour. He was so lighthearted and playful. I never laughed so much in my life, every day I was with him. I am still running a deficit of laughter.

When we became a couple, he was in his 60s; I am not sure we'd have lasted if we'd gotten together sooner. Inner peace had become more important to him than when he was young. When he started walking at the age of 46, he was on a mission, with a really earnest goal to rid the planet of nuclear weapons. Experience then taught him that there was a difference between goals and dreams. He saw that all his walking and all the talking about peace was not necessarily making a big splash.

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(continued from previous page) But talking to individuals was making ripples. And he understood that the more gentle and balanced a person he was, the more this energy would spread to others. This doesn't mean he was passive and wimpy, though. He could be really demanding, and wouldn't let me get away with old habits that didn't serve me or our marriage.

I had been single for some time when we came together, and wasn't always considerate of this new person in my life. I soon learned how important it was for both of us to be responsible to the relationship we were creating with each other. We could either nourish it or poison it. So we nourished it. This intentionality is one of the big lessons in the book, I think.

Derek brought out the best in me, and sometimes the worst, too, when my anxiety was triggered. I would dig my heels in, while wanting to run away (probably to pre-empt his leaving me). But I learned to trust that it was OK to be myself. We never shied away from sharing our true feelings, even difficult ones. Occasionally we'd get into arguments about the most stupid things but that was all part of the big picture of being real and true to ourselves, which is necessary for a relationship to flourish. One of those fights is illustrated in the book quite humorously.

Q) Was it difficult finishing *Walking to Japan* after your husband's death?

A) Yes it was. Not because it brought up a lot of grief, though. No, I really loved staying in touch with my husband in that way. Perhaps it had more to do with my being a detail person, a perfectionist.

At first I was in shock, overwhelmed, and didn't know where to begin. But then it was clear to me that the scope of the project would have to change. Derek had conceived it as a collection of stories, and I knew that although it would still be a memoir, there had to be more context, because Derek himself wasn't here to explain, "Hey, this is who I am and where I came from, and this is why these stories are so important to me." I allowed myself a year after his death to just BE, feeling guilty on occasion for not tackling the project, but I simply didn't have the energy. And then one day I did.

I spent the next year compiling. There were completed stories that we'd worked on together, and many that we'd not yet put on paper. I watched and listened to old cassette tapes and VHS videos Derek had made, and read probably hundreds of letters and diary entries and articles of his. I interviewed friends and people who had known him. This posed some interesting challenges, as occasionally the details varied about an event. I found this concerning, but I learned to let go of my attachment to precision and get more into the spirit of the tales. To Derek what mattered was not how to get from A to B, but how his mind and heart were opened along the way.

I began writing in his voice, doing my best to remember things he'd told me, and the words he used. This really made me feel connected to him, which was very consoling. During this process I'd sometimes feel compelled to write in my own voice, and a few of these short pieces were incorporated into the book too, as a sort of thread woven through it, the meta-story of the book's creation. At the end of this part of the process the book was almost 200,000 words! I spent the next year weeding out little chunks until it was about half as long. This was much harder than compiling. What to leave out? Then I looked at hundreds of photos, choosing the ones I thought best illustrated the stories, and prepared them for print. This is all while I'm trying to carry on a "normal" life.

When well-meaning friends asked what I was up to, I was incredulous that they didn't seem to understand how the book was consuming me. Now that it's done, I do feel relief and a huge sense of accomplishment, knowing I have made Derek's legacy public, in what I hope is a very entertaining and enlightening way. He would be thrilled. And—it's not perfect, but I have to be OK with that. He certainly would be. I am passionate about this book and its messages, and the kind of cosmically funny thing is—if I'm going to do a good job at promoting it, I really have to LIVE its messages, not get too stressed, too attached, too serious about this whole thing. And that's not easy for a perfectionist!

Sample Chapter

CHAPTER 3: INVITATION

So how did I become a peace walker? Perhaps the best way I can explain is by jumping right into the middle. Maybe that's not the usual way to do it, but I've never been one for convention.

In 1985, I was living on Galiano Island, a little chunk of paradise off Canada's West Coast. My two daughters, Christine and Pauline, had flown the proverbial nest and were testing their new-found wings. My partner Lani was on a sojourn abroad, following her own life's path as a healer.

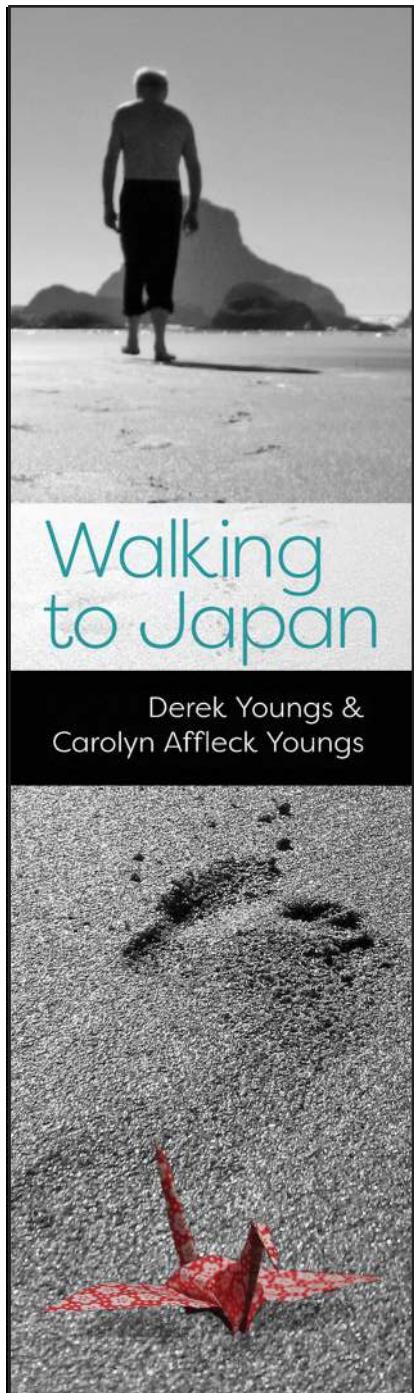
With everyone gone, I took time off from my work as a massage therapist to enjoy some solitude. Every day I walked out my door and up a steep wooded trail to the peak of Mount Galiano, where I would sit on a rocky outcropping and look out across the water. In the distance, a fringe of snow-capped mountains met blue sky. Below me down the slope, eagles circled lazily, their outstretched black wings tipping into each updraft. The sun warmed me, and I felt flooded with light.

As my intimacy with nature deepened, and my awareness broadened, I remained lit with an inner glow. But the thing about light is that it reveals shadows.

One lazy morning I turned on the television and happened upon a news story about protesters blockading a logging operation of old-growth forest in northern British Columbia. Trees that had been standing for hundreds of years were being threatened with destruction. The scenes were so intense that I couldn't watch. I changed the channel but landed on a cops-and-robbers drama where the bullets were flying. This turned my stomach. With only a few channels to watch, there was only one other option.

Continuing my channel surfing, I landed on a program about the Doomsday Clock. Over the next half hour, I learned that this symbolic device was started in 1945 by concerned scientists as an indicator of the risk of a nuclear disaster. As the dangers increased, the hands moved closer to midnight, the final hour. There was now the equivalent of two tons of TNT weaponry on Earth for every living person, and this fact was barely registering on our emotional radar. The time was now almost three minutes to midnight.

I'd been born during the Second World War. The atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki should have been the first and last of their kind. But they weren't. Technology was way beyond that now. What did this mean for my children? And my children's children?



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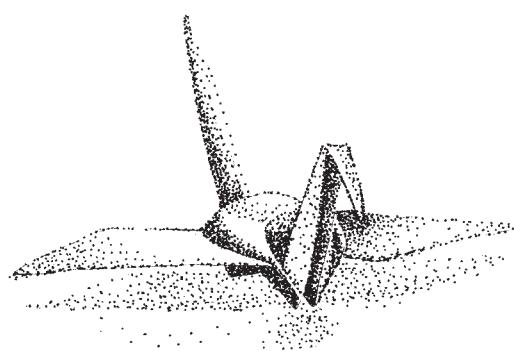
(continued from previous page) I turned off the TV, walked out the door, and went up the mountain. But I didn't find solace there. I couldn't hear the songbirds for the sounds that filled my imagination: the roar of chainsaws, the screech and splintering crash of falling giants, the whiz of bullets, and the sickening roar of a nuclear detonation.

I lay on the ground, tears sliding down my cheeks onto the damp earth. I think I may have even screamed out loud. But I know no one answered. I was alone, my beautiful vision of the world crumbling, along with my idyllic life. Days stretched into weeks of introspection, but no amount of self-searching yielded answers. I saw only humanity's evils: greed, violence and apathy. Darkness spread through me like an inkblot. Trapped by my own negativity, I felt impotent, powerless to change even my bed linens, let alone change the world. At times I worked myself into a fury and then lapsed into lethargy. "This situation is dire," I despaired to a friend on the phone. "Why the hell doesn't somebody do something?" As I said the words, a thought surfaced. I am somebody.

For my grandkids to have a better future, I would have to stop wondering what and how, and just do something, anything, NOW. I recalled an anti-war statement I had once read: I will not preoccupy myself with an enemy. I recognized that I had been doing just this. I had created an enemy called "world destruction" and now my own thoughts about it were destroying me. My passionate anger had rendered me blind and lame.

Passion is life's essential fuel. But it must be tempered. Remembering this, I vowed to stop shaking my fists at the sky, stop hiding in denial, and to use my passion more productively. Anger would keep me alert and motivate me during the times when all I wanted was to crawl into bed and hide under the covers. I needed a healthy outlet for my rage, one that would serve both me and the planet. But what was it?

I asked for guidance—from Spirit, from angels, God. I was not a religious man, but I hoped that the answer would come. And it did. Not everything is always a sign, but when our intentions are true, I believe that the universe somehow conspires to show us the way. One day, I was flipping idly through a magazine on the kitchen table, and something caught my eye—a promotion for something called the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament. In the past I wouldn't have noticed the slick advertisement, but now I had goose bumps. A little voice in my head whispered, *You can do this!*



Book Review

In today's world, seldom do we hear a tale of someone who walks the talk—literally. That's why it's a special delight to discover a book like *Walking to Japan*. Contrary to what the title suggests, this is far from a guidebook unless it's a guide to living a life of peace and action. Instead, it chronicles Derek Youngs' extraordinary life of non-violence, self-realization and adventure, which ended far too soon. By his side, we join the pursuit of a noble path and his metaphorical dream of walking to Japan.

Youngs' quest for peace was born from his own birth in England during turbulent World War II. After a brush with a more "normal" existence, his life's passion was discovered during the Great Peace March in 1986 from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. and continued over two decades with other pilgrimages, including a cross-Canada peace walk, a post-Berlin Wall journey across Europe with a pony named Mary, and a later trek on Spain's Camino de Santiago. Perhaps the highlight of his life's mission was his long-awaited appearance at the 60th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing where he laid 1,000 paper origami cranes on Sadako's memorial statue in Peace Park.

Thousands along his paths enjoyed hearing Youngs' entertaining stories, sharing his disarming silliness and simple message of peace at public appearances, through extensive media coverage, and via daily encounters. But few realized his more personal struggles.

In *Walking to Japan*, we uncover his more intimate side; witness a constant barrage of births, illnesses, deaths, doubts and chance encounters that sweep his life. We discover a portrayal of the peacemaker who faced and overcame the many struggles of his own existence and transformation.

Throughout it all, the women in Youngs' life shaped his growth. His wife Carolyn played an especially vital role in his final years as she transitioned from young protégée to wife to co-author of this heart-warming book after Derek's untimely passing. Through her tender eyes we glimpse an intimate portrait of a life well-lived, full of humour, humility, love, frailties and forgiveness.

As Youngs once reminisced, "In all my walking and talking about peace, I haven't stopped nuclear weapons, or the genocide in Rwanda, or the fighting in Gaza. But I have helped friends and strangers. I have made a difference by talking with people, listening to their fears, feeling their pain, and sharing my love and hope. We can all make a difference by working to let go of fear and hatred, by living from the heart."

Can we hope for anything more?

— Brandon Wilson

Lowell Thomas Gold Award-winning author of *Along the Templar Trail: Seven Million Steps for Peace*

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Photos

Please peruse selected photos from *Walking to Japan*, and others not included in the book:

<http://www.walkingtojapan.com/gallery/>

