ship with her husband. “That memory - it’s embedded in you.” Her experience with recurring dreams and memories, she learned much later, was not unique among the former comfort women - it was the norm.

About a year after she saw the TV broadcast about the campaign of the former comfort women of Korea in 1991, Ruff-O’Herne went to the International Hearing on Japanese War Crimes in Tokyo, and told her story to the world. Articulate, thoughtful, an assured public speaker, Ruff-O’Herne’s testimony has made a difference, as she thought.

She agreed to the autobiography, then, which she wrote as a book entitled 50 Years of Silence, later made into a documentary film (by the same name) that has been shown worldwide. The book has recently been translated into Japanese and is a bestseller. The film won six awards.

But as far as progress for the comfort women since 1992? “Nothing! Absolutely nothing. I am here eight years later. I meet the same comfort women I heard speak eight years ago. The same faces again. And for us, there’s been nothing. There have been wonderful organizations, for human rights, and women’s rights and God knows what! United Nations and everybody has been there to plead the cause of the comfort women. ... There are also many people like them who have done an enormous amount of work for the comfort women ... but, we are still on Square One. Nothing’s happened for us really. We still haven’t had an apology nor has any legal responsibility been admitted by the Japanese government.”

Ruff-O’Herne identifies with the Korean comfort women 100 percent on the issue of the Asian Women’s Fund, a fund raised by private organizations in Japan to pay private reparations to the comfort women. “If we accept that, it’s like we’re saying ‘all right, the Japanese government had nothing to do with it. They are not guilty.’ ...Only if (money) comes from the government does it mean that Japan is taking legal responsibility. Some of these Asian women, they are so poor. Desperately poor. And yet, they have enough pride in them to refuse it. So that is very important... that we wanted to not accept it.”

Her recent popularity has been good for the cause of all comfort women, she said, “because there is no anger or hatred in that book. And I say in the book, as I said publicly when I came here (to Tokyo) eight years ago in 1992, that I had forgiven them for what they did to me, but of course, that I can never forget.” A whole busload of elderly Japanese war veterans came to a ceremony she planned while in Tokyo in 1992 – to lay a wreath of forgiveness at the tomb of the unknown Japanese soldier. “When I saw them, ...of course, what went through my mind was ‘My God, one of them might have raped me.’ But they were there to say to me that they were sorry... That, to me, was a big part of my healing process. ...I think that is why the film and the book have been well received here. ...I have forgiven them, but, at the same time, the truth still has to come out. Justice still has to be done.”

O’Herne has thought deeply about the her time of suffering and reveals through her words that she has healed from some terrible wounds. She clearly thinks of her testimonies, either spoken, written, or on film, as a way to educate and inform people in an experience that many would view as only destructive and meaningless. “You can’t live your life forever in anger and hatred. You receive much more by being able to forgive, I think. It doesn’t mean that I haven’t carried anger in my heart. Of course I have! But there comes a stage in your life... I feel I have used the suffering I have had and the atrocities that have been done to me... in a positive way. In a constructive way. I haven’t wasted it. I did not want my suffering to be wasted. I always thought, ‘Surely, God has not had this happen to me for nothing. In the end, some good will come of it.’”