

Ground Zero

April 2008

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Kicking Vandenberg in the Ankles: Notes from the Pacific Life Community Gathering

By Tim Russell



We marched down scenic Highway 1 to mark 25 years of demonstrating at Vandenberg Air Force Base to resist missile development and draw attention to the immorality of nuclear weapons. We walked amongst beautiful California eucalyptus trees and – on the other side of the street – a not-so-beautiful missile testing site. With 18,000 workers and an expanse larger than the three surrounding cities put together (totaling 99,000 acres), Vandenberg has been the face of US militarism on California’s central coast for over half a century. Amid honks of approval and other signs of affirmation from motorists, the procession made its way to the entrance of Vandenberg, home of US ICBM testing and one of the main complexes involved with putting weapons in space. We were followed by armed base patrol on horseback and a small drone circling above.

The weather was perfect and we were full of energy as 150 of us gathered to say “no” to Vandenberg’s years of developing delivery systems for nuclear death.

Since 1958, Vandenberg has been “the only

military base in the United States from which unpiloted government and commercial spacecraft are launched into polar orbit,” states *Space* writer Leonard David. David adds, “It is also the only site from which intercontinental ballistic missiles are routinely test fired into the Pacific Ocean, arching over sea waters and splashing down at the Kwajalein Atoll within the Marshall Islands.” Additionally, Vandenberg plays an important role in the missile defense illusion by sending up the dummy rockets to be shot out of the sky during a missile defense test.

Not since 1983, when nearly 800 people were arrested at the gates of Vandenberg, have more been in attendance. Media presence was reasonable, although – not unexpectedly – little ended up being published in the major press. A bus chartered by Los Angeles Catholic Worker joined our bus from the Pacific Life gathering, together with many more protestors from the greater southern California area. Dennis Apel, from the Guadalupe Catholic worker, called out

Vandenberg... continued on page 6

Seventeen Arrested at MLK Action Federal Charges May be Pressed Against Some

By Glen Milner

120 people were present at the demonstration commemorating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the gates of Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor on January 19th. 17 demonstrators were arrested at the highway entrance into the base.

After a vigil for peace at the base, six demonstrators entered the highway on federal property, walking arm-in-arm toward the base while singing "We Shall Overcome." At the same time, five other demonstrators blocked the highway entrance to the Trident submarine base while holding a banner with a statement by Dr. King which stated, "When scientific power outruns moral power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men."

After the eleven demonstrators were arrested by Naval Base security, six other demonstrators blocked the highway entrance to the base with a banner which stated, "Abolish Nuclear Weapons." The six were arrested by Kitsap County Sheriff's deputies.

Demonstrators also hung a large banner over the entrance to the Trident submarine base which stated, "Share the Dream of a World without War."

Those arrested by Naval Base security were Jon Bowers and Sophie Siemion of Bremerton, Fr. Bill Bichsel, S.J. of Tacoma; Ann Kittridge of Quilcene; Jack Fogelberg of Auburn; Nicole Scott of Shoreline; Gemma Borys and Susan Borys of Vaughn; Kerry Fitzpatrick of Gig Harbor; Gabrielle LaValle of Lynnwood; and David Damstrom of Seattle.

Larry Kerschner of Pe Ell; Joy Goldstein of Vashon; Kathryn Poole of Sedro Woolley; and Rev. Anne Hall, David Hall, and Glen Milner of Seattle were arrested by Sheriff's deputies.

The six demonstrators arrested by Kitsap County Sheriffs were booked and later released in Port Orchard. Demonstrators were told they may be charged with "attempted disorderly conduct", with a maximum 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

At least seven of the 11 demonstrators arrested on federal property have received notices indicating that they may have charges pressed. Father Bill Bichsel, who had been previously arrested on base property, received his notice on the day of the action. In early March at least six other demonstrators arrested on base property for the first time received a notice from the Base Commander at Bangor, delivered by the postal service, return receipt requested. The notice stated they could be charged with 18 USC 1382 with a possible fine and six months in jail for entering a military facility.

The notice indicated the demonstrators must appear in court and that if no court date or time was shown, it would be provided in the mail. No court date was shown. At publication, no one knows whether the Navy has asked, or plans to ask, federal prosecutors to pursue this case.



The three waves of arrest groups at the MLK action began with two groups crossing the blue line. Photo by Leonard Eiger.

My Bangor Pilgrimage

By Leonard Eiger

The dictionary defines "pilgrimage" as a journey to a holy place, undertaken for religious reasons, or to a place of special significance.

On January 19th, I started out on a pilgrimage, leaving North Bend well before dawn. I picked up another pilgrim on the way; someone with whom to share this sacred journey. Tom and I took the ferry from Seattle, arriving at our initial destination, the Kitsap Unitarian Universalist Church, not long after sunrise. The goal of our pilgrimage, however, would be the sacred space known as Ground Zero, a plot of land bordering Naval Base Kitsap Bangor, home of our nation's west coast Trident nuclear submarine fleet and one of the largest concentrations of nuclear weapons in the world.

There were familiar faces

Pilgrimage... continued on page 3

Mother and daughter are exuberant after being released by Naval Base Security personnel. Sophie Siemion, 19, and Ann Kittridge, 50, are both members of CODE PINK: Women for Peace. Photo by Peggy Love.



Glen Milner is the Media and Outreach Coordinator for Ground Zero.

and new faces as we gathered at the church to prepare for a vigil and nonviolent direct action in witness to the insanity and futility of nuclear weapons. After exploring nonviolence through role playing sessions, and finalizing the day's plans, it was time to leave for Ground Zero. From there roughly 120 people walked down the road to the main entrance of the submarine base where we vigiled, and 17 participants walked out onto the roadway with their banners, symbolically blocking the entrance. They were arrested, processed and released.

Many would, and perhaps justifiably, ask why a group of people would bother to engage in such an action. What difference will it make? Does anyone even notice? Speaking for myself, I can say that I take part in these actions (partly) because I believe that I have a duty to future generations. And, if we continue to build a false security based on these horrible weapons, there will almost certainly be a horrible future for our children, if any future at all.

Even with this nuclear sword of Damocles hanging over humankind, I have hope that we can turn the tide. For one thing, there are other organizations like Ground Zero, working for nuclear disarmament around the country and in other nations. There also seems to be an incipient public discourse on the future of nuclear weapons. Parade magazine, in its August 12, 2007 issue, asked the question, "Do We Need New Nukes?" The feature article in the November, 2007 issue of Scientific American was titled, "The Nuclear Threat". One year ago George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn wrote an appeal for A World Free of Nuclear Weapons. And now, one year later, they have renewed that call.

Even as we are poised on the brink of self-destruction, we are simultaneously poised on the brink of the possibility of understanding just what we have brought upon ourselves, and what we can do to pull humanity back from the brink and move towards a nuclear-free world. It is possible, but it will be critical to seize this moment while we have a window of opportunity. It will require that we bring more people into the effort, one that is definitely a long haul. If you think global warming is *An Inconvenient Truth*, I propose that nuclear weapons are an *An Even More Inconvenient Truth*, and most definitely one that we must face. I have great hope that we can and will do so.

On January 19th there were 120 people at the gates of the nuclear submarine base. Perhaps one day there will be thousands.

Leonard Eiger is the coordinator of Faith In Action, the Social Justice Ministry of the Snoqualmie United Methodist Church. He can be reached at faithinaction-sumc@comcast.net.

Peace Quilt II Up for Raffle!



Thanks to quilter extraordinaire Karol Milner, you now have a second chance to win a Peace Quilt – and the best part is that all proceeds go to the construction of the new Ground Zero house. So whether you contribute \$5 or \$5,000, the more raffle tickets you buy, the greater your chance to win.

This year's Peace Quilt is a 36 inch by 48 inch lap quilt or wall hanging with beautiful sunflower prints in red and yellow, pictured above in a photo by Alisa Milner. A panel on the front of the quilt states, "Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, 2008."

Chances to win may be purchased by simply mailing your check to Ground Zero, marked for Peace Quilt. We will make sure each \$5.00 amount will buy you one raffle ticket for the drawing at the Ground Zero Hiroshima/Nagasaki event in August. Raffle tickets may also be purchased at Ground Zero events. The winner does not have to be present to win.

New House Update: Ready to Start Building!

By David Hall

Kitsap County granted Ground Zero a building permit in late January. In early March the Stewardship Council voted to start building as soon as we can.

Bids for materials came in at just under \$90,000. This includes the demolition of the existing structure, excavating for and laying the foundation, Durisol blocks for the exterior walls, roof trusses and interior wood products, windows, doors, and roofing materials. We agreed to a possible cost of \$120,000 to “dry lock-in” so that the house shell is weather-tight, hopefully by October, assuming we obtain the necessary volunteer labor to do most of the work. Additional funds will be needed for insulation plus all the finish work inside and out. Help is needed to find donated materials and appliances, plus we estimate that we need to raise another \$80,000 to add plumbing, electrical, heating, a kitchen, the interior and exterior finish, a security system, and landscaping (see wish list).

Many volunteer opportunities remain to be filled!

Email or call Dave Hall to volunteer to build, support the builders in camp, scrounge materials, organize volunteer parties, help raise new funds, or to help in other ways:

davehall@familyhealing.com or (206) 545-3562.

Ground Zero lives less than a mile from the closest thing to a doomsday machine humankind has ever built. Nuclear weapons thrive at the heart of US military policy and they are not likely to disappear anytime soon. Like slavery before them, nuclear weapons and the Trident system are at the core of our current military and economic realities. The new Ground Zero house proclaims that we want a Bangor Peace Park as our neighbor, in place of the Bangor base for weapons of mass destruction, and we are digging in to make it happen.

David Hall chairs the Ground Zero Building Committee.



House Wish List!

- Volunteer general contractor
- Volunteer builders
- Plumber
- Electrician
- Cook tent
- Driveway gates (2)
- Gas stove, with 4 burners and 2 ovens – Energy Star rated
- Stove vent and fan
- Stove and refrigerator for cook tent (can be used and old)
- Dishwasher – Energy Star rated
- Refrigerator with good size freezer – Energy Star rated
- Electrical wire
- Ceiling fans (4)
- Skylights (up to 22” wide)
- Plumbing pipe
- Framing lumber
- Flooring plywood
- Flooring cover (no carpet, but clean area rugs OK)
- Drywall
- Drain pipe
- Gravel
- Foundation forms
- Topsoil
- Wheelbarrows
- Tools
- Alaska sawmill
- Landscape plantings
- Bathroom vent fans
- Light fixtures
- Windows – double pane
- Flooring material
- Meals for workers on work days
- Cash for any of the above!



If you can donate or help obtain any of the above, contact David Hall at davehall@familyhealing.com.



“The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger”

Recent Book by Jonathan Schell

By Leonard Eiger

Reykjavik, Iceland, October 11, 1986: on the morning of October 11th, President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, sat down at the opening session of what is now known as the Reykjavik summit and agreed that they both shared the objective of the elimination of all nuclear weapons. It may be hard for many to believe, but both of these men had become fervent nuclear weapons abolitionists.

Had these two men been able to work out their differences over just one key issue, this date would have been burned into our historical memory like no other. And yet, what arguably may have been the greatest opportunity of violent threat reduction in the course of human events slipped through their fingers. Although another event with this potential may never again occur, we in the nuclear weapons abolition movement continue chipping away at the nuclear monster. And as we move into the seventh decade of the existence of nuclear weapons we have a book that provides us with not only a historical context for our struggle, but also a guide for our work in this next decade and beyond.

Jonathan Schell’s book, *The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger* clearly and thoroughly explains how and why the nuclear danger has revived, where we are heading, and what can be done about it. Schell, whose extensive credentials include being the Peace and Disarmament Correspondent for *The Nation*, has produced a book that anyone engaged in the nuclear weapons issue should read. This is the book that provides the tools needed to engage in the necessary debate on how to move away from what has always been and continues to be the gravest danger to humanity.

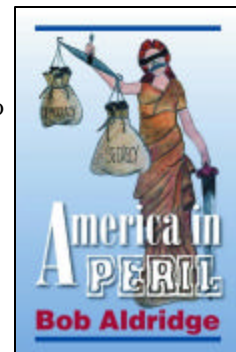
Schell reminds us that “the bomb was born in the mind”, and that we must “let it return there”. But is it possible to put the genie back in the bottle? To quote Schell, “it is no more possible to return to innocence than it is for a grown person to return to childhood. Shall we, like a child, insist on multiplying the device merely because we can? Or is it possible, like an adult, to exercise a mature restraint?” For someone so knowledgeable on such a dark subject, Schell’s message is one of hope, but a hope predicated on our ability to act like adults and as a community of nations.

Leonard Eiger attends and photographs many Ground Zero events. His article, “My Pilgrimage to Bangor”, appears on pg. 2.

Two New Books by Early Trident Resisters

By Alice Zillah

Bob Aldridge, who left his position as a developer of the Trident weapon system to become an activist working for nuclear disarmament, has a new book out. *America in Peril* examines how a small group has taken power in this country and is “systematically undermining democracy and scrapping our Constitution.” The book looks not just at the foreign policy disasters of the Bush/Cheney administration, but also analyzes “how the government is not only keeping tabs on the populace, but also steadily eroding humanitarian law.” A full description and ordering information can be found on the web site of the Pacific Life Research Center, at www.plrc.org. Aldridge has waived all royalties from sales of the book and writes that, “the purpose of this entire project is to spread a message America should hear.”



Jim Douglass, who co-founded Ground Zero with his wife Shelley, has completed his new book, *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*. It will be published by Orbis Books on April 30.

Douglass, who left Washington State to start a Catholic Worker hospitality house with Shelley in Birmingham, Alabama, has been called the “leading North American Catholic theologian of peace” by fellow activist and theologian Ched Meyers. His previous books include *The Nonviolent Cross*, *The Nonviolent Coming of God*, and *Resistance and Contemplation*.

Advance copies of the book have been enthusiastically received. Father John Dear, SJ, says, “One of the most important books in recent years, *JFK and the Unspeakable* sheds the light of truth on our war-making government and its pursuit of global domination at all costs.” And Daniel Ellsberg, famed whistleblower of the Vietnam War, says, “Douglass presents, brilliantly, an unfamiliar yet thoroughly convincing account of a series of creditable decisions of John F. Kennedy – at odds with his initial Cold War stance – that earned him the secret distrust and hatred of hard-liners among the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA. Did this suspicion and rage lead directly to his murder by agents of these institutions, as Douglass concludes? Many readers... will find themselves, perhaps – like myself – for the first time, compelled to call for an authoritative criminal investigation. Recent events give all the more urgency to learning what such an inquiry can teach us about how, by whom, and in whose interests this country is run.”

Douglass will be reading from and discussing *JFK and the Unspeakable* at Eagle Harbor Bookstore on Sunday, June 8, at 3:00pm. Eagle Harbor Bookstore is located at 157 Winslow Way East, on Bainbridge Island. The book can also be ordered through their web site, at www.eagleharborbooks.com.

Alice Zillah lives in Olympia and edits the Ground Zero newsletter.

to the base employees to join us on the side favoring peace. Three dedicated demonstrators, Larry Purcell, Mary Jane Parrine and Ed Ehmke, crossed the green line onto federal property at the entrance to the base. They were booked and released and will likely appear in federal court sometime this summer to contest their case.

The fifty activists who attended the Pacific Life Community (PLC) gathering over the weekend had extra spring in our step. This was the second annual conference since the recent reinvigoration of the PLC, and was held at the La Casa de Maria retreat center near Santa Barbara. We sang together, made food together, and prayed together. On Saturday, we viewed and discussed the short movie *Original Child Bomb*, produced by local filmmaker Mary Becker (copies available at

www.originalchildbomb.com). Mary and her daughter crafted a meditative message of "No more Hiroshimas," including rarely seen original footage of the aftermath of the first atomic bombing. The main reasons for gathering Friday night and Saturday were to prepare for the Vandenberg demonstration and to ask ourselves, "Where's the hope?" and, "What's next?"

In order to help answer these questions, Dennis Apel, the primary organizer, had invited John Dear, S. J., and Bruce Gagnon to participate. Fr. John Dear is one of the primary Christian voices for the disarmament movement. Bruce Gagnon, who came to Ground Zero in 2007, again voiced his carefully articulated message against weapons in space and US militarism. Gagnon helped to fill in the picture of our nuclear weapons predicament, while Dear offered a strong message of compassion and hope.

The search for a positive light in a bleak world had begun the night before when the fifty in attendance briefly shared their backgrounds. The love and dedication in the room was overwhelming. Jerry Zawada, just out of jail, offered quiet witness. Leslie Klusmire, from Bishop, California, had been to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament gathering in London and shared her experiences. And Jeff Dietrich, from the LA Catholic Worker, wouldn't let any overly modest attendee get away with failing to describe the full extent of his or her work for peace. Laughter was heard throughout.

At the rally before the march, Bruce Gagnon debunked the notion that the recent satellite shoot-down at the end of February was anything more than hype for the missile defense program. He also reminded us, as Jeff had done before, that people on the base are aware of our action and can and do change their minds. Gagnon, who had been a Nixon

Republican early in his political career, was a good example.

The overall messages had many shared themes. One was, "rely on relationships for the long haul," as Dear emphasized. This includes our relationship with God. Dear also added that things are likely to get worse, and not to judge the effectiveness of activism from the attention we get in major media sources. But Dear also took a moment to rekindle hope, stating ironically that, "hope is what we do in the face of no hope." He shared stories of people acting for positive social change and ultimately being successful, when at the time they saw no tangible, discernable hope. Before the march at Vandenberg, Dear was again instructive as he beckoned us to get in touch with our "inner nonviolence," and check it from time to time during our action. He helped us to see that nonviolence is more than just not being violent, but something closer to love – something he called "perfect nonviolence."

During our meetings, the Pacific Life Community was reaffirmed as a faith and resistance community. It was decided that next spring the PLC will convene in our very own backyard, at Ground Zero.



Dennis Apel looks on as Larry Purcell (left) speaks at the second annual gathering of the new Pacific Life Community. Photo by Jen Olson.

Tim Russell lives in Olympia, where he owns and manages Rainy Day Records and teaches at South Puget Sound Community College.

Priests Who Protested Torture Policy Released From Prison

By Felice and Jack Cohen-Joppa

Franciscan Fr. Louis Vitale and Jesuit Fr. Stephen Kelly, who is one of the founders of the revitalized Pacific Life Community, were released on March 14 from California jails, after serving five month sentences as federal prisoners.

The two were sentenced last October in Tucson, following their November, 2006 arrests at Ft. Huachuca in Sierra Vista, Arizona, during a nonviolent protest against military involvement in US torture policy. After Magistrate Judge Hector Estrada forbade them to use international law in their defense, the two pled no contest to charges of trespass and failure to obey an officer on October 17 and were taken into custody.

For more information, including complete background on the case and legal briefs about torture and international law, visit www.tortureontrial.org.

POSTCARDS, FILMS, T-SHIRTS, and BUMPERSTICKERS

"CONVICTION" a documentary about three Dominican nuns, including Ground Zero organizer Jackie Hudson, sentenced to Federal Prison for their nonviolent protest at a Minuteman III missile site in Northern



Colorado. This 48-minute film evokes important conversations about the role of religion in politics, the role of nuclear weapons in national defense and the role of International Law in the Federal Courts. DVD. Item # F-1 \$25 for personal use \$40 for public performance showings

"WALKING FOR PEACE" This 29-minute film documents the spiritual and physical journey of a group of people who walked 300 miles, from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation to Bangor Submarine Base, to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. DVD. Item # F-2 \$10



Sunflower Bumpersticker

5.5 inches diameter. Gorgeous! Brilliant full-color sunflower and yellow text on bright blue background. The sunflower is the international symbol for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Item # S-2 \$1.00 ea. 1-10 \$.75 ea. 11-100 \$.50 ea. 101+



WE FOUND THEM!

Weapons of Mass Destruction...they're closer to home than you think! Map shows dozens of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons sites across the US, with a full list on the back.

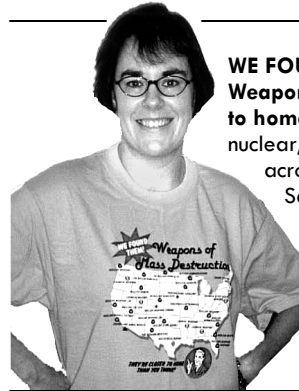
Sage green shirt.

Item # SH-1

S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL

\$16 each or

2 for \$30



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"War No More" with Peace Dove and Globe White, yellow, blue and green design on black shirt. Ground Zero logo on sleeve.

Item # SH-2

Adult sizes S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL

Children's sizes S, M, L, XL

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2 for \$30



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3x12" White and red on blue. Item # S-1 \$1.00 ea. 1-10 \$.50 ea. 11-100 \$.25 ea. 101+



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We All Can Live Postcard
4x6" Item # PC-2 \$4.00 for pack of 10

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(Please check one or more) For the: General Fund _____ Ground Zero Building Fund _____ Peace Quilt Raffle (tickets \$5 each) _____

_____ Please call me; I want to start leafleting at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard _____ or downtown Seattle _____.

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Phone: 360-377-2586 E-mail: info@gzcenter.org Website: www.gzcenter.org

Return of the Ground Zero Missile

By Glen Milner

The Ground Zero D-5 inflatable missile survived the house fire in April, 2005, and was recently found in Mary Gleysteen's barn. It was used in December 2007, marking the fifth anniversary of the founding of Lake Forest Park for Peace. Pictured below in a photo by Cliff Wells, the missile was carried in the Martin Luther King Day march in Seattle on January 21, 2008. The missile is very close to the size of a real Trident D-5 missile, which is 44 feet long, but weighs slightly less than the 130,000 pounds of a real one.



Little Boy Little Girl

By Larry Kershner

in defiance of current
theories of the physical universe
on August 6, 1945
ten thousand paper peace cranes
flew out of a black hole
in the sky
above
Hiroshima
overcoming Death,
the destroyer of the worlds

For Sadako Sasaki, who was two years old when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Ten years later she developed leukemia. Sadako began to fold origami paper cranes, because a Japanese folk tale said that the gods would grant the wish of anyone who folded 1,000 cranes. She died before she finished, but she inspired a peace movement in Japan that continues today.

GROUND ZERO

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E-mail: info@gzcenter.org

Address Service Requested

“By far the greatest danger facing humankind — in fact, all living beings on our planet — is the threat of nuclear destruction.”

— The Dalai Lama

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