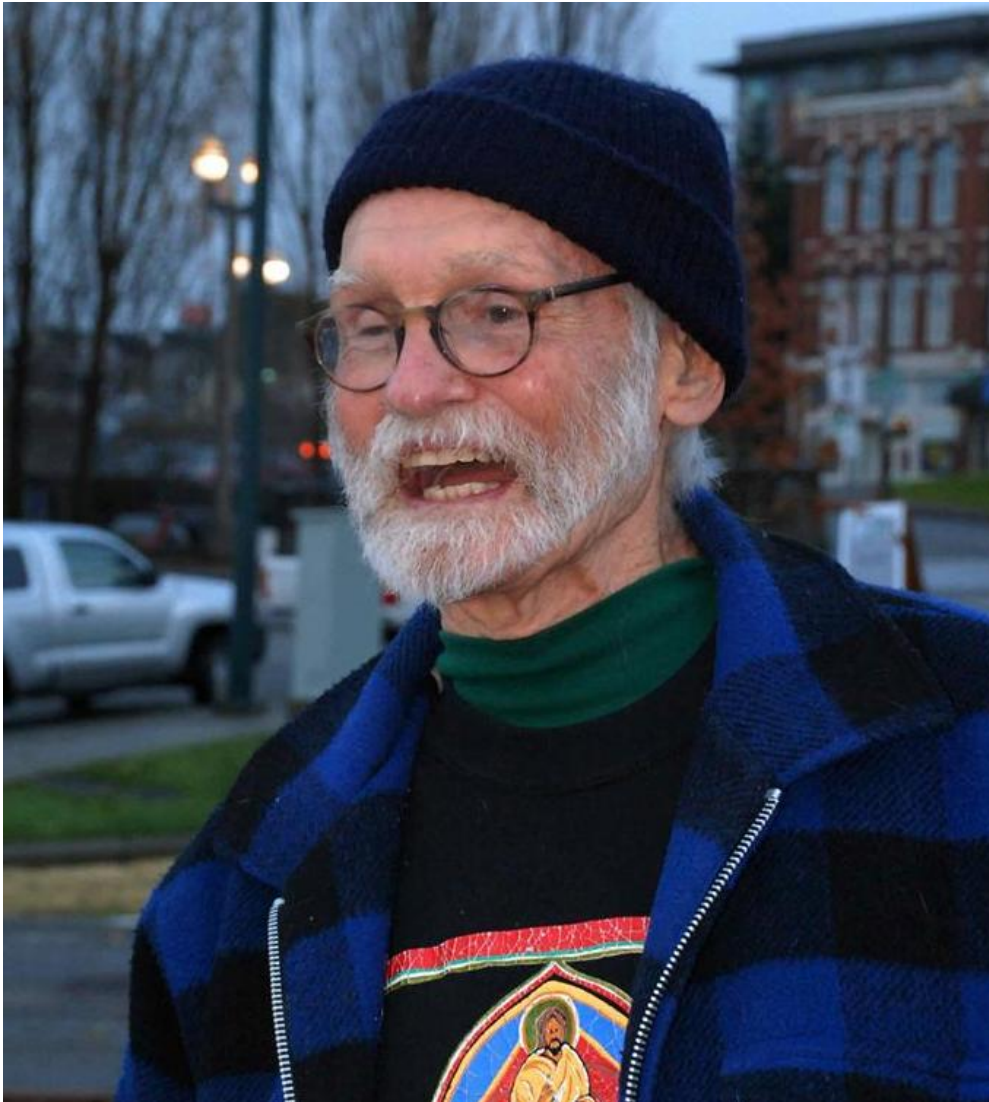


# Ground Zero

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## Joined with the Cloud of Witnesses



By Dotti Krist-Sterbick

We are one community of people from various religions, non-religions and history; some of us have known Father Bix all our lives, call him uncle, great uncle, brother, Godfather and the friend who was always there for us, but a little late. Some of us have gone to prison with him, engaged in Buddhist drumming while praying people over the line, shared ancestral prayers and smudging with him.

Some of us have studied theology and German with him, washed dishes, argued, cussed, drank, got sober, laughed, and sung with him. Some have lived in the same G

street community and Catholic Worker House with him. Many have been baptized by Bix or celebrated their marriage with him. With some he has journeyed during a loved one's death and funeral. Outcast by society because of ability, ethnicity, addiction, mental health or orientation, some of us found an ally who, on our behalf, would not back down. Some of us built houses, programs and community with him.

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**Father Bix... continued on page 2**

Some of us have had our lives radically changed through Bix's help or just by his simple presence. Some of us have never met him, but he has somehow touched or intrigued us, inspired our imagination. We are here because Bix's heart was full of love and yeses. He lived a fullness of life that included all of us.

For Bix, the ultimate symbol of institutional injustice, of humans creating a system that works against fullness of life is the Atomic Bomb. The Atomic Bomb represents our country's whole military industrial complex and its ultimate priority.

He came to know the government's military priority as he watched officials train foreign governments to kill their own people. He saw the resources that go to our military spending that could go to who he called "the vulnerable ones." He saw the horror of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, how ultimate and final these bombs were in robbing people, animals, plants, trees, all of creation of fullness of life, let alone life itself. And yet, we say these bombs make us more secure. We barter away our own fullness of life in the name of security, in the name of preserving "our way of life."

Bix wrote: "These thoughts led me to an inner feeling of futility; thoughts of how deeply embedded American people are in this culture of death when we allow our vulnerable to disappear and consent to the use of nuclear weapons which will bring global death to millions."

The feeling of futility would come and go for Bix. Many of you who have faced prison, or dedicated your life to justice and helping the vulnerable ones probably know this feeling intimately. The question haunts, what can one person do in the face of such principalities and powers?

During a particularly difficult time Bix was also not getting good news about his health. His heart was not predicted to last very long, he was going to die. How did he not give up? Bix ultimately received consolation at the gravesite of Chief Joseph in Nespelem, Washington. He encountered a feeling he called "Resurrection". He felt the earth beat in concert with his own heart beat; he felt tremendous peace.

Speaking of this experience and of Chief Joseph he wrote: "His spirit speaks quietly and strongly to my soul. I wanted to spend some days there on retreat living in the Jesuit parish church next to the graveyard. Much of my time was spent being quiet next to his grave. The spirit of the chief who quit his heroic struggle with the US cavalry in order to save his people rises out of the earth. With his

words, "From where the sun now sets, I will fight no more forever." He stopped the violence of the US cavalry and the violence that comes out of battle. His compassion, humility, and strength lighted his path of non-violence."

Later, during his Plowshare action when he and four others cut through a fence at Bangor, sprinkled sunflower seeds and got incredibly close to the nuclear weapons, he wrote "We all experienced a great joy after being arrested, cuffed, hooded, and forced flat onto the cold earth. It came to me that beyond my furthest hopes, we were witnessing to the power of the Resurrection. Even in this place of fear, death, and hopelessness, the power of life, hope and love can rise."

And so here we are, together again, the beloved community joined with the Cloud of Witnesses. And Bix is alive in our hearts. And we get to sing love songs to him. We get to claim for him a poem he wrote for another:



**Dancing before the start of the Transform Now Plowshares trial**, at the courthouse in Knoxville, TN in May 2013. *Photo by Felice Cohen-Joppa.*

"In a world cold and frozen  
you hugged warmth  
into our brittle bodies  
until suppleness returned,  
you breathed hope  
into our sagging  
and desperate spirits, and  
you reflected our worth  
in your moon-lit face.  
You bid us to sell  
the pearl of great price  
to use so that  
no one stand in need.  
You taught us  
not to hinder  
the work of the spirit  
in any life, and  
that we can learn  
to take wing  
and soar together."

In the Cloud of Witnesses:  
Fr. William Jerome "Bix" Bichsel...*Presente.*

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**Dotti Krist-Sterbick** serves as pastoral assistant at St. Leo Church. She delivered this eulogy for Father Bix to an overflow crowd of over 1,000 people on March 14. This is an excerpt; for the full talk please see [www.psnukefree.blogspot.com](http://www.psnukefree.blogspot.com). More remembrances of Bix begin on page 8.



# In Memory of Jerry Schlaman, 1947-2014

## *Veteran for Peace, Voice for Justice, Tireless Ground Zero Supporter*

Obituary by Peggy Love

Jerry Lee Schlaman died peacefully in his home in Rock Island, WA on December 31, 2014, with his wife, Peggy Love, at his bedside. He died of a form of pancreatic cancer. Jerry was born in Grand Island, NE on June 25, 1947, to Adolph and Elsie Schlaman, who predeceased him.

Jerry and Peggy met in 1977, in Boston, where they both worked for the same company, he as an engineer and she as an attorney.

Jerry earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering at Central New England College in 1977. He got the foundation for this degree through training by the U.S. Navy in nuclear power. He was a reactor operator on the USS Long Beach. After all that training and education, he worked around the United States helping to design, start up and troubleshoot commercial nuclear power plants.

He and Peggy married May 31, 1981, and made their first home together in Phoenix, AZ. He worked in Cleveland next and then got a job in Russellville, AR. It was in Russellville in 1988, that they were blessed by becoming parents of Sarah Elizabeth Schlaman, who was so anxious to join her parents that she came 12 weeks early. She was the light of their lives. While there in Arkansas, Jerry had the joy of buying an airplane and he really loved taking his family on trips around the area, as well as to visit his parents in Nebraska.



**Jerry's good humor** well served those he stood with at hundreds of vigils. In 2009, he demonstrated at Kitsap Mall during the weekend of Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorations. *Photo by Leonard Eiger.*

Jerry had a dream from his youth that he would someday own an orchard in the Wenatchee Valley. That dream came from his visit with his family in 1962 to the World's Fair in Seattle. He fell in love with the area then and was one of the lucky ones who actually fulfilled his dream when he found their orchard in Rock Island. The family moved

into their new home in July 1992, but sadly, in September 1992, their beautiful daughter died. Probably the saddest

moment for Jerry in his life. He and Peggy determined to stay and so they did. Jerry worked hard on the orchard, but also traveled around the country to work at various nuclear plant sites. He also worked at Oregon State University, where he helped with the testing of a new Westinghouse nuclear plant design.

Jerry cared about his country and its people, especially its young people. He was unhappy when he saw that his country was throwing its weight around. When he heard the drums of war in 2002, he was quite distressed and began to speak out against it. It took him a few years to find an organization that held many of the same views that he did and it was Veterans for Peace.

The two principles most important to him from its Statement of Purpose were "to end the arms race and to... eliminate nuclear weapons" and "to abolish war as an instrument of foreign policy". He joined in 2005 and continued to speak out. After a few years, he became a Lifetime Member.

He and Peggy started a weekly Vigil for Peace in Wenatchee in August 2005, which continues to this day. Another organization which Jerry supported was the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, which has been working to abolish nuclear weapons since the 1970s.

Jerry is survived by his wife of 33 years, Peggy Love. He is also survived by his sister, Berneice Seymour of Spring, TX; brothers, Dick Schlaman of Grand Island, NE, and Bob Schlaman of Warm Beach, WA; and many nieces and nephews.



**Peggy and Jerry** in Wenatchee in August, 2014. *Photo courtesy of Peggy Love.*

**Peggy Love** lives in Rock Island with the furry canine companions who also loved Jerry dearly.

# Making Connections to End the New Nuclear Arms Race

By Mona Lee

On August 8, 1945 when atomic bombs were falling on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I was six years old and living on Chambers Road in Ferguson, Mo. Which at the time was a working class suburb of a predominantly poor black city. To this day, I vividly recall a photograph on the St. Louis Post Dispatch front page of Japanese faces distorted into hideous masks of terror. In school we learned this had been done to end the War.

Thus began the old nuclear arms race. From then on, that race escalated as later we were told the US nuclear arsenal was to prevent “the communists” from taking over the world. In Catholic school we learned that communism was the essence of evil although my mother, who lived in fear of my father losing his job, once told me that under communism she wouldn’t have to worry because the government gave everyone a job. I also remember my father saying that nuclear weapons made our country the most powerful nation on earth. Yet we were frequently reminded that the bombs could, and in fact most likely would, eventually destroy the world.

It was not until much later that I figured out why our country needed to be the most the most powerful nation. That was to control the world’s resources because our economic system, called capitalism, runs on the need for ever increasing profits for the wealthy. It is also capitalism’s insatiable hunger for profits that has increasingly deflated the wages and living standards of working people until today we have the most obscene income gap between rich and poor in more than a hundred years. And the people to whom

**“A bludgeoning US police state currently imprisons more African Americans than it once held as slaves.”**

the least of all this trickles down are today’s young people, especially African American descendants of slaves like the ones who now inhabit my home town, Ferguson.

Recently our government has decided to spend one trillion dollars to modernize its entire nuclear arsenal, thus enabling our weapons to destroy missile silos of other nations before they can not strike back. This, of course, has frightened Russia and other nuclear arms nations, thus triggering a new arms race that has made nuclear war more likely than it has been since the Cuban missile crisis. The capitalist ruling elites have decided that their profits are worth the risk of nuclear war.

So where will the trillion dollars come from to pay for this insanity?

From you and me and working class people of places like my home town where the African American teenager,

Mike Brown, was shot by police the day before he was to enter College . . . like New York City where James Garner, another young black man was suffocated by police . . . like Cleveland where twelve year old Tamir Rice was shot while playing with a toy gun in a park . . . and countless other places where a bludgeoning US police state currently imprisons more African Americans than it once held as slaves.



**The Ferguson uprising** sparked nationwide protests against police brutality and militarism. *Photo courtesy of the Socialist Worker.*

On August 8 2015, 60 years after Hiroshima woke us up to audacity of our country’s military might, the Ferguson incident jolted us into the realization that this military power could be turned against its people as police, equipped with M16 rifles, riot gear and armored vehicles, descended upon peaceful protestors decrying the untimely death of their young neighbor. We learned that that all this war machinery had been supplied by the same military establishment that owns the nukes. An affective capitalist police state had been stealthily created in America, our “land of the free” without our knowledge. It took a shock wave like Ferguson to jolt the capitalist media into letting us know. I shudder to think what it might take to force them to inform us about the “New Nuclear Arms Race.”

During the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 everyone with a TV set was sitting in front of it trembling and biting their nails. Yet when I spoke to nearly a hundred young activists gathered at the University of Washington last month, virtually none were aware of the new nuclear arms race. Most were unaware that the Trident Base Bangor is located in Hood Canal only 15 miles northwest of where we sat and contains the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons on the

**Making Connections... continued on page 11**

# Navy 2015 Joint Land Use Study: Secrecy Rules (Again)

By Glen Milner

The Navy is conducting a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), to preserve space and to prevent any encroachment upon Navy activities in the Puget Sound region. The JLUS specifically addresses Naval Magazine Indian Island and Naval Base Kitsap, including Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, Keyport, Manchester Fuel Depot and Jackson Park.

The Preliminary Draft for the Navy's JLUS was published online on February 12, 2015. Public meetings were scheduled five days later in Chimacum, and on February 24 in Bremerton. The Navy's \$658,000 study is expected have a new series of meeting in May or June and be completed by the end of 2015.

According to the Navy JLUS, the program will: *"Undertake a cooperative and proactive planning effort that encourages compatibility between the jurisdictions, the Navy, and their neighbors in order to reduce or minimize development and operational impacts and conflicts."*

The 162-page draft JLUS consists mostly of vague summaries of various issues and stresses the economic benefits of Naval Base Kitsap and Indian Island, and the need for better "communication." But the JLUS makes clear that the Navy intends to control the waterways and transportation routes in the Puget Sound region, land use near acoustic underwater testing areas, and land and building heights near Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

On February 24, Mary Gleysteen, Chris Warmedahl, Tom Rogers, and Glen Milner attended the Navy's JLUS meeting in Bremerton and handed out a four-page leaflet to nearly everyone attending the meeting.

Our four-page leaflet cited the Department of Defense Guidance Manual for the JLUS program which states: *The JLUS program relies on strong community planning... The JLUS program is community controlled and community directed.* However if the community is never

informed of the Navy's intentions, or of existing or potential land use conflicts, the community cannot be involved in the process in any significant way.

The 40-page Guidance Manual for the JLUS program specifically directs planners to include *"explosives, safety quantity distances from ammunition storage that may affect land outside the base, external radio frequency interference, and electromagnetic radiation effects on adjacent land."*

None of the above was discussed in the JLUS draft even though explosive material for Naval Base Indian Island is first brought by rail to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor and then by truck to Indian Island. And the submarine base at Bangor will soon be handling explosives equal to up to 7.44 million pounds of TNT in the form of rocket motor propellant at its two Explosives Handling Wharves in Hood Canal.

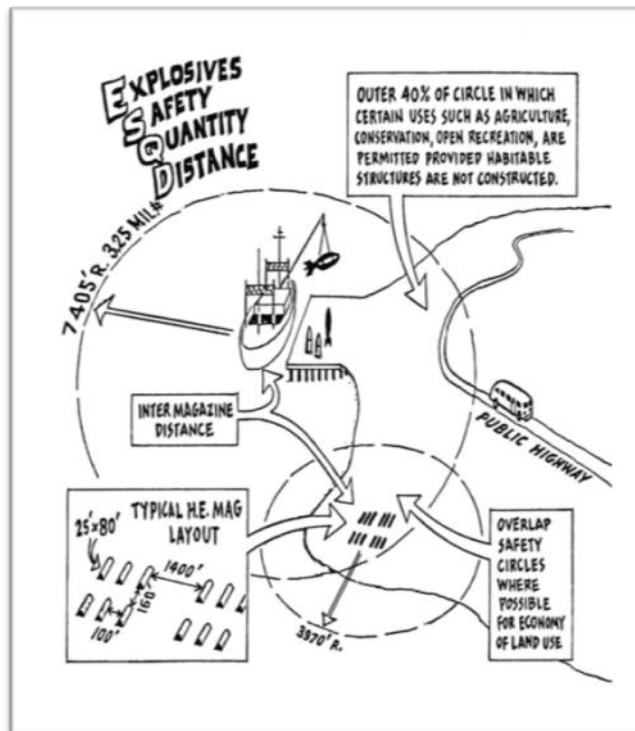
Our four-page leaflet also contained maps for the secret radiological accident response plan by the Navy and Kitsap County Department of Emergency Management for Naval Base Kitsap, and the new blast zone for the two Explosives Handling Wharves at Bangor.

The *Bremerton Patriot* reported on the February 24 meeting:

"Milner again took issue with the lack of perceived concern

for the surrounding areas. 'They're concerned about encroachment by the public on Navy facilities but not so much the reverse,' Milner said. 'The concern isn't on the impact the Navy will have on the civilian population.'"

The Department of Defense has conducted 102 JLUS programs in other communities in the United States between 1985 and 2014 as a means to control civilian encroachment and expand military operations on U.S. soil. The four-page leaflet is on our [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org) website.



**This informative cartoon diagram** appears in the Navy's JLUS Guidance Manual. While it clearly indicates a calculus concerning explosives, nothing in Navy's current JLUS addresses explosives. *Diagram courtesy of the US Navy.*

**Glen Milner** serves on the Stewardship Council, and organizes the annual Peace Fleet in Elliot Bay to greet the parade of Seafair warships.



# Bringing the Message of No to New Trident to the Big Apple

By Leonard Eiger

Article after article in the past few months has bemoaned the U.S. Navy's "aging" ballistic missile submarine fleet, touted the need for a replacement, or explained the need to fund the new fleet outside of normal funding channels (can you say "slush fund"?).

If some members of Congress have their way, the OHIO Class Replacement (or New Trident) will have its own special slush fund. With the funding in hand (outside of the accepted Congressional budget channels, and outside the Navy's shipbuilding budget) it would be smooth sailing for General Dynamics Electric Boat, a company that stands to reap huge profits from the construction of the new submarines. Electric Boat (in Groton, Connecticut) expects to see its workforce grow from its current 13,000 employees to 18,000 by 2030, based in large part on New Trident. Not surprisingly, the two members of Congress who are the most vocal proponents of New Trident (and its rather nontraditional funding method) are from Connecticut.

Yet, beyond the funding issues lies the fundamental question no one (in the corporate press) is asking — why build an outdated nuclear weapons system that will only serve to increase both global nuclear proliferation and the risk of either accidental or intentional nuclear war? The momentum pushing New Trident, and a host of other nuclear weapons programs, is Cold War thinking. Trident's heyday should have ended long ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The US is creating a perceived need for nuclear weapons through its foreign policy pursuits, which place nuclear weapons front and center. A recent article referred to Trident as playing "an increasingly important role in America's ability to deliver a nuclear punch." The article also quotes Virginia Rep. Rob Wittman referring to Trident as "a national strategic asset. Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia is another company that could gain from production of New Trident.

The ultimate question we need to ask is whether Trident, and especially New Trident, is an asset or a liability. We don't want to learn the answer the hard way.

We stand at a critical crossroads in the nearly seven decade-long struggle to abolish nuclear weapons; I think Dr.

King's phrase "the fierce urgency of now" would be an understatement. A new Cold War is brewing, and it could end up involving more than just the US and Russia this time. At any rate, it is the US and Russia that remain the world's nuclear superpowers, and it is these countries that must lead the way to nuclear disarmament.

The 9th Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty will take place at the UN beginning in late April. The empty rhetoric of prior NPT Review Conferences makes me skeptical of the probability of progress towards "negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control," as Article VI of the NPT requires.

This makes it even more critical that civil society rise up and engaged citizens make their voices heard. Just prior to this year's NPT meeting there will be a large gathering of people from many different movements at the Peace

& Planet Conference on April 24 and 25. The conference will end with a march to the UN on April 26. On April 28 there will be nonviolent direct action at the US Mission to the UN. I will be participating in all of these events, representing Ground Zero. I will be drawing attention to the need to stop production of New Trident as well as trying to build a coalition of organizations to facilitate our power in speaking with a more unified voice for nuclear disarmament.

Each of us has some role to play in the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons; we all can (and must) do something for the sake of future generations. I invite everyone to go to the Peace & Planet website to learn more. While there, click on the link under "Get Involved!" to sign the *Petition for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*. The petition organizers have so far obtained over 5 million signatures!

In his book *Confronting the Bomb*, historian Lawrence Wittner wrote that it is not the conventional explanation of "deterrence" that has saved the world from nuclear annihilation over the past 65 years, but a "massive nuclear disarmament movement." Let us hope that we will have a "massive" presence in New York City this April to send a clear message to the nuclear weapons states that the time for disarmament is NOW!

**Leonard Eiger** co-chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee of the Stewardship Council. Beginning in late April, he will post regular updates about the Peace & Planet Conference and the NPT at [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org).



**Civil society must rise up.** Photo courtesy of the Peace & Planet Conference.

**"We stand at a crossroads in the nearly seven decade-long struggle to abolish nuclear weapons."**

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# New Treasurer Needed This Fall, 2015

By Tim Russell

Greetings!

My term will be up as Treasurer this fall, and I will be looking to pass on proverbial torch. Please give it some thought as there are many great things about being Treasurer at Ground Zero. I am in touch with everything that is going on and people say thanks for being the Treasurer all the time — yet it's not that much work. Think of the glory! The recognition! The resume building experiences!

The primary responsibilities are:

- Automatic bill pay through our bank for a half dozen regular bills, and write a few checks a month.
- Transfer the information from the checking account onto a spreadsheet format that shows our regular income and expense categories, such as donations and utilities or newsletter expenses.
- Show up to many or most Stewardship Council meetings and give a short description of the months checking account activities.

There are a few other responsibilities such as working with the insurance company for an annual quote (just a few emails back and forth), paying a few annual taxes and providing a budget recommendation once a year. Let me know sometime soon if you are interested, and we can chat about a handoff sometime towards the end of the year. Thanks so much for considering this concrete way to further Ground Zero's objectives.



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**Tim Russell** has served as Ground Zero Treasurer for four years. He lives in Olympia with his wife and daughter, and teaches at South Puget Sound Community College.

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## Peace Pagoda Update

By Mira Leslie

As we move into spring, we continue to discuss the possibility of building a peace pagoda on the grounds of the Ground Zero Center.

Two positive new developments can be reported at this point: First, in December 2014 the Bangor Naval Base Commander received a letter from the Ground Zero Center requesting a meeting with them to introduce this idea. The naval base asked for a drawing, and in February contacted us to say that they don't have any problem with us building a pagoda on our side of the fence. The reason we did was twofold — to maintain open relations with the Navy, and to assure the county when we get to that step, that we are in compliance with a state regulation concerning land use compatibility with military installations.

Secondly, Tom Rogers, who has cared for the forest behind the house for years, found and marked very good

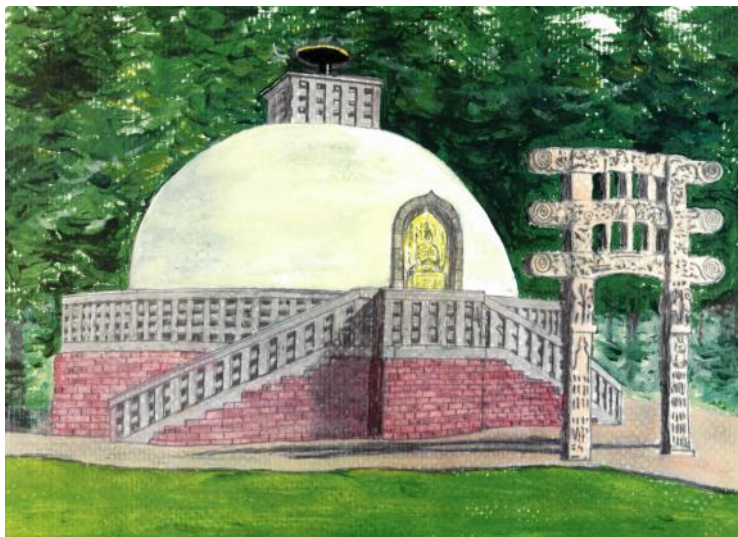
location for the pagoda that will save all of the large cedar trees, and only require removal of one large fir tree. It is a flat spot with underbrush, and will preserve a skirt of trees between the boundary fence and the pagoda. This site is a beautiful short forested walk from the house, and will mean that the pagoda is not visible from the house or the county road.

At this point we will move forward to inform neighbors and develop plans. This work manifests our commitment to building peace, and we are

mindful in nurturing courage, resilience, and goodwill in this effort.

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**Mira Leslie** is a dedicated Peace Walker and activist. She traveled to Jeju Island last fall with Father Bix's delegation, to demonstrate for a halt to the construction of a giant military base on the peaceful island. **Senji Kanaeda** drew the diagram of the Peace Pagoda above.





# Remembrances of Bix

*William Jerome Bichsel was born on May 26, 1928 to a working-class Catholic family in Tacoma. He was ordained to the Society of Jesus on June 29, 1959, and took final vows on Aug. 15, 1962. His assignments included Gonzaga University dean of students, 1963-66; religion teacher at Seattle Preparatory School, 1968-69; assistant pastor at St. Leo in Tacoma, 1969-76; community organizing in Seattle, 1977-79; working with the mentally ill in Tacoma, 1979-87; part-time chaplain at Western State Mental Hospital in Tacoma, 1987-99; Catholic Worker community in Tacoma, 1989-99; and pastoral minister of the Catholic Worker community in Tacoma, 2000 until his death. No list of accomplishments can fully do justice to Bix, however. Here, we share some remembrances and tributes. For more, or to share your own, please visit and join the Memories of Bix page on Facebook.*

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“[He was] one of the greatest people I’ve ever known. He was not just a great priest, but a rare Christian, a true peacemaker. He lived among the poor and served them, spoke out against war and nuclear weapons, and suffered imprisonment and rejection, but he did it all with a smile and a spirit of nonviolent, loving kindness. That combination made him a living saint in our midst. He showed us how to be Gospel peacemakers. The best way to honor him is to carry on his life mission, to do what we can, as he did, for the abolition of war, poverty, and nuclear weapons, and to follow the nonviolent Jesus steadfastly.” — Fr. John Dear

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“Three years ago a friend, Shannon McCormack, asked me if I could bring Bix to her Montessori school. Shannon’s school had a wall with photos of heroes—Mandela, MLK, Gandhi, Thurgood Marshall—and amongst a few others, Bix. Shannon wanted her students to meet Bix.

So Bix and I arrived a few days later. We ended up spending the afternoon there, enjoying every minute of it. Bix spent time on the floor of the main playroom with the kids, singing songs, learning meditations they were working on, talking about school with them. The kids quickly took to Bix, holding his hand, eagerly showing him toys and art projects, excitedly sharing one thing after another. Bix had a fabulous time, smiling the whole day. I loved watching him interact with the kids. When we finally left, we talked about

how much fun it would be to set everything else aside and work for Shannon for the rest of our careers. Bix, of course, was about 83 at the time.

Shannon called me later that week. She told me that the next morning after our visit to her school, one of her students pointed at Bix’s photo on the wall and told Shannon Bix was the student’s favorite of all those pictured. Then the student pointed to the photo of Gandhi and asked Shannon when he would be coming.” —Blake Kremer

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“Fr Bill ‘Bix’ Bichsel came to Scotland with the Footprints for Peace Walk in 2007 and was arrested twice at Faslane nuclear weapons base in two days. Later he returned to visit us in 2012 on his way to the Norway for the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony. He had been nominated for the Peace Prize by a group in his home town of Tacoma Washington in honor of his persistent campaigning for nuclear disarmament and in particular for taking part, at the age of 82 in the Disarm Now Ploughshares action at the US Trident base on the Pacific coast for which he did about a year in prison, being held in some pretty harsh conditions at times.

While in Scotland he spoke at the Peace and Justice Centre and we hosted his visit, travelling with him to visit Rev

Alan Macdonald the former Moderator of the Church of Scotland and to the Faslane Peace Camp, where he joined the Wednesday vigil. We visited with him in Tennessee when he was sentenced for trespassing at the Y12 factory where the Hiroshima bomb was made. While there Bix took us to visit Guy Carawan, at the Highlander Folk School. Guy wrote “We Shall Overcome” with Pete Seeger. Bix was always singing, especially civil rights songs. And he was always laughing. One day in Knoxville we all went to lunch and Bix and David Dwyer started telling jokes. They didn’t stop for about an hour. Bix said that he believed Scotland was leading the way to a nuclear free world. Bix, Presente!” — Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre

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“I had the privilege of being with Bix for his very last lucid moments on the evening of Wednesday February 25 at Jean’s House of Prayer. We had all received word that morning that Bix’s much-maligned heart was finally due to stop beating within a day or two; he had just been released



**In May 2013, Bix joined the vigil in front of the Tennessee jail where the three Transform Now Plowshares activists were taken after their trial. Photo by Felice Cohen-Joppa.**

**Remembrances of Bix... continued on page 9**



from the hospital and had received his last rites. I was headed to the Pacific Life Community gathering in the Bay Area the next morning (which Bix had planned on attending before his health deteriorated) along with Megan and Melissa from the Tacoma Worker, so I made arrangements to stay the night with them in Tacoma that evening, knowing that this would be our last chance to say goodbye to Bix.

When I arrived at Jean's House, Bix's bed, respirator, and other medical gear were all stationed in the living room, which was adorned as ever with photographs of prophets and peace activists such as Sr. Jackie Hudson, Gandhi, and Dorothy Day, whom Bix would soon be joining. There hung a tattered plaque bearing the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 that were so foundational to Bix's life, that would be read at his funeral:

*Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my sisters and brothers, you have done it to me.* — Matthew 25:40

There were already a number of people milling about the house, and a constant stream of people coming and going. There were moments of laughter and levity, but there were many, many tearful goodbyes—droves of locals pouring in to pay their respects, as well as old friends from out of town calling to say a final farewell to Bix by phone.

Yet with all that, what struck me as both remarkable and just classic Bix is that he was not only the least grief-stricken person in the room, he seemed to be in reasonably good spirits, as affable as ever. You'd have thought he just stumbled on the good fortune of receiving a lot of kind visitors that particular evening. When someone asked him how he was feeling, in a very serious and concerned tone, he almost seemed at a loss for anything interesting to report on an emotional plane. "Pretty good, I'd say...you know...it's been pretty much gravy so far."

Throughout the evening there were a number of moving testaments, tributes, and farewells. A young Native boy sang and drummed a song of his people at the encouragement of his family. Seth Martin played a back-breaking rendition of his song, "Lone Wild Bird," and ended his sharing with a kiss on Bix's forehead. I shared a couple songs at Bix's encouragement ("Peter plays the most wonderful music"—can you imagine what it meant to me to hear that?), including my favorite blessing from the Hebrew Scriptures:

*May God bless and keep you  
May God's face shine on you  
May God be kind to you  
And give you peace*

But what sticks with me the most were some words Bix shared after we all sang "We Shall Overcome." It was the only point in the evening I witnessed where he wasn't occupied with receiving a stream of visitors, so it was probably the last reflection that he ever offered.

He said (and I will never, ever forget this): "You know, love...is the most powerful force in the world. More powerful than all of the nuclear weapons. I do believe this. We really can do it, you know...I do believe in the power of the resurrection, the power of the creator God." And then he stopped to receive more visitors."

—Peter Gallagher

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I am sure as with others lately, I find myself thinking about Father Bix almost all the time.

And then about others we have lost in past years.

On his 80th birthday, Bix organized an event called the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Most of us knew it as Bix's Birthday.

Because the event was promoted on the Tacoma Students for a Democratic Society website, the May 31, 2008 demonstration brought one of the largest police responses in recent history at Bangor. See the attached notes on the police response.

Years later I better understand the meaning of the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Mary had proclaimed to her cousin, Elizabeth, (Luke 1:46-55) that God will pull tyrannical forces from their thrones and fill the depraved populations of the earth with resources for living full lives. This is what we heard a number of times at the service for Father Bix on Saturday—Father Bix thought that all should have the opportunity to live full lives.

I never told Father Bix about the exaggerated police response to his event. For some reason, I never thought he would be concerned.

I never heard Father Bix say this, but he seemed to live it: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...* —Glen Milner

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**During the 2015 Pacific Life Community gathering,** just a couple of days after he died, Bix was very much in the hearts of 80 friends gathered for an action on March 2. Twelve activists were arrested during a blockade of Lockheed Martin in Sunnyvale, CA. *Photo by Felice Cohen-Joppa.*

# Funeral for the Earth in Seattle on the Eve of Earth Day

By Mona Lee

Peace activists will conduct mock funerals for the Earth in Seattle on the eve of Earth Day in response to the increasing risk of nuclear war.

At noon on April 21, members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action and several other activist groups will gather in Westlake Center Park to enact a symbolic street theater performance depicting a memorial service for the earth. Black-robed monk pall bearers will vigil around a large black casket containing a replica of the earth. One of the monks will read a eulogy describing the earth in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Gregorian chant and classical requiem music will be played while mourners toss flowers onto the casket.



**A global crisis:** the renewed Cold War with Russia means that country is also planning to build additional nuclear submarines. Construction on four is underway now. *Photo courtesy of Science Photo Library.*

Following the twenty-minute performance, the monks will carry the casket along the sidewalk to the Henry Jackson Federal Building and perform the same mock funeral again before visiting the office of Senator Patty Murray. Ground Zero has obtained permits to conduct the scheduled performances at both venues that afternoon.

This street theater performance will call attention to the increased danger of nuclear war following on recently announced U.S. plans to spend one trillion dollars on modernizing its entire nuclear weapons arsenal over the next 30 years. Some military experts maintain that the policy has brought the world nearly as close to nuclear war as it was during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. They advise that the new weapons will be able to hit the missile silos of other countries before they can strike back.

Members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Earthcare Not Warfare, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Veterans for Peace, Socialist Alternative, and others will join in the action to call public attention to what they consider to be an ill-advised policy that may well provoke a “new arms race” at a time when relations between the United States and Russia are strained over tensions in the Ukraine.

“This modernized system is not a defensive weapon but a first strike weapon. Once launched, it cannot be called back,” insists the event coordinator, Mona Lee. “This motivates and threatens other nuclear-armed nations, so they are modernizing their own weapons systems, increasing the danger. This creates a hair-trigger, where if another nuclear nation perceives a threat, they will have only a few minutes to use their nuclear weapons or lose them, making a nuclear war more likely now than in previous decades.

Lee points out that Eric Schlosser, in his book, “Command and Control”, cites many close calls, as in 1995 when the Russians initially mistook a Norwegian weather satellite launch for a US nuclear attack.

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**Mona Lee** is on the planning committee for the Mother's Day action and the Earth Day action. Updated information about the actions can be obtained at [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org), or by contacting her at [mona\\_lee@comcast.net](mailto:mona_lee@comcast.net).

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## Peace Fleet Records Show Progress

By Glen Milner

Ground Zero members do pretty well with First Amendment issues. In fact, as with Ground Zero leafleters at the base, we often win. We are likely making progress on cutting nuclear weapons but that is harder to see in the belly of the beast.

I often file a records request with the Port of Seattle after the Peace Fleet to see how law enforcement is being handled at the event. The recently-released 2014 map shows that we're making progress in the struggle.

Not many years ago the Coast Guard would chase Peace Fleet vessels to areas between the piers, or worse, when the Navy fleet arrived. The Coast Guard still maintains its bogus 100-yard “no protest” zone in front of Pier 66, and the Port has closed the rooftop of Pier 66 to the public for the fleet arrival. But we now have a 200-yard “Spectator Zone”, which is 100 yards from Pier 66 and 100 yards from passing Navy vessels. Unlike designated “protest zones” we can move along other piers as we wish.

The next Peace Fleet is July 29, 2015. We welcome more Peace Fleet vessels, sailors, and demonstrators on the pier.

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**Glen Milner** serves on the Stewardship Council, and leads legal efforts against nuclear and other illegal weapons in Washington State.

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planet. So of course, it had not occurred to them that an accident in loading or unloading a missile there could contaminate the entire Puget Sound Region.

Those young activists gathered that day at UW were some of the most aware people I know. Most had worked hard to deliver Seattle workers their famous \$15 minimum



**Demonstrators stand by a casket with Mother Earth at the Bangor Base during the 2015 MLK action. Photo by Leonard Eiger.**

wage; every one of them was clued in to the likelihood of capitalism's insatiable thirst for profit destroying all life on the planet by disastrous climate change; most had marched to cry out that, "black lives matter." But the recently increased threat of nuclear war had not crossed their radar screens, nor had it occurred to them how much good the millions of dollars poured into nuclear weapons modernization might otherwise do to further their many worthy causes like education, health care, public works, jobs programs. Two years before I had joined them to work on issues they cared about, and that's what gave me the opportunity to address them on the nuclear threat and how it is integrally connected with all their other concerns.

Bruce Gagnon of Global Networks speaking at Ground Zero during the Martin Luther King Day Activities reminded us that, "All of our progressive movements are on the losing end of things these days. We've got to get out from behind our single issue silos and make connections between our various campaigns if we hope to have any success. I am going to explore going to the unemployment office, Social Security office, welfare office and hand out flyers that show the links between massive cost overruns on Navy warships, F-35 fighters, space war fighting technologies and the real cuts coming in social programs that are daily impacting the lives of people across the nation. When we begin to shine a light on these wasteful military programs for endless war, and help the public see the deadly connections to cuts in social program, then we can seriously talk about expanding our movements. Until we take these steps to connect the

dots across issue lines, we will remain isolated, weak, and ultimately ineffective."

The hundreds of leaflets we hand out will continue to be tossed into the nearest trash bins until we succeed in making those connections. All our efforts to awaken young people to the threat of nuclear war will fall upon deaf ears unless we call awareness to those connections.

That is why Ground Zero, along with other Seattle activists are planning an Earth Day Action in downtown Seattle on April 21, 2015. We will begin with leafleting, vigiling and street theatre at noon at West Lake Center Park in downtown Seattle. Complete with monks, candles, a casket holding the symbolic earth we will enact the same Memorial for the Earth street theatre Ground Zero performed at the Bangor Gate last month. Our leaflets will point out the way these extremely dangerous and extravagant military expenditures necessitate cuts in social programs and starve initiatives for education, health care, public works, jobs programs, and dampen all progressive hopes for the future. From West Lake we will lead a funeral procession to the Federal Building, conduct the Memorial again there as well, and meet with our Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

We hope you will join us. Everyone is welcome.

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**Mona Lee** serves on the Stewardship Council. She is a avid cyclist and lives with her husband in Seattle.

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## **Letters to the Editor—important way to get out the word**

*A short and clear letter to the editor can go a long way to getting out information that doesn't ordinarily get reported on. The letter below, by Michael Siptroth, was printed in the Mason County Journal recently.*

I'm a teacher and community activist who cares deeply about our children, community and Earth. There are so many hungry, homeless, badly housed and undereducated people in our community. We also have transit problems that hurt people and the economy, while we spend hundreds of billions on the military.

If we were to redirect the \$60 billion used to support the nuclear program, which we say we will never use, to the real human and environmental problems we have, we would have a much better county, state and world.

The Pentagon wants to spend \$1 trillion to build new submarines, missiles and systems by the end of this century, which means that many more people will go hungry and remain homeless. We could build a first-rate transportation system for that money and provide educational opportunities and housing for those in need.

Please join the effort. Nuclear weapons are immoral and illegal; let's stop them now before it's too late!

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**Michael Siptroth** lives in Belfair and serves on the Stewardship Council.

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# GROUND ZERO

**GROUND ZERO CENTER  
FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION**  
16159 Clear Creek Road NW  
Poulsbo, WA 98370

**Phone:** 360-930-8697  
**Website:** [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org)  
**E-mail:** [info@gzcenter.org](mailto:info@gzcenter.org)

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*“The vast majority of the people  
of the world want their  
children to be able to live life to its  
fullest potential. No matter what the  
obstacles to human interaction, the  
human connection of all people runs as  
a conduit of energy in a subterranean  
layer of our earth.”*

*— Father William “Bix” Bichsel,  
March, 2013*

## Upcoming Ground Zero Events in April and May

### Funeral for Mother Earth, April 21, Seattle

Peace activists will conduct mock funerals for the Earth in downtown Seattle on the eve of Earth Day, to dramatize the increased risk of nuclear war

At noon on April 21, 2015 members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action (GZ) and several other activist groups will gather in Westlake Center Park to enact a symbolic street theater performance depicting a memorial service for the earth. Black-robed monk pall bearers will vigil around a large black casket containing a replica of the earth. One of the monks will read a eulogy describing the earth in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Gregorian chant and classical requiem music will be played while mourners toss flowers onto the casket.

For more information, please see the article on page 10 of this issue.

### Mother's Day Gathering and Action, May 9

Ground Zero will commemorate the original intent of Mother's Day — to call for an end to war and violence — with a gathering, vigil and action on Saturday, May 9.

The planning committee (Mona Lee, Mary Hanson, and Marianne Mabbit) invites attendees to bring photos of children. You may also submit photos of your own children or grandchildren so they can be enlarged onto posters. For more information, contact Mona Lee at [mona\\_lee@comcast.net](mailto:mona_lee@comcast.net).

The day will include food, fellowship, nonviolence training, and speakers. To get updated information about the day's schedule and events, please visit [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org).

