

ground zero

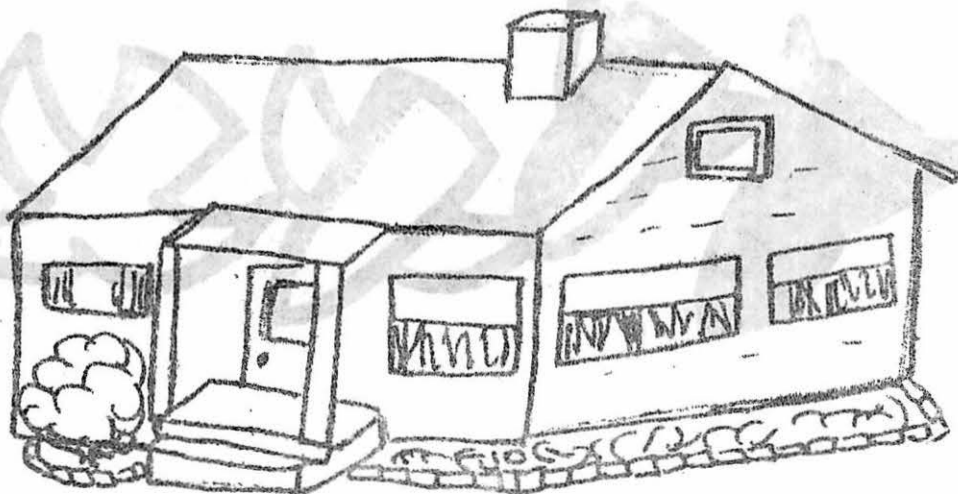
Volume I, Number 1
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WHAT IS GROUND ZERO?

Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action is a 3.8 acre piece of land located on Clear Creek Road in Kitsap County, Washington State, USA. The location is significant because the land shares 300 feet of common fence with the Trident Nuclear Submarine Base being constructed here. On one side of the fence sits our little house, our large vacant lot, our small, rickety sheds, and the geodesic dome which is going up for extra shelter. On the other side of the fence, shielded by a thick band of trees, lurks a high security ammunition storage area - probably containing some of the many nuclear weapons housed at Bangor.

Ground Zero was purchased in December of 1977 by a collective of people using money donated by many of you. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent action is incorporated as a land trust. The articles of incorporation state our purpose in this way:

1. to establish a Center for Nonviolent Action which seeks the goal of a world free from nuclear destruction and unjust divisions in humanity;
2. to hold the land on which the Center is located in an environmentally sensitive and responsible manner;
3. to develop at the Center for Nonviolent Action specific means toward a nuclear-free world which are based on the principle of truth in thought, word, and action, the principle of unity of all beings, and the principle of transforming love in resistance to war and injustice;
4. to explore at the Center strategies and tactics for nonviolent campaigns incorporating the end-means vision;
5. to use the Center as a training site for participants in nonviolent action;
6. to encourage and foster at the Center a continual reflection on, and deepening in, nonviolence as a way of life.



THE GROUND ZERO COLLECTIVE

Ground Zero keeps going through a collective of five core members and through the work and hopes of many more people both in this area and further away. We do not have a very complicated structure, and most of the structure we have has developed in response to situations arising at Ground Zero. One major determinant of responsibility in the past four months has simply been location. Most of the people who work with Ground Zero have major responsibilities of one sort or another elsewhere and cannot spend large amounts of time traveling and planning in Kitsap County. The Ground Zero Collective is made up of people who have committed themselves to taking major responsibility for keeping the operation in Kitsap going. That means time spent planning, doing basic footwork, and traveling. The major responsibilities of the Collective at this point include:

1. upkeep, maintenance, and supply of the land and buildings - finding someone to fix the plumbing, cataloging books in the library, buying groceries and toilet paper;
2. planning for the Wednesday night discussion groups: helping to find speakers for suggested topics and speaking times for those who want to share, skillsharing if necessary, and physical preparation of the premises;
3. planning and facilitating the weekly leaflettings; making sure that there is a leaflet every week, that it gets run off and delivered to Ground Zero in time, and that there are enough folks to pass it out.
4. being available to facilitate nonviolence workshops; planning the workshops in accordance with the suggestions of the folks attending them; using the workshops as skillsharing times for folks who want to take on some of the responsibility of leading them.
5. handling money; asking for money; paying bills, mortgage, taxes, leafletting costs, etc.
6. outreach, particularly to Kitsap County people in order to open discussion on issues of mutual concern.

What we usually try to do is to find issues that people are talking about, or that people have said they would like to discuss, and then organize a forum for that to take place. We are quite open to any suggestions about further topics, kinds of meetings or happenings, or other uses for Ground Zero. Please share your ideas with us.

Some folks have asked about Ground Zero sponsorship of small group actions. We do sponsor small group actions, if that's what people want. What we usually ask of such a group is that they come to a weekend nonviolence workshop and spend some time talking with us about their plans for an action. (Obviously, anyone is free to do an action at any time without reference to us!) This is a good process for thinking through the ramifications of civil disobedience and for finding a community context in which to act.



WHO WE ARE

RUTH HOOD lives in Bellingham, Wn with her family community. She has spent the past twenty years employed in caring for family and home, and has also worked as an RN. She joined the May 22 Coalition as a Bellingham representative. Since returning from 1 and a half years in Scotland in 1976, resistance to military and economic oppression has been a priority. Ruth is a feminist; interested in spiritual growth as a facet of nonviolence.

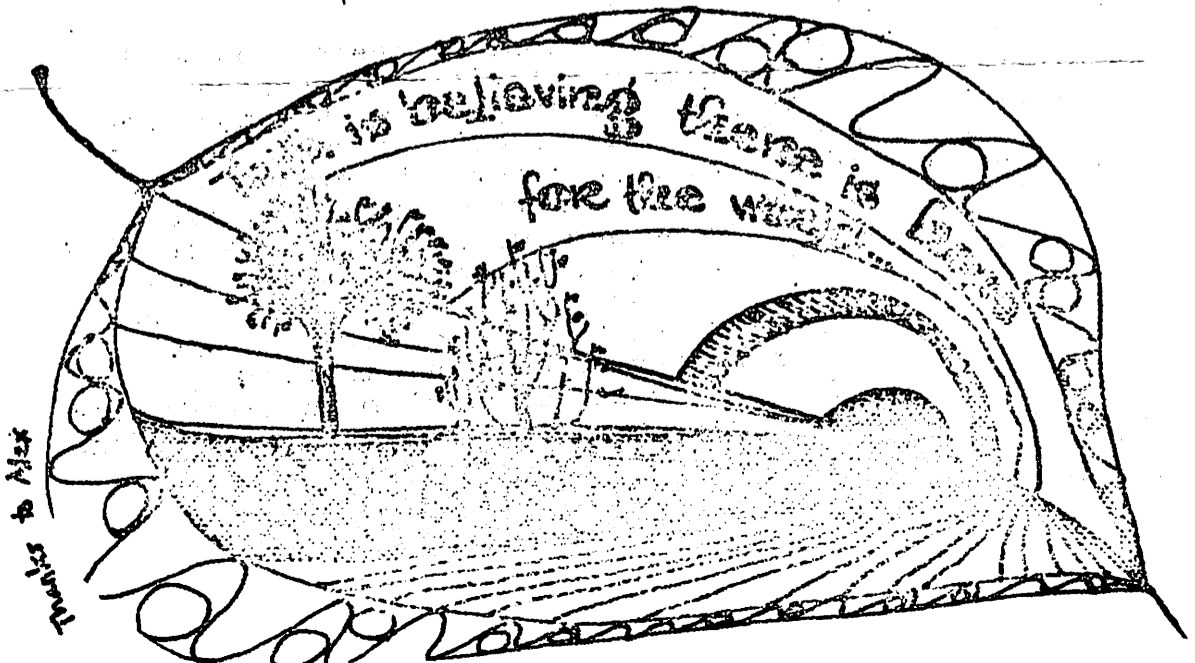
SHELLEY DOUGLASS lives in a yellow trailer in Seabeck, Wn. with Jim, Thomas (8), Trumpkin the dog and Mischief the hamster. Exploring feminist dimensions of nonviolence (or nonviolent dimensions of feminism) is my priority. Employed as staff person at Ground Zero.

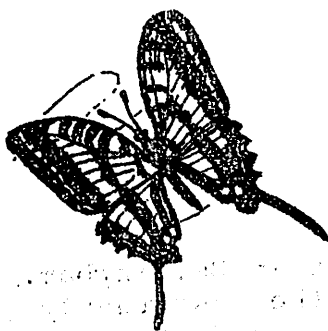
BOB BRADAC lives in Seattle, Wn. and has been working as a night janitor to support himself. At heart Bob is an actor who is currently developing a Mark Twain voice. Bob lives in a cooperative house in the University district; he works with both Ground Zero and Live Without Trident, works, too, at being feminist.

BILL HOOD is an accountant in Bellingham. Until four years ago he'd never considered nonviolence as an alternative. His first encounter with the Bangor base was as a lieutenant in the US Navy in 1961 - it had no noticeable effect. His second encounter was in August of 1977 and since that time life has not been the same. He is struggling with various forms of injustice manifested in his own life - racism, sexism, economic oppression, etc.

JIM DOUGLASS was converted to Jesus, Gandhi, and no-nukes by some good people at the University of Santa Clara in the late 1950's. He wrote about that in articles and books, and is trying now to act on it. A more recent convert to feminism and being human in resistance. He likes Jimi Hendrix and Floyd Cramer. (????-ed.)

"US" INCLUDES MANY MORE PEOPLE - people who do carpentry on the dome we're building, people who come out at 6 AM to leaflet on Thursdays, people who lead or join in the Wednesday night discussions, folks who come to the nonviolence workshops, folks who go over the fence at Bangor and face trial and jail, folks who donate time and money to keep Ground Zero going... The list goes on and on. The five people above who form the Ground Zero Collective, and who wrote this newsletter, are only the tip of the iceberg. Without all these other folks, Ground Zero would be nothing at all.





WHAT WE BELIEVE

FEMINISM IS BASIC

What this means to us is quite simple: our Western culture has been founded on the notion that women are less than human, do not have the same capabilities and rights as men, and are to be considered the property of men. We have further compounded the problem by dividing human characteristics into 'masculine' and 'feminine', and developing men and women to fit this mold. This process has led to overwhelming personal injustice against women in every area of life. Until recently women could not vote, hold property, or gain legal custody of their own children. We are gradually correcting these most obvious injustices in our society, but we have barely begun to address the deeper issue: the patriarchal bias with which our entire culture is endowed.

Because political and economic power has been held exclusively by men, and because men have been forced into certain stereotyped ways of thought and action, our political system rewards and incorporates "masculine" characteristics such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, technical and intellectual ability, and the suppression of feeling. Western social structures reflect this bias, and we at Ground Zero believe that building up a peaceful society will require the building up of a whole new concept of human-ness, and a new structure to fit it. We don't believe either capitalism or communism is an adequate model: the adequate models have not yet been created.

Because we believe that patriarchal attitudes and structures are a prime source of our world's problems, we try to raise consciousness about them at the same time as we raise consciousness about the arms race. They are two sides of a multi-faceted construct which includes racism and other forms of institutionalized destruction. It makes no sense to oppose the evil of nuclear war without opposing the attitudes which bolster it and the structures which prepare for it. Ground Zero is an attempt to do both.

WORKING WITH THE WORKERS

Thomas Merton had a basic insight on relating to "the other side". A friend of his has written of how Merton was disturbed by a "pacifist minority identity that expressed itself in various forms of self-righteousness, infecting protest so that it only drives opponents further apart." Thomas Merton understood that true nonviolence seeks not victory over others but a mutual transformation in truth and love:

A deep longing for transformation, of oneself as well as others, needed to animate activities for peace, and that requires respect and sympathy with those whom protest located on "the other side." We must, he wrote the Catholic Worker, "always direct our action toward opening people's eyes to the truth, and if they are blinded, we must try to be sure we did nothing specifically to blind them. Yet there is that danger: the danger one observes subtly in tight groups like families and monastic communities, where the martyr for the right sometimes thrives on making persecutors terribly and visibly wrong. The martyr can drive them in desperation to be wrong, to seek refuge in the wrong, to seek refuge in violence."

(cont'd. next page)

Without compassion, protest tends simply to play on the guilts of one's opponents. "There is," Merton wrote, "no finer torment."

At Ground Zero we have tried to relate to the Bangor worker in the spirit of compassion and nonviolence described by Thomas Merton. One way of doing that has been through our weekly leafletting at the base. On each Thursday morning, we pass out leaflets to workers driving onto the base between 6:30 and 8:00 A.M. Our leaflets have covered such topics as "What about the Russians?", "What About Our Jobs?", Trident as a first-strike weapon, the effects of radiation, the risk of nuclear accidents, civil disobedience actions at the base, who we are, and traffic problems created for leafletters and workers by base regulations. In early December, we passed out a leaflet about St. Nicholas Day with our attached gift to the workers, a button saying "I'd rather make toys". Friends reported seeing these buttons worn in downtown Bremerton that day, and on workers driving into the base on subsequent days.

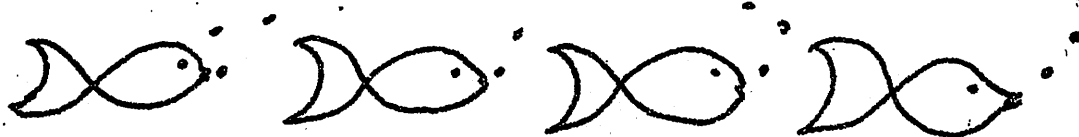
We think it is testimony to a beginning relationship of trust between the workers and ourselves that every Thursday morning an average of 600 to 700 workers will slow down in heavy traffic, roll down their windows, and accept leaflets from people challenging the current basis of their livelihood, Trident. We've tried to be open to the workers in turn by taking their letters to us in criticism of our leaflets, and with their permission printing and leafletting at the base those counter-statements. We talk individually with such workers when we can. We have given talks at three local churches heavily attended by workers and their families. It is ironic that our best relationships with any one category of workers on the base is with the Pan American security guards, who often arrest us for civil disobedience. Most of the Pan Am guards are sympathetic and friendly. They and we see a lot of each other. They understand from personal contact that it's Trident we're against, not them.

In coming months we hope to build more of a relationship with the workers by exploring steps toward peace conversion, for them and us, in a society now reliant on nuclear war preparations for both jobs and defense. Bangor workers and Trident resisters are in similar moral positions. In terms of the security of our lives, we all play things safely enough to accept in large measure the basic premise of nuclear war: silence and complicity in its buildup. Just how much of our security are we willing to forego for peace? A community of Bangor workers and resisters, willing to risk more on both sides in mutual support, can stop nuclear war and build a better world.

(*James H. Forest, "Thomas Merton and the Catholic Worker" The Catholic Worker, Dec. 1978.)

HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP

Ground Zero subsists entirely on donations - and there are lots of things we need. Money, of course - to pay bills, to pay for this mailing, to finance the leaflets. Skills, especially home repair and carpentry/plumbing skills; a big table or desk, an old armchair or two, maybe a sofa; blankets. We are appreciative of any and all such help!



JOIN US AT FUTURE HAPPENINGS: Phone Bob at 524 0194 to carpool from Seattle.

Ground Zero sponsors regular Wednesday evening discussions on questions involving nonviolence, social change, spirituality. Catch the 5:50 Winslow ferry from Seattle, return on the 9:50 or spend the night and leaflet in the morning.

RESCHEDULE: "The Politics of Communication" presented by Leslie Cossitt (how we communicate in groups, and why) APRIL 4

FEBRUARY 21 - A preview showing of a film on nonviolence being made by Carol Burns of Olympia; footage of the United Farm Workers' struggle, the Misqually Indians, and anti-Trident demos, plus discussion

FEBRUARY 28 - Ash Wednesday candlelight vigil at the Old Main Gate of Bangor base, followed by hot tea at GZ

MARCH 7 - Ruth Hood leads a discussion of power - what is it? How does it work?

March 14 - Native American Treaty Rights (tentative)

March 21 - Joe Martin shares about the First Avenue Service Center

March 28 - (tentative) "What It's Like to Work At Subase Bangor" (we're inviting workers to come and share with us)

LEAFLETING EVERY THURSDAY AT 6 AM - MEET AT GROUND ZERO IN THE MORNING, OR COME AND SLEEP OVER THE NIGHT BEFORE.

WORKSHOPS IN NONVIOLENCE

We are offering to do workshops in nonviolence on the following weekends in the Spring:

MARCH 9-11

MARCH 23-25

APRIL 6-8

APRIL 20-22

MAY 4-6

MAY 18-20

(workshops begin at 7:30 pm on the Friday and end at noon on the Sunday unless other arrangements are requested.)

Workshops usually include discussions on personal and political violence/nonviolence, time to get to know other participants, some history of nonviolent movements in general and the Trident campaign in particular, role plays, and discussion/planning of possible actions by participants. Also good food and fun!

We will do these workshops for anywhere from 5 to 20 people; please let us know in advance if you're coming. We will be in touch with you a week before your workshop to confirm the date; please don't just show up - if there are less than 5 people registered, the workshop will have been cancelled.

BRING: a sleeping bag and towels, warm clothing, bread, cheese, fruit to share as a pot-luck lunch. We will provide ingredients for breakfasts and dinners; all cooking is shared communally.

GROUND ZERO CENTER FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION
RTE. 5 BX 5423
POULSBO, WN.
USA- 98370