

Ground Zero

July 2022

Volume 27 Issue 3

Activists Blockade Trident Base to Protect Mother Earth



By Leonard Eiger and Glen Milner

Over 50 people were present on May 7, at the demonstration against Trident nuclear weapons at the Bangor submarine base. Nine demonstrators blocked the main highway entrance into the base for about 10 minutes and were cited by the Washington State Patrol.

At around 2:15 pm on Saturday, the nine demonstrators entered the highway carrying a large banner stating, "THE EARTH IS OUR MOTHER—TREAT HER WITH RESPECT" and blocked all incoming traffic at the Main Gate at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor. They were removed from the highway by the Washington State Patrol.

All nine demonstrators were cited for violating RCW 46.61.250, *Pedestrians on roadways*, and released at the scene.

Those cited by the Washington State Patrol: Brenda McMillan and Caroline Wildflower of Port Townsend; Margarita Munoz of Seattle; Sue Ablao of Bremerton; Carolee Flaten of Hansville; Rev. Gilberto Perez of Bainbridge Island; Ramon Nacanaynay of Shoreline; Michael "Firefly" Siptroth of Belfair; and Tom Rogers of Poulsbo, WA.

Mother's Day in the United States was first sug-

gested in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe as a day dedicated to peace. Howe saw the effects on both sides of the Civil War and realized destruction from warfare goes beyond the killing of soldiers in battle.

Earlier, on Saturday morning, a tribute was held for Robert "Bob" C. Aldridge, peacemaker and guiding inspiration for Ground Zero and Trident resistance who passed away on April 29. Statements were read from Shelley Douglass and Jim Douglass. Shelley Douglass stated, "*This campaign began with a Trident designer, and a conscientious family making a decision to resist, together. That's why, from the very beginning, this campaign has seen Trident workers as potential partners in the work. It's why we leafleted for so long, why we try to build relationships and community across fences and lines. It's why so many people who once disagreed have become part of the community...*" An eight-minute video of Robert Aldridge in 1980 is at <https://youtu.be/kISzBKDOJ68>.

Mother Earth... continued on page 2

Kathryn Railsback, Ground Zero's Activist-in-Residence, then spoke on war and nonviolence and her work with trauma survivors from around the world. With Friends Peace Teams, Kathryn has traveled multiple times to East Africa and co-facilitated workshops in several countries, with a focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Her work with war survivors has strengthened her beliefs in pacifism and the need to promote nonviolence as a way of life. Kathryn said, "The production and possession of nuclear weapons is an outgrowth of the mistaken view that we can find peace through creating fear of violence."

Members of the Seattle Peace Chorus Action Ensemble performed throughout the day. A new and original song by Doug Balcom was performed for the first time with the lyrics, "*If we can close each nuclear base, that imperils the human race, we'll all be the lucky ones.*" The Action Ensemble also performed at the main gate to the submarine base.

About 50 sunflower seedlings were planted during the day, in rows along the fence separating Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor and Ground Zero.

Sunflowers are the symbol of a world free of nuclear weapons. On June 1, 1996, Ukraine transferred to Russia for dismantlement of the last of the 1,900 nuclear warheads it had inherited from the former Soviet Union. Celebrating the occasion a few days later, the Defense Ministers of Ukraine, Russia, and the United States met at a former nuclear missile base in the Ukraine that once housed 80 SS-19 missiles aimed at the United States. They planted sunflowers and scattered sunflower seeds. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma said, "With the completion of our task, Ukraine has demonstrated its support of a nuclear weapons free world." He called on other nations to follow in Ukraine's path and "to do everything to wipe nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth as soon as possible." U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry said, "Sunflowers instead of missiles in the soil would ensure peace for future generations."

Leonard Eiger chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero. **Glen Milner** leads legal efforts for Ground Zero, and took the photo on the cover.

Two Full Days of Activities Planned to Commemorate the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

By Mack Johnson

We are excited to announce that we will be hosting our annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki Weekend of Remembrance and Action on Sunday, August 7 and Monday, August 8.

This will allow people to attend the From Hiroshima to Hope lantern ceremony at Seattle's Green Lake on the evening of Saturday, August 6.

Larry Kerschner, Poet Laureate for Veterans for Peace Rachel Corrie Chapter will facilitate a poetry workshop, and Tom Rawson will give a concert on Sunday.

There will be a vigil and nonviolent direct action on the morning of August 8. People will gather at 6:00 AM, and there will be a new version of the flash mob dance performed to the music of "War! What is it good for?" in 2019, which blocked entrance to the Main Gate.

We will provide more details on this event as the plans continue to come together. Please see the Ground Zero website for more details, or contact Mack Johnson at telemackj@gmail.com or 360-649-1712.

Please save the dates and join us!

Mack Johnson is a retired teacher and serves as secretary of the Stewardship Council.

No Military Training in Our Public Parks!

From Not in Our Parks

On April 1st, 2022, Thurston County Superior Court Judge, James Dixon ruled to reverse the four-to-three decision made by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to permit military warfare training in 28 coastal Washington State Parks. He then issued an official order and 30-day appeal period.

The 30-day appeal period ended June 13th with no appeal filed! That means there will be no permits issued to allow covert military warfare training in Washington State Parks.

The lawsuit was filed by Whidbey Environmental Action Network (WEAN), a small, frugal, and effective nonprofit governed by passionate environmental activists. Attorneys with Bricklin and Newman in Seattle represented the case and won! Even with the attorneys' generously reduced fees, this was a big case and legal expenses are significant. Please visit www.notinourparks.org to make a donation or learn more.

Peace and Environmental Activists Protest at Major Department of Defense Fuel Depot for Earth Day

By Glen Milner

On April 23, over 20 peace activists and environmental activists joined for Earth Day at Manchester fuel depot, known formally as the Manchester Fuel Department (MFD), to protest hydrocarbon use by the U.S. Navy and the Department of Defense.

Activists with Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, 350 West Sound Climate Action, Earth Care Not Warfare and other peace and environmental groups met at noon at Manchester State Park. From there, they walked to the Manchester fuel depot, the Department of Defense's largest single-site fuel terminal in the United States, and demanded that the U.S. military reduce its carbon footprint while reducing its global military footprint on the planet. The U.S. military has approximately 750 military bases around the world and emits more carbon into the atmosphere than 140 nations.

If the U.S. military were a country, its fuel usage alone would make it the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, sitting between Peru and Portugal.



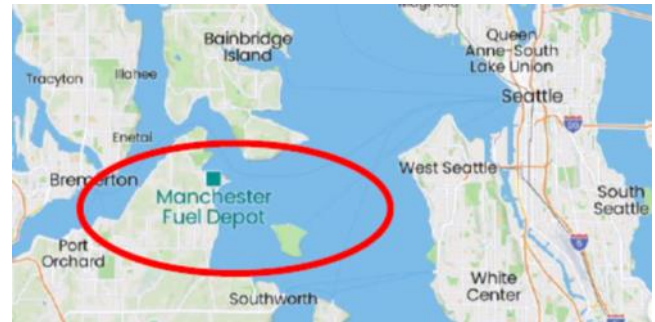
The US Military is the world's biggest polluter. Activists called out the Navy's Manchester Fuel Depot. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

The Manchester fuel depot sits on approximately two miles of Puget Sound shoreline, storing product in 44 bulk fuel tanks (33 Underground Storage Tanks and 11 Aboveground Storage Tanks) on 234 acres. Most of the tanks were built in the 1940s. The fuel depot (tank farm and loading pier) is less than six miles west of Alki Beach in Seattle.

Records available from 2017 show over 75 million gallons of fuel stored at MFD.

Conflicts induced or exacerbated by climate change contribute to global insecurity, which in turn, increase the chance of nuclear weapons being used. The effects of climate change can also feed the ambitions

among some states to acquire nuclear weapons or different types of more useable or tactical nuclear weapons.



While climate change and the threat of nuclear war are the two major threats to the future of humankind and life on our planet, their solutions are similar. International cooperation to solve one of the problems—whether to abolish or tightly reduce nuclear weapons or to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—would greatly help with the solution of the other.

Our proximity to the largest number of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S. at Bangor, and to the “Pentagon’s largest gas station” at Manchester, demands a deeper reflection and response to the threats of nuclear war and climate change.

A 2020 Freedom of Information Act response from the Navy to Ground Zero member Glen Milner showed that most of the fuel from the Manchester depot is sent to local military bases, presumably for training purposes or for military operations. The vast majority of the fuel is sent to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

One F/A-18F, similar to the Blue Angels jets that fly each summer over Seattle, consumes approximately 1,100 gallons of jet fuel per hour.

The Pentagon recently shut down a fuel depot near Pearl Harbor in Hawaii that was built during the same time period as the Manchester depot. The decision by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was based on a new Pentagon assessment, but was also in accordance with an order from Hawaii’s Department of Health to drain fuel from the tanks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

The tanks had leaked into a drinking water well and contaminated water at Pearl Harbor homes and offices. Nearly 6,000 people, mostly those living in military housing at or near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam were sickened, seeking treatment for nausea, headaches, rashes and other ailments. And 4,000 military families were forced out of their homes and are in hotels.

Glen Milner lives in Lake Forest Park. He has been active with Ground Zero since the days of the White Train campaign.

Bob Aldridge, whose courageous whistle-blowing paved the way for Ground Zero, passes away at age 96

By Leonard Eiger

Our dear friend and colleague Bob Aldridge joined the Cloud of Witnesses on April 31st. The following offerings are a tribute to Bob.

It is no hyperbole to say that Bob Aldridge is the reason that Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action exists and continues to resist Trident. Bob's story is one of faith, awareness, family and courage. Ground Zero co-founder Jim Douglass reminds us that it was "Bob's courageous witness that alerted many to the first-strike capabilities of Trident." His legacy continues to enrich and guide our work.



Four powerful voices for peace. Bob Aldridge at an antinuclear demonstration with, from left, Sue Ablao, Janet Aldridge, and Sr. Jackie Hudson, OP.

Back in the early 1970s Bob was a missile designer at Lockheed Missiles and Space Corporation working on the first Trident missile design (the Trident missile would be built for the new OHIO Class "Trident" ballistic missile submarines and would carry thermonuclear warheads). Bob recognized something about the maneuvering reentry vehicle that he was designing; it was designed "to home-in on underground missile silos in a nuclear first strike" (Ground Zero Newsletter, Vol. 7, Issue 3, July 2002).

Bob's conscience got the better of him (something that has not happened to the vast majority of nuclear weapons scientists or engineers), and after a family retreat following Christmas 1972, Bob submitted his resignation letter to Lockheed.

A year later Bob met with Jim and Shelley Douglass and told them of his remarkable journey from

missile designer to student of nonviolence, and briefed them on the plans to create what would be known as Sub Base Bangor (West Coast home of the new Trident fleet) on the shores of the Hood Canal in Washington State, just 20 miles from Seattle. And so the seeds of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action were sown by a person with the courage to follow his convictions.

In 1977 Jim Douglass and John Williams found 3.8 acres of land with a small house right next to the Bangor fence. What a find! A year later Bob sent Jim and Shelley Douglass an urgent letter warning of the first strike threat that Trident represented (the first Trident submarine was commissioned in November 1981). First strike meant that Trident would likely be used to deliver a preemptive surprise attack of overwhelming force on the Soviet Union.

The Douglasses and many others continued building Ground Zero (which was preceded by the Pacific Life Community) as they worked in common resistance to Trident; blocking the railroad tracks on which the "White Trains" brought the nuclear warheads and rocket motors, leafletting at the gates of Bangor and blocking the gate, and building awareness of the dangers (as well as the immorality and illegality) of Trident and all nuclear weapons.

It has been nearly 50 years since the Christmas miracle that gave us the gift of this community of nonviolence known as Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

The Douglasses have grown into other peacemaking endeavors, and other dedicated peacemakers have joined in over the years. Out of those fertile seeds planted by Bob Aldridge (and nurtured by many others) has grown a strong and beautiful tree, the fruit of which is a community of people dedicated to the principles of nonviolence and a world free of the spectre of nuclear weapons.

Bob Aldridge, *presente*.

"After a family retreat following Christmas 1972, Bob submitted his resignation letter to Lockheed."

Leonard Eiger chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero.

Bob Aldridge: First to cross the line

By Shelley Douglass

It's probably not fair to say there'd be no Trident campaign without Bob Aldridge. I'm sure someone would have realized the first-strike capability of Trident eventually, and people would have worked against it.

But THIS Trident campaign could not have happened – be happening – without Bob, and Janet, and their family. THIS Trident campaign began with the person who was designing the re-entry vehicle for the missile system. THIS



Bob Aldridge.

Trident campaign began with a family decision to non-cooperate with evil. THIS campaign began with a Trident designer, and a conscientious family making a decision to resist, together.

That's why, from the very beginning, this campaign has seen Trident workers as potential partners in the work. It's why we leafleted for so long, why we try to build relationships and community across fences and lines. It's why so many people who once dis-

agreed have become part of the community. It's why we've tried to include and respect relationships and family ties. Bob planted the seed for those attitudes, and the seed has borne good fruit.

Bob did a lot of other good things of course – explaining the first strike system, analyzing nuclear policy, and lately writing about the goodness underlying the universe, and inviting us to make it visible. Those are all gifts from Bob, but the first best gift was his example which did indeed make goodness visible. May we continue to follow him.

Shelley Douglass co-founded Ground Zero. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

Bob Aldridge, Help Us

By Jim Douglass

Bob Aldridge never stopped seeing, changing, and acting on every truthful urge in his life, from a Trident missile designer to a proactive nonviolent warrior to a satyagrahi for earthly harmony to a pilgrim in the Goodness Field of the universe.

Bob kept striving for a way of transformation for each and all before it was too late for us all in a blast of fire at the end of it all.

So a prayer through Bob at the heart of the Goodness Field on this Mothers Day:

Give us the eyes to see
and the urge to walk
in union with all on Earth.

May we see our opposing parts
as the heart and soul of who we are,
members of our family
on both sides of our fence.

May we walk together,
mothers and fathers,
sisters and brothers,
on the arc of the moral universe,

into the arms of Love.

Jim Douglass co-founded Ground Zero. He is an author of several books, including "JFK and the Unspeakable."

Ground Zero's Statement on the War in Ukraine

By the Ground Zero Stewardship Council

War turns young men and women into murderers, when life has no meaning, when our political "leaders" and media outlets beat the drums of war.

The War in Ukraine should end now with:

- an immediate cease fire;
- an immediate end to the slaughter of innocents;
- a moratorium on arms shipments to Ukraine;
- and a recognition that war will not solve this issue or any issue.

Any war, proxy war, or increased hostilities between nuclear-armed nations greatly increases the chances of a nuclear war. The War in Ukraine shows that nuclear weapons must be abolished—not advanced into new delivery systems and new explosive sizes as many of our so-called "experts" are now promoting.

Instead: Resist the war machine as best we can. Love our family, friends, and neighbors. Work to love our enemies. Embrace the wind and the rain and the sun. Our world is beautiful. We are beautiful.

Live our lives to the fullest—each day.

Heartfelt Testimony Delivered at Hearing

Three participants share their messages

By Mary Gleysteen

On June 14, six Ground Zero activists provided their deeply felt beliefs about the need to eliminate the Trident weapon system in a hearing before Judge Timothy Drury in Kitsap County District Court. (We ordered a thumb drive video of the entire proceeding which we will try to make available to those who would like to see what they missed!)

Brenda McMillan, Tom Rogers, Caroline Wildflower (via zoom), Carolee Flaten, Margarita Munoz, and Gilberto Perez testified. Sue Ablao and Ray Nacanaynay settled their cases by mail and Michael Siproth will have his hearing July 5, at 1:30pm.

The judge listened intently to the heartfelt testimony and commended the defendants for what they are doing, saying the world would be a better place if people could hear defendants' message. Just as the base was closed symbolically, he said he was imposing a symbolic fine of \$10 each and noted the courtroom history of several of the defendants.

Below and on the following page, three defendants share the powerful messages they delivered in the courtroom.

Mary Gleysteen serves on the Stewardship Council and. She lives in Kingston in Kitsap County.

“No Other Option”

By Brenda McMillan

I used to write to my representative in Congress deploring the military budget.

Mostly the replies told me we need a strong defense.

It is not our defense that bothers me, it is these weapons' offense I take issue with.

If I were a millionaire I would be listened to maybe.

So here we are with Trident submarines in the sea and Growlers in the sky.

So I'm in the street protesting. What other option do I have?

Brenda McMillan is a long-time Ground Zero member and lives in Port Townsend.

Refusing to be complicit

By Tom Rogers

On May 7, I was part of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action's demonstration to raise awareness about the danger of nuclear weapons. I held a banner and blocked access to the Trident submarine base. Blocking access to the main gate was a symbolic closing of the base.

I'm a retired submarine officer. As Commanding Officer of a submarine I was directly responsible for nuclear weapons. I understand the horrible destructive power of those weapons and the humanitarian disaster that would result from their use. I spent 32 years operating submarines, mostly against the old Soviet Union. The Cold War ended over 30 years ago, yet our government still relies on a barbaric national security strategy based on the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Today, I believe that the probability of nuclear war is greater than it has ever been.

If I understand all of this and do nothing, then I am complicit in an evil crime against humanity.

In 1970, 191 nations ratified the Nonproliferation treaty. In Article 6 our government pledged to negotiate a treaty on complete nuclear disarmament. Article 6 reads, quote:

“Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on 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.” End quote

If we did what we said we would do in 1970, there would be no nuclear weapons today. This treaty is part of the body of international law. As a Party to the Treaty our government is obligated to work toward nuclear disarmament.

I believe that nuclear weapons disarmament is achievable. It will take continued grassroots efforts to raise awareness and to elect leaders who will work toward that goal. Unless citizens are aware of the dangers, they can't be expected to support candidates who will end our reliance on nuclear weapons.

Current leadership among the great powers won't get us there. It's time for a new generation of leaders who will understand that the danger of nuclear war far outweighs the false security of deterrence.

I promise to continue to do everything I can to achieve that goal.

Tom Rogers is a retired Navy captain and former nuclear submarine commander. He has worked with Ground Zero to rid the world of nuclear weapons for nearly 20 years.

"Let us shoulder the work to end violence at last"

By Margarita Muñoz

Throughout my 35 years of teaching I emphasized to my students the importance of being compassionate as well as critical thinkers. When I recognized our government's persistent support of nuclear weapons, not only their cost but their ferocity, I blocked the gate to Bangor Naval Base, to bring attention to this deplorable reality. I dedicate my defiance at the gate, to Kenny Spotz and all students who have walked through my classroom doors; as well as to my children, grandchildren, extended family and anyone who has ever loved or has been loved.



Bringing the nonviolent witness to the courthouse. The defendants and their supporters marched and sang to District Court, where they leafletted and sang on the courthouse steps. *Photo by Mary Gleysteen.*

On October 7, 2001, after the United States bombed Afghanistan in retaliation of that terrible day on September 11, Kenny (11 years old) interrupted class by standing and declaring: "I don't get it. In school we're taught to resolve conflicts peacefully; but in the real world, adults drop bombs!"

As a portion of my testimony, I sang "No More Violence for Peace:"

We're Americans...let's not fund the next war
As Americans...let's look deep to its core
Let's fight ignorance, homelessness, climate change, hate
Let that be our focus and wisdom create
As strong Americans,
No more violence for peace

There's a tension that's brewing, a lure to attack.
That helps clear our conscience when we want to strike back
It frightens young children; it makes mothers weep
It holds the world hostage and robs us of sleep

Let's be smart Americans...No more violence for peace
Remember your childhood, the number one rule
"Do unto others as you'd have them do"
Hiroshima's bombing...the second world war
The strength of our Nukes? 28,000

It's so volatile, search deep down inside. Be responsible
and swallow our pride
To honor the victims in wars of the past. Let us shoulder
the work to end violence at last
Let's be commendable, no more violence for peace

Let's protect our Earth's creatures, the futures of youth
Now that proves our strength—leads us closer to truth
Why not feed the poor, empower the meek. And with our
technology, strengthen the weak
For the sake... of... humanity, no more violence for
peace

So, Your Honor, there is much you can say
And Your Honor, there's a role you can play
There's new vision and courage the world needs to see
Find justice through peace and a hero you'll be
Please, Your Honor, support actions of peace

Margarita Muñoz is a former teacher and member of the Seattle Peace Chorus. She is a poet and songwriter.

Bannering Continues Through the Summer — Join Us!

By Rodney Brunelle

Everybody is invited to stand with us for an hour most every Friday for bannering. We gather at 3:00 pm at the I-5 overpass at NE 45th in Seattle. We've seen that the simple message ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS gets the most driver reaction. Contact info@gzcenter.org to confirm dates or get more information.

Rodney Brunelle is an activist with Pax Christi and serves on the Stewardship Council.

New Peace Dove Greet Visitors to Ground Zero

By Glen Milner

It was a very Good Friday at Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action as people came together to continue our work for a peaceful world free of the threat of nuclear annihilation.



Doves appear as symbols of peace in many religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Paganism. The dove at Ground Zero arrived on April 15. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

Tracy Powell, one of the founders of No More Bombs, installed a Peace Dove sculpture at Ground Zero Center. Tracy hand carved the dove out of Indiana Limestone; it is 15" x 20" x 17", and weighs at least 150 lbs. The Peace Dove is a gift from Tracy to Ground Zero Center and the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda.

Indiana limestone, like all limestone, is a rock primarily formed of calcium carbonate. It was deposited over millions of years as marine fossils decomposed at the bottom of a shallow inland sea which covered most of the present-day Midwestern United States during the Mississippian Period. Tracy noted that this is the same stone that Lieutenant General Lesley Groves (who directed the Manhattan Project) used to build the pentagon.

Tracy created the Dove Project, in which he carves stone doves and sells them to raise contributions for peace and disarmament organizations, like ours.

Glen Milner serves on the Stewardship Council and works with the Media and Outreach Committee.

Peace Walk embarks July 30

Join for an hour, day, or week!

By Rev. Senji Kanaeda

Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo—In Respect of All Life

The time has come to abolish nuclear weapons and stop all wars. The annual Peace Walk will start on July 30 in Portland and conclude at Ground Zero on August 8. The schedule will be:

July 30, Saturday: Portland, OR.
July 31, Sunday: Vancouver, WA
August 4, Thursday: Olympia
August 5, Friday: Tacoma
August 6, Saturday: Lake Forest Park—Green Lake, Seattle (Hiroshima Day Lantern Ceremony)
August 7, Sunday: Poulsbo—Ground Zero Center
August 8, Monday: Hiroshima Nagasaki Day Weekend at Ground Zero.

This annual peace walk is sponsored by Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Order, Eugene and Tacoma Catholic Workers, Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Lake Forest Park for Peace, American Indian Organization for Change, Footprints for Peace, Bainbridge Island and North Kitsap Interfaith Council and more.

On January 22, 2021 in the winter of the world's COVID-19 disaster, a landmark treaty for the realization

of world peace came into force at the United Nations. That's TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons).

And on June 21-23, 2022, they held the first conference by signatory countries in Vienna. Our Earth is filled with events that make us realize that we are at a big turning point during this world-wide calamity.

Now we are facing the danger of nuclear war from the cause of the war by Russia to Ukraine. At that same time global warming has continued and the future is dark and uneasy. The future of humanity is certainly in jeopardy.

Now, with the opportunity to enter into force of the TPNW, we will walk and pray and convey the message of peace and nuclear abolition. I believe that is one of the things we can do. We want to walk together in parts of Oregon and Washington State for an hour, a day, or a week in this moment. We are currently building a spiritual symbol for world peace—the Peace Pagoda—at our destination at Ground Zero Center.

Gassho (palms together)

Rev. Senji Kanaeda leads Peace Walks around the world. For more information, contact him at (206) 724-7632 or kanaedasenji@gmail.com.

Ground Zero Goes Carbon Neutral – an Interview with Charlie Michel

By Tom Rogers

This is a story about how Charlie and Carol Michel made Ground Zero carbon neutral. Back in September 2021 Charlie reached out to me after a presentation I did for the Enlighten Forum on what Ground Zero is doing to raise awareness about nuclear weapons in our backyard. He made a generous donation to Ground Zero Community and suggested we get together to talk about climate change and reducing Ground Zero's carbon footprint. Charlie and Carol, my wife Chris, and I got together and Charlie got right to the point. He said, "Tom, Carol and I want to donate a rooftop solar system to make Ground Zero carbon neutral." Without spilling my beer I replied, "Tell me more."



Charlie and Carol Michel stand in front of the Ground Zero Center which is now all the more beautiful for being solar-powered. *Photo by Tom Rogers.*

Charlie and Carol have been proponents of rooftop solar, non-fossil fuel appliances, and electric vehicles for some time. Four years ago, they began helping local non-profit organizations reduce their carbon footprints and utility operating costs by installing rooftop PV solar generating systems and LED lighting in their buildings.

I pitched the offer to the Ground Zero Stewardship Council and everyone agreed to accept. Charlie and I calculated the size of the array needed to make our electrical usage net zero and we went out for bids to three solar contractors. Power Trip Energy won the bid by designing a great system and offering a several thousand dollar discount in recognition of our work toward nuclear weapons abolition. The installation proceeded and our system went on line in mid-December. Concurrent with the solar installation we installed an electric vehicle charger and switched all of our lighting to LED.

I recently sat down with Charlie to talk about his passion for reducing carbon emissions, achieving net zero, and saving the world from the effects of climate change.

Tom: Why are you and Carol contributing your personal resources to reducing carbon emissions?

Charlie: We have been fortunate that we are able to retire with sufficient finances to see us the distance. Rather than leave it all to our kids, we believe it will do them and the world better to use it to combat climate change.

What I did for a career may be surprising to some. I was a petroleum engineer working internationally. I made a lot of oil for the world when energy production from the earth was the catch phrase. My father-in-law was the one who told me about climate change back in 1986. I didn't want to believe it, but slowly decided it was the truth. As I could, I changed course in my career to focus on projects to reduce emissions associated with oil production and was very successful at that. It's a lot easier to reduce emissions in a dirty industry than it is in, say, a retail shop.

In one case, I was able to eliminate a near constant flare of gas from one North Sea platform by changing the way we pumped into and flowed back liquids into some problem wells; that one project saved the equivalent of over 5,000 homes' energy use for a year. With another project in Alaska, I eliminated the heating of tens of millions of gallons of water with diesel, and instead used excess heat from a processing plant.

Tom: I know that you have worked for years to reduce your own personal carbon footprint. Would you describe what you've done?

Charlie: Sure, my own home and automotive transportation are now "net zero". I have 66 solar panels, a heat pump for HVAC, a heat pump clothes dryer, a heat pump hot water heater, two electric cars and two eBikes.

Carol and I have gone to a plant-based diet for health, but also to reduce our carbon footprint even more by not eating animals or animal products. When people ask me, why am I vegan? I explain the climate effects of foods. And I say really, the question is not why am I vegan? The question is why isn't everybody else vegan?

Tom: When and why did you start helping non-profits to reduce their carbon footprints? Would you describe it as a decision, or a process?

Charlie: We have contributed to charities all our working lives. The first time we purchased carbon offsets was for transatlantic flights back in 2005. I think it went for more fuel efficient stoves in Bangladesh. But it was nothing we could see or touch. In 2017 we got the idea to

Carbon Neutral... continued on page 10

combine these two aspirations: help local non-profits by reducing their fuel bills and reduce their emissions.

Tom: Your drive to slow climate change seems to be more personal than political. Do you consider yourself a climate activist?

Charlie: I'm afraid I'm not very good at brandishing posters in public, but I have done that on some occasions. Maybe something I should do more of...

I certainly write letters to the editor. I write all my legislators. I sign all those internet petitions for climate change. I put my name on those. But I don't find myself going to Olympia. I don't demonstrate on the Capitol steps, and I have yet to go into the Capitol Building to talk to them. I do some of that but I do it remotely.

I'll tell you who I think is really practicing climate activism. There's an organization called Coltura. They are working towards the phase-out of gasoline. They just want us to get rid of gasoline. And so they've championed a bill and it has passed through the Washington state legislature. Clean Cars 2030, so any new car you buy starting in 2030 must be fully electric or you can't register it in the state.

I have personally participated in some of their

tion.

Coltura did an analysis of who uses how much gasoline and what the demographics are and then came up with a proposed incentive system so that you could subsidize those people to get them out of their gas cars into electric vehicles. And usually, it's a pickup truck. And then the idea is that pickup truck gets bought by somebody who doesn't drive that much, so it uses less fuel. You're getting the super users of gasoline into electrics, because it'll take way longer to achieve climate goals by just having it out there as a blanket tax credit, and the people that can most afford it need it the least in many cases. So anyway, that's Coltura and they've done many other things. But the superusers study is one of their hallmarks right now to getting that incentive system into legislation.

Tom: What should the US government be doing to achieve net zero worldwide? What should individuals be doing?

Charlie: For starters, the government needs to amend the constitution to get money out of politics, which avalanched with the Citizens United Supreme Court decision. Monied interests work to their own inter-

est, not that of the citizenry. An example is the defense industry getting the government to spend money on yet more unnecessary nuclear weapons. But back on climate; Let's take the example of food. Eating a standard American diet (SAD) with its heavy emphasis on meat, dairy, and eggs is what those industries have lobbied for when in truth it results in 10-20 times the carbon emissions of a plant-based diet and adverse health consequences documented by over 10,000 scientific papers. The average American is responsible for 16.5 metric tons of CO2 emissions. Going to a plant-based diet drops that by one to two tons at zero cost, not to mention the health care savings. Our government needs to get into action to electrify everything and build out the grid. It needs to be on the same effort of scale as WW2. Once we do this in our country, or at least get a good start at it, then we have a moral leg to stand on when

talking with the rest of the world. Individuals may not be able to afford solar PV, but don't need any funding to stop eating animal products. Individuals can also rethink travel; flying to Europe is over a ton of carbon emissions. Take a road trip instead, and even better in an electric car. When your gas furnace goes out, install a heat pump instead. Use a heat pump dryer or a clothesline. Recycling is a good thing, but it isn't good enough to just tick that box. We need substantial change.



A mural in Glasgow, the site of last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference. The US and China are the world's largest carbon emitters. *Photo courtesy of bbc.com.*

activities, and I've also donated to them, so I helped fund what was called the Coltura Superusers Study. It's looking at trying to come up with an incentive system for the people that don't have a lot of money but are still driving 150 miles a day in that old Dodge pickup truck. They're the people we want to get into electric vehicles, not the little old lady who only drives to church on Sunday. Sure, that little old lady is cool, but it doesn't make as much a difference. We need to target incentives at the people it makes a difference with. So, it's early yet but the superusers study has gotten both federal and state atten-

Tom: I know that you have contributed both time and money to help the Mountaineers Organization to reduce its carbon footprint. Can you describe what you've accomplished for them?

Charlie: The Mountaineers is a nonprofit helping people get outdoors safely. In 2017 we half-financed a 271 solar panel installation at The Mountaineers Sand Point facility. This got the conversation started, and we formed a Carbon Footprint Reduction Committee. With some of our financial and engineering help we have eliminated all natural gas consumption at the Tacoma Program Center. In a couple of months, a 30kW solar PV array will go up on the roof and the building will be net zero for both gas and electric.

Tom: Besides Ground Zero and the Mountaineers, what other organizations have you helped?

Charlie: We financed KCTS (public TV station in Seattle) to replace all fluorescent lighting with LED's. We bought a solar-powered LED kiosk for State Parks. We paid for Bremerton Parks to convert Evergreen Rotary Park to all LED, which may be what inspired them to do the same at all their other parks.

Tom: You financed the total cost of a solar PV generating system at the Ground Zero Center, enough to make Ground Zero carbon neutral. What is it about Ground Zero that motivated you to reach out to us?

Charlie: Ground Zero's missions and goals align with our own. What better way to support such an organization than by reducing its operating cost while reducing its carbon footprint? It was after watching Tom Rogers give his presentation on Enlighten. The opportunity just jumped out at us. Anyway, you find a nonprofit doing something for the public good, you help lower their costs and you lower the carbon footprint. You just do it all. I mean, it makes so much sense to do it that way. And we get a tax deduction for it.

Tom: I believe that there are two existential threats to human civilization, nuclear weapons, and climate change. Do you see a relationship between those threats? For example, as the climate crisis progresses there is potential for extreme climate induced humanitarian disasters. Some speculate that the potential for use of nuclear weapons will increase as marginal nations turn to war as a means of national survival. What's your take on this?

Charlie: If you think immigration is a problem now, wait until the temperate climate regions have whole countries knocking on their door. (Eventually, the Cana-

dians may have to build a wall!) Nuclear weapons may be just too tempting of a "solution" and doom the planet. Russia has bet heavily on oil and gas, something we dare not burn much longer and so what will they turn to for survival? Could they hold us hostage to send them food in exchange for our very survival?

Tom: What's your next project?

Charlie: For the first time, I am working with a local credit union on installing PV on their roof. It will speak to those driving up Silverdale Way. It's premature to name the credit union right now, but it's a small outfit with one office. We have no vested interest. Our vested interest is in the climate.

Tom: Are there any questions I didn't ask that you'd like to answer?

Charlie: Sure, "Why is there such a hurry to all this?"

Glen Merzer in his book *Food is Climate* talks about "The Burning Machine" (burning fossil fuels) and "The Killing Machine" (eating animals and their products for food). The latter he maintains is a far bigger contribution to climate change than the former, but we need to work on both, and quickly. We have a "carbon budget" of emissions before we bring on catastrophic climate change. There are "feed forward" mechanisms that lead to a tipping point. First is the loss of sunlight reflectivity from snow and ice, so the land absorbs more solar radiation and thus we warm faster. Second is the thawing of the permafrost. Once thawed, microorganisms start chewing away at the peat. This process would emit three times the emissions of burning all the world's biomass, or 25% more than burning all our fossil fuel reserves.

I would volunteer to hold a few seminars on how to go plant-based (and enjoy it), on electric vehicles, and on making your home net-zero (next winter).

Tom: Thank you Charlie and Carol for the vital work you are doing on this important existential issue and thank you for your generosity toward Ground Zero. Next time you drive by Ground Zero make sure you stop in and plug in your Tesla.

"Ground Zero's missions and goals align with our own. What better way to support such an organization than by reducing its operating cost while reducing its carbon footprint?"

Tom Rogers is a retired Navy captain and submarine commander. He has worked with Ground Zero for nuclear abolition since 2004.

GROUND ZERO

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

Phone: 360-930-8697
Website: www.gzcenter.org
E-mail: info@gzcenter.org

Address Service Requested

**Send us your change of
address before the post
office does and it saves
Ground Zero money!**

*If you no longer want to receive our
newsletter, just let us know and
we'll take you off our mailing list.*

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. Postage Paid
SILVERDALE WA
98383
Permit # 111

*“Not everything that is
faced can be changed;
but nothing can be changed until
it is faced.”*

— James Baldwin

Peace activists to meet the U.S. Navy fleet on August 1

By Glen Milner

Peace Fleet demonstrators will gather at noon on Monday, August 1, near Pier 66 on the Seattle waterfront. Bell Harbor Marina will be open for kayaks and for mooring vessels. On-shore activists will meet on the newly rebuilt Pier 62 at the same time for a nonviolent demonstration against weapons of war. This is the 21st year for this event.

Why would we demonstrate for peace at a Seattle maritime festival? We are here for the unrepresented and forgotten victims of these weapons of war and to call attention to the crimes of our nation. And because the celebration of warships in our harbor helps bring about the normalcy of modern war.

The fleet arrival at Seafair is a public relations and recruiting event for the U.S. Navy. Previous years have brought Trident nuclear submarines complete with

nuclear warheads and Navy warships used to launch Tomahawk cruise missiles in the first and second Wars on Iraq and the twenty-year War on Afghanistan. The fleet is displayed for five days in downtown Seattle at tremendous cost to taxpayers while crucial social services in education, health care, housing, and transportation are impaired for lack of funds.

For more details, please contact Mary Gleysteen at mary-gleysteen@gmail.com; Rodney Brunelle at rodney.brunelle@gmail.com; or Glen Milner at gk_milner@comcast.net.



Glen Milner has organized the annual Peace Fleet since its beginning in 2000. **Karol Milner** took the photo of Mira Leslie with her Pace flag with rainbow colors at the 2013 Peace Fleet.