



NDE Newsletter  
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## SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

by Peter Ediger

Uncalculated stockpiles of spiritual weapons reside within each of us. It is time for us to develop, test and deploy these weapons systems. It is time for us to hear anew the call to take up the non-violent arms of the Spirit. It is time for us to put on the whole armor of God and take our stand (Ephesians 6).

That is a perilous call. The lesser peril is that in the hearing of the call we may become engaged in battle and be wounded. The greater peril is that in responding to the call we may jump into the fray clothed in a superficial spirituality, inflicting violence in the process and becoming wounding more than healers. But the greatest peril of all is to ignore the call and go on dying a slow death as we seek security in the illusionary systems of our materialistic society. Our greatest peril is the fear of taking risks with our faith. Let us acknowledge that at the point of commitment and willingness to take risks, communities of nonviolent spiritual resistance have something to learn from the communities which they resist. The words of Jesus are instructive: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). The "children of this world" are taking high risks in the pursuit of their quest for security in military weapons. Are the "children of light" learning to take risks in the pursuit of security in spiritual weapons?

Where do we go for such learning? What are the questions we should be asking? Where are the laboratories for creative experimentation? Are you and I, each of us personally and all of us together, the laboratory? What are we waiting

for? Are we afraid of where the question will take us? Are we hoping for someone charismatic to come along and give us answers? The discovering, testing and developing of spiritual weapons is not an optional calling for a few "spiritual" people; it is an essential calling for us all.

NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE is joining with persons and communities across the continent and around the world in the deployment of the non-violent spiritual weapons which may bring an end to nuclear weapons testing and the escalating arms race. This is our call: to embrace non-violence in the face of violence, truth in the face of illusion, hope in the face of despair, love in the face of fear. To ignore that call is a denial of faith and an abandonment of hope. To follow the call is a promise of new creation.

### LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE

"It was a cold and overcast day and the desert floor around us was bleak. In the quiet you could actually hear the beat of your own heart. Mine seemed to match the rumblings and boomings of the distant gunnery range--both seemed out of rhythm with the intentions of the Creator. My heart, like our world, is an armed camp filled with fear, distrust of others, God and myself. With every kind of security system, mine field and free-fire zone connected to a trip wire ready to destroy everything including that which it was designed to protect. Our hearts along with our arsenals need to be disarmed."

Vince Petersen, a Franciscan from Ohio, describing his experience at the Nevada Test Site. On Ash Wednesday, he was the first of many to maintain a continuous presence there as part of "Holy Time--Holy Ground" during Lent. The next issue of the Newsletter will include a report on Lenten Desert Experience VII.

## DESERT WITNESS

by Denise Stephenson

Stevi Carroll has two children and teaches many more. She wants them to have a future. So in 1982 when a few Las Vegas once again began witnessing at the Nevada Test Site, Stevi decided to join them and took both her daughters. She went to the test site then and she goes now, to publically stand against the nuclear obsession of our society. As a local person, a parent and an educator, she believes it is important to confront the paradox of preparing to destroy the world with nuclear weapons and also planning for a future. Today Stevi holds a sign near the cattleguard that marks the entrance to the Test Site. The sign says, "Stop Testing Nuclear Weapons." Stevi waves at the cars and busses carrying workers for the morning shift.

Bill Rosse visits the Nevada Test Site frequently. Though travel is expensive and funds are tight, he comes to voice his concern for the destruction of sacred land. He is a Shoshone and head of the Environmental Protection Committee of the Western Shoshone National Council. Bill issues permits to those who wish to walk onto the test site. Permit in hand, many are arrested for trespass. For though the land belongs to the Shoshone, according to treaty, that treaty is not honored by our government. Many visitors to the test site respect the treaty and hold that these native peoples are rightful stewards of this land, stewards who would not participate in the daily rape that takes place there now. Bill stretches across the weathered hood of his car and scrawls his signature

on the piece of paper granting a visitor permission to enter sacred Shoshone land in the name of peace.

In October of 1986 Art Casey took up residence across the highway from the Test Site. He founded the Peace Camp which is there today, home to folks who believe, as Art does, that it is important to be here, in the desert, at the Test Site, to say "No" to nuclear testing. Prayer, personal relationships and physical presence are essential to Art and his witness. In this place he believes to be evil, he stands prayerfully for conversion. Here Art and others seriously undertake the work of nonviolence and peacemaking. Personal relationships have developed with the authorities and sometimes with the workers. This morning, as the wind from Charleston Peak whips the protester's signs, Art leans across the wire fence separating public land from the Test Site and chats with Jim, the Nye County Sheriff.

The dawn comes slowly and dimly through the smoky glass of the bus Maria rides each morning to work at the Test Site. She cleans offices in Mercury, the same work she used to do in Las Vegas but for more money. It is for the children, she reminds herself. Usually she tries to sleep during the hour long commute, but these past weeks she has stayed awake to see the people on the side of the road near the cattleguard. She does not want to lose her job, but these people are so cheerful. This morning she sees a woman standing with her daughters. They are waving. She waves back.

### Small Voice in the Desert

Alone.  
below the towering mountains  
in the great spanse of rocky desert i stand  
small, insignificant. why am i here? why protest?



then i notice tiny white blossoms emerging from the sand--  
delicate and beautiful  
courageous  
Hopeful.

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NDE Newsletter  
Box 4487  
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"Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We, women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

--Julia Ward Howe, 1870

## MOTHER'S DAY

You are invited to reclaim Mother's Day as the day of peace Julia Ward Howe originally conceived of. On May 8, four regional non-violent actions are planned at nuclear weapons facilities across the U.S. which will connect Mothers & Others in the struggle to create a genuinely peaceful planet: a non-sexist, non-racist, politically and economically just world.

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## NDE Intern Report: Jill Ansel

My journey with NDE began in October of '86 when I participated in World Peace Day at the Nevada Test Site. There I was arrested for the first time; the impact on me was tremendous. I returned to New York City with renewed spirit and, something I hadn't planned on, renewed hope. On August 6 of '87 I was once again at the Test Site, with 49 other New Yorkers, as part of the Ecumenical Peace and Justice Coalition. The experience of being in the desert with a loving community and walking across the line into the test site in prayer was, as before, incredible. This time I paid attention to the voice I had heard my first visit to the desert and decided to go to Nicaragua to continue to stand non-violently against injustice. When I returned from there this past January to find a letter from Peter and Denise describing the internship, I called immediately.

I've welcomed the opportunity to work with NDE as an intern. My experience has been as positive, as spirit-filled, and as much fun as I hoped. As for continuing my journey, NDE has given me the chance to follow the voice I heard in the desert. Being an intern here also gives me the chance to help others hear the voice as well.

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HOLY GROUND

by Peter Ediger

In the latter decades of the twentieth century  
the gods of materialism consort with the gods of militarism  
they birth a race of Arms gods  
their prophets proliferate across the land  
they build great altars on land and sea and in space  
they call the people to worship their gods saying  
Arms are our refuge and strength  
Save us, o Arms gods, save us  
Protect us from our enemies.

In Nevada's desert under Shoshone soil  
the prophets of Arms test their gods  
they drill deep holes and fire their gods  
The earth trembles with furor  
but God is not in the trembling  
The winds blow with radiation  
but God is not in the blowing  
The fires burn with elemental intensity  
But God is not in the burning.

In the desert, the still small voice  
of the Creator cries out  
What are you doing here sons and daughters of Elijah  
sisters and brothers of Moses and Jesus  
and Francis and Ghandi and King?  
What are you doing here?



**Nevada Desert Experience**

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