



Desert Voices

THE SEMIANNUAL PUBLICATION OF NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE.ORG

ISSN 1539-9869

Volume # 31 Issue # 1

SPRING 2018

When Will The Other Nations Push Back?

By MARCUS PAGE-COLLONGE

A few months ago the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved their doomsday clock back to two minutes to midnight. Before looking into their reasons, the alarm bells ring in my head: Is it merely because of the unholy wildcard in the White House, and what his ego-maniacal strangeness might mean for nuclear deals with Iran and Korea? Faced with 1,000 species extinguished per year, and more murders of unarmed civilians in our cities, why be concerned about nuclear war?

These scientists are responding not just to reckless rhetoric from fear-based folks with fingers on nuclear triggers, but to the support that such decision-makers have from insecure individuals in white supremacist society. The belief that certain people are better than others (more deserving) and should have weapons to ensure their power over others, strongly supports both an infiltration of guns everywhere and nuclear weapons "for us." What will inspire the US government (and others) to surrender their nuclear weapons? In the schools, streets, and nationalist boundaries, it's the same choice between fearfully clinging to weapons as if they will save us, or courageously embracing "the other."



Whatever the choice of weaponry at whatever the level of social control, I and several dozen others each year reject this fearful ideology by stepping into the Mojave Desert for a nonviolent Peace Walk directly to the nuclear weapons test site, to experiment with personal disarmament of the heart. The natural pace of walking is a rejection of the false hope of "security" through more powerful weapons. We don't wish to succumb to the mainstream cultural value of controlling others, of threatening violence in order to feel powerful. Instead, we let the wilderness of a naked landscape speak to us, sometimes buffeting us with heat and wind, other times with cold and snow, all the time we are with each other, pilgrims walking 10 miles a day or more to experience our plain old power as pedestrians, as earthlings, as children of a nonviolent deity who wants us all to at least get along, and at best to celebrate joyfully as family.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Historic Peace Boat Embarks on New Voyage

By WENDY ROGAN

When I first read about the Golden Rule, I was captivated by the story of the historic wooden boat and crew, whose 1958 voyage to the US atomic testing zone in the Marshall Islands was a significant event in the early nuclear abolition movement. I was struck by the parallel of this little boat's journey with that of the Sacred Peace March. Two different pilgrimages—one a journey over the earth, one a voyage over water—yet one single purpose. Just as peace walkers endure the desert's relentless winds, harsh sun, and bitter cold, the crew of a sailboat must brave the same unforgiving conditions at sea. But such is a pilgrimage: when we endure some sacrifice, however small it may be, the journey becomes all the more meaningful to us.

The restored wooden vessel is now a national project of Veterans for Peace, and is on a new mission of education and outreach. I wanted to learn more about the project, and perhaps link our work at Nevada Desert Experience with the Golden Rule Project. I caught up with the boat and crew in San Diego last September, where they were preparing for a peace flotilla action during the Navy's Air and Sea show.

The story of the Golden Rule began in 1958, when former US Navy commander Albert S. Bigelow had an epiphany. As a Quaker, he was horrified by the escalating nuclear arms race, and was emboldened to take action. He envisioned sailing a boat to the Marshall Islands, directly into the site of US atmospheric nuclear tests, risking his own life to call attention to the devastating effects of the bomb on people and the environment.

He purchased and outfitted a 36-ft. ketch, appropriately named the Golden Rule, gathered a crew of three men, and set sail from San Pedro, California bound for Eniwetok atoll. But the little wooden sail boat would never make it that far.

Bigelow and the crew were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard when they attempted to re-supply the boat in Hawaii. The US government had hastily passed a statute making it a crime for a private citizen to enter the testing zone. The crew were arrested, tried, and sentenced to six months in jail.

"How do you reach men," wrote Bigelow, "when all the horror is in the fact that they feel no horror?" But Bigelow's story did reach people. As word of their trial in Honolulu spread, supporters wrote letters and marched in Washington to demand their release and call for an end to nuclear testing. These protests generated public pressure that led to the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty by President Kennedy in 1963.

Other boats would soon follow in the wake of the Golden Rule. At the time of the trial, another boat, the Phoenix of Hiroshima, was docked just two slips down from the Golden Rule. The boat's captain, Dr. Earle L. Reynolds, a doctor who had studied the effects of radiation on Japanese children, and his family were so moved

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Wendy Rogan Continues

by the courage of the Golden Rule crew that they decided to take up their mission. Reynolds successfully sailed into testing zone, but he too was arrested, tried, and served a jail sentence.

Greenpeace was the next vessel to sail against nuclear weapons. At a meeting of activists in Vancouver in the late 1960s, Marie Bohlen suggested that a boat could sail to the US weapons testing site in the Aleutian Islands, just as the Golden Rule had years earlier. The rusty trawler Phyllis Cormack, renamed Greenpeace, was selected for the protest voyage, and history was made once again.

Meanwhile, the Golden Rule changed hands several times, and after many years, fell into disrepair, eventually sinking in a gale in Humboldt Bay in 2009. Then, a group of veterans decided to save the brave wooden boat from this watery grave. They hauled out and restored the historic vessel, re-launching the boat in 2014.

After three successful seasons of education, outreach, and action along the Pacific coast, the Golden Rule project staff is currently preparing to re-create the original mission, and sail to Hawaii, then the Marshall Islands, with the goal of reaching Japan by 2020, the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

While researching more about the voyage, I discovered another parallel between these pioneering activists and our work in Nevada. Early in the morning on August 6, 1957, the 12th anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb, Bigelow and a group of 35 other Quaker activists held a prayer vigil at the gates of the Nevada Test Site. In groups of two and three, eleven of the activists crossed the line in protest, and were arrested for trespassing and tried in Beatty. Reading about this protest in Bigelow's book, *The Voyage of the Golden Rule: An Experiment in Truth*, I felt an instant connection with these pioneering nuclear abolitionists.

"After leaving court, we returned to the prayer vigil at the Mercury gate. We continued to pray through the night. At dawn we experienced, from a distance of about twenty-five miles, a nuclear explosion. This was proof that our intuition, our feelings, and our senses were right. We knew that we could never rest while such forces of evil were loose in God's world."

Learn more about the history of the Golden Rule in the film [Making Waves: Rebirth of the Golden Rule](#), a 25-minute documentary directed by our friend, James Seamus Knight! The film is available to view on the Golden Rule Project website, at www.VFPgoldenruleproject.org. I encourage you to organize a screening and discussion with your local peace organization, faith-based group, or community/civic group.



Four pacifist men in 1958 sail the Golden Rule from California toward the Marshall Islands in order to nonviolently place their bodies in the way of planned nuclear bomb blasts.



Vera Anderson continues the tradition of dialog with opponents and supporters of opponents, during an NDE event.

Marcus Page-Collonge continues

Rabbi Mel Hecht of Las Vegas said two decades ago, “Is it NOT a miracle that we have not destroyed ourselves? It is because of people such as you who keep praying,” for peace and justice; that’s the reason humanity thus far has been spared the fate that the nuclear weapons industry strives for. The goodness of cultivating more goodness in our hearts staves off global destruction, perhaps the same way praying at sunrise in an ancient Shoshone prayer ensures the sun will rise? The ability of people from disparate religious traditions to pray together is one reason I keep coming back each Spring for those kinds of prayers, to cultivate my own conscience while pushing back the potential mass destruction from hand-held guns, weaponized drone joysticks, and nuclear trigger buttons.

There is one answer to the existential problems of nuclear weapons proliferation, geopolitical maneuvering that splits up families, global climate change due to human behavior, and racist/supremacist fears taking real lives in towns across the USA. That excellence is a simple trifecta: do the right thing, speak truth to power, and use your body as a monkey-wrench in the systems of violence. NDE continues to support folks who are doing that last bit—creating prayer-actions as a form of direct action that takes ideas, feelings, and love-based values up a notch from mere symbolic action. We all need to keep making symbolic action, and continue prayer-actions, and create nonviolent direct actions, because that power of Love for enemies and neighbors of all species on this planet is the only solution to all the ailments of the world.



One of the enduring, classic rituals at the Sacred Peace Walk is based on a traditional commemoration of the final oppression, torture, and murder (death penalty) of a passive Jesus Christ. In this modernized re-enactment and re-contextualization, NDE participants on the SPW see late-20th century images of the ongoing brutality in contemporary racist, militarist, and state-sponsored terrorism.

From Our Event Coordinator



This is Robert Majors from Nevada Desert Experience in Las Vegas. As you know, we focus our efforts on mobilizing our communities of traditional values and faith to educate themselves and others on the injustice we have committed to man, this Earth, and the conscience of love.

Over the course of the years we have reached many people through our newsletters, our participation in the community, and our protest. Our involvement has given us the opportunity to work with bright people who want to help make a change. So our community has grown, and you have seen the fruits of their labor: the photography, the writing, the song, the criminal history report.

As small as these things are, they are surely dressed in a remarkable love that will preserve them for generations and will continue to inspire those who witness them to shine a little more with the golden aura. If you are reading this, then you may already know how important this work is. We thank you for your continuous support and for keeping updated on what we are doing in Nevada. However, it is even more important that this message reaches out and becomes understood to future generations.

Please share us as much as you can with whoever you can. Our word is our most valuable resource and you can help us multiply this resource by being courageous enough to speak about it. We will do our best to cultivate every seed you plant and try to create an environment that will last.

*Thank You,
Robert Majors*

NevadaDesertExperience.org
1420 W Bartlett Ave
Las Vegas NV 89106

NON-PROFIT
Postage Paid
Permit # 1009
Las Vegas, NV



NDE Office Co-Manager Ming Lai flies a kite, not a drone.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Co-Founder Louis Vitale, OFM wishes NDE participants peace and all good from his retirement home in Oakland, California.

UPCOMING NATIONAL EVENTS (SOME IN NEVADA!)

June 13, 12:00 Noon: "Can We Turn Back the Hands of the Doomsday Clock?" Lunch talk by Rachel Bronson of Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, @ the Commonwealth Club, 110 The Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA

June 28, 8:00 AM: "Six Months After the NPR" Breakfast talk by John Harvey on the Nuclear Posture Review, @ Capitol Hill Club, 300 First St. SE, Washington, DC.

See: www.MitchellAerospacePower.org/strategic-deterrence-breakfast-series.

July 15, 5:00 PM: 24-Hour Rosary Vigil @ the Trinity Bomb Site in New Mexico. Contact Marcus for info: 209.Atom.Fan or AmmonHennacy@gmail.com

August 4, 2:00 PM: Sackcloth & Ashes Peace Vigil @ Los Alamos, NM

September 22, 9:00 AM: Campaign Nonviolence Active Nonviolence Workshop @ Beaverton, OR

October 7 & 8, 2018 Justice For Our Desert @ Creech AFB and the NNSS

January 2019: NDE's Float in the MLK Jr Day Parade, Las Vegas, NV

April 13-19, 2019: NDE's Sacred Peace Walk from Vegas to the NNSS

Tree-Free Paper

It's not kenaf, it's not recycled tree-flesh, it's not cotton, it's not hemp—it's TreeZero, 100% tree-free sugarcane waste fiber you are holding in your hands. This paper is advertised "Carbon Neutral" too, in its production, all part of NDE's efforts to reduce our environmental footprint.