

DESERT VOICES

The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience

Number 10, Summer, 1991

Nuke Blast Shivers 10th Lenten Desert Experience

The bomb which exploded underneath the Nevada desert on March 8 produced significant fallout on the assembly gathered for the 10th Lenten Desert Experience in Las Vegas that weekend. The 600 participants did some intense soul searching after Dr. Rosalie Bertell, an internationally recognized expert on the effects of low-level radiation, cautioned people about going to the Test Site within 72 hours of a nuclear test. She expressed particular concern about the possible risk to children and women of child-bearing age being exposed to alpha rays, which may cause genetic problems.

Following hours of discussion, the group agreed to hold its morning Bible study and liturgy at a desert site near Las Vegas, and then give people the option of going to the Department of Energy building in Las Vegas for prayer and vigil, or going to the Test Site for

prayer and civil resistance action. One hundred and eighty-seven people were arrested, given citations and released in the action at the Test Site.

In other LDE X events, some 100 Friends gathered for a weekend discussion on the "Peaceable Kingdom" March 22-24, with 50 cited for trespass on Sunday. Daily vigils were held at the Test Site during Holy Week, with a "Stations of the Cross" service on Good Friday and a Resurrection Mass on Easter Sunday. Thirty-eight persons were arrested in actions during Holy Week.

On Tuesday of Holy Week, six persons were arrested in a prayer vigil at the Tonopah Test Range, home of the F-117! Stealth Fighters which were heavily involved in the bombing of Iraq. The six were cited for trespass and released.

RADIATION EXPOSURE AND HEALTH CONCERNS

Concerns about possible health risks due to radiation exposure from the nuclear weapons test on Friday of the LDE-X weekend (March 8) resulted in discussion and alternative planning for the ecumenical service at the Test Site.

In response to those concerns, we are collecting data and asking for an interpretation of studies so participants at future Test Site actions can assess exposure and health risks. Most existing studies are based on atmospheric tests.

Rosalie Bertell's concern during LDE weekend was for women of childbearing age, and for persons with depressed immune systems, being at the Test Site within 72 hours of a nuclear weapons test. At present, we have no other opinions about that. Up to that time, we were not aware of an increased danger immediately after a nuclear weapons test.

Generally we are told that one's presence at the Test Site does not endanger health. Background radiation over the world is elevated from what it was before nuclear technology became a way of life. Background radiation in Las Vegas and at the Test Site are often the same. Some say the cosmic radiation from the airplane trip to Nevada is greater than what is received in a few hours at the Test Site. If these are comparable in terms of the radiation received, we do not yet know. We hope to have answers soon. If you have information that can assist us, kindly write or call. Thank you.

WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

Reflections on a Decade in the Desert

by Anne Symens-Bucher

In the Spring of 1984, after three ad hoc Lenten Desert Experiences, Ed Dunn, Louie Vitale, Duncan McMurdy, Mike Affleck and I sat in our makeshift office and resigned ourselves to the fact a campaign had begun. Something had started and there was no turning back. We had no idea we would still be coming to the desert a decade later. But we kept coming, and we will keep coming.

We continue this campaign with no illusion that it will be easy to stop nuclear weapons testing or militarism, or sexism, or racism. But we come anyway.

We come here to grieve.

We come here to celebrate.

We come here to weep, to laugh, to sing, to dance.

We come here to walk across cattle guards, to crawl under and climb over fences, to become friends with the officers who arrest us.

We come here to struggle with the violence deeply rooted in ourselves.

We come here to renew our friendships, to forgive each other and love each other so that love flows out from us into the desert.

We come here to be instruments of God's peace.

We will be fed here.

We will be healed here.

We will be loved here.

We will find strength and courage and peace here enough to go forth from this desert and continue our work.

And when we feel that we can go no farther, we will come back to this sacred place and be fed again.

NEWS NOTES

- **"Notes on Faith and Strategy,"** a new booklet by **Michael Affleck** reflecting on NDE's ten year history, is available from NDE: single copy \$2.50; five for \$10; 10 for \$15.
- **Anne Symens-Bucher** has been employed as **NDE Development Coordinator**. Her address: 1968 1/2 36th Ave., Oakland, CA 94612; (415) 535-2268. Anne, a co-founder of NDE, brings a strong commitment to the NDE quest for a more peaceful world.
- The June issue of **SOJOURNERS** magazine features NDE. Persons not already subscribers may order the issue or a subscription from SOJOURNERS, box 29272, Washington DC 20017.
- According to the Washington Post (April 3, 1991), "the Defense Department has begun secretly developing an extraordinary nuclear-powered rocket capable of lifting immense weapons or satellites into space... Ground tests associated with the reactor have been scheduled at the Nevada Test Site."
- Occasionally NDE trades mailing lists with carefully selected groups with similar agenda. If you prefer your name not to be included in such list trades, please notify the NDE office.

Nuke Hearings Planned

The Department of Energy is holding hearings in communities near nuclear facilities across the country to give the public an opportunity to address concerns related to the nuclear weapons industry.

Hearings will be held in Las Vegas, NV; Washington, D.C.; Columbia, SC; Idaho Falls, ID; Amarillo, TX; Richland, WA; Atlanta, GA; Oak Ridge, TN. Contact PEIS Task Force, (202) 624-9351. In Las Vegas, (702) 648-8982.

Desert Voices

Desert Voices is the newsletter of the non-profit Nevada Desert Experience.

Your letters, articles, announcements of coming events, poetry or humorous pieces are welcome.

Send them (and a stamped, self-addressed envelope) to **Desert Voices**, Box 4487, Las Vegas NV 89127-0487, Phone (702) 646-4814

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

The ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT in the US, USSR and China were discussed by 85 participants from those nations at a conference at the University of California-Irvine, April 10-14.

Worldwide environmental devastation from nuclear weapons and power plant accidents since the 1950s were reported with sobering reality. The earth has monumental scars in the USSR at Kyshtem and Chernobyl, and at US nuclear weapons facilities. Citizen groups from the US and USSR were frank about health consequences as well.

The Chinese delegation spoke of small nuclear programs located in the isolated countryside. The delegates felt these facilities do not problems to health or environmental problems. To stop testing nuclear weapons, China would require the US and USSR to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals. By the end of the year, China hopes to have a nuclear power reactor operating, and another two in 1992.

Staff of the US Office of Technology Assessment, and the General Accounting Office (GAO), both arms of Congress, were critical of the Department of Energy (DOE) management. The clean-up of the nation's nuclear weapons complex will cost at least \$100 billion and take 30 years or more. The GAO staff report indicated that this situation came about because, "the Atomic Energy Commission, DOE's predecessor, developed a policy of 'least interference' with a view that the nation's best scientists could produce the optimum results if they were left unfettered by government oversight. The environmental restoration problems we face today can be traced in large part to that policy." The solution suggested was that DOE embrace a new management culture.

CORPUS CHRISTI DESERT EXPERIENCE

The Corpus Christi Desert Experience will bring together women and men from many religious communities in a Faith and Resistance Retreat focussing on a witness against nuclear weapons testing. The retreat will be held in Las Vegas and at the Nevada Test Site, June 17-21, 1991.

Co-sponsored by NDE, the 8th Day Center in Chicago and Groundwork in Detroit; and with endorsement of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and the Conference of Major Superiors (CMSM), the retreat is open to members of religious communities and all others who are inspired by such prophetic figures as Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Teresa, Ignatius, Elizabeth Ann Seton, and Catherine McAuley.

This retreat at will emphasize peacemaking, inclusiveness and interconnectedness, the holiness of all creation, and the traditions of justice and peace flowing out of the spirituality of religious life.

For more information and a brochure, contact: Groundwork/CCDE 11224 Kerchval, Detroit, MI 48214-3323; 313-822-2055.

GANA FORMED: MEETS IN SWEDEN

GANA, the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance, was officially launched at the Test Ban Treaty Conference held at the United Nations in New York in January, 1991. GANA will hold its second meeting June 27-30, 1991, in Stockholm, Sweden, in connection with the 10th World Congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

The vision for the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance came out of the International Congress for a Nuclear Test Ban held in Alm-Ata, Kazakhstan, USSR in May of 1990. Thanks to support from "Desert Voices" readers, NDE Staff members Mary Lehman and Peter Ediger were able to be present at that Congress, and have continued to be involved in the formation of GANA. NDE would like to be represented at the Stockholm meeting, but we will need special contributions of \$1,400 to cover the cost. Would you like to help? Send a contribution designated for GANA trip to NDE.

LDE X Audio Tapes for Sale

\$4.50 each. Cost includes postage. Please order by # below.
(some variation in audio quality)

- #1. Mary Luke Tobin Workshop: *Where Are We Going?*
- #2. Daniel Berrigan Workshop: *Idolatry in the 90's*
- #3. Jim Wallis Workshop: *Discerning the Times*
- #4. Rosalie Bertell Workshop: *Radiation Effects*
- #5. Notes From A Half Score Songs: Rufino Zaragosa, ofm, Colleen Fulmer, Jessie Manibusan, Karen Miller, Lydia Carlos-Reynes
- #6. Saturday morning: Ched Myers Bible Study; Louie Vitale, ofm "Why Are We Here?"; "I Remember.." stories from LDE I-IX: Anne Symens-Bucher, Rosemary Lynch, ofs, Rick Kidd, Pamela Meidell, Mike Affleck, Art Casey.

A Letter to All Our Supporters:

We are encouraged by the growing international movement toward a Comprehensive Test Ban. We are challenged with the reality that the primary resistance to a CTB is here in our country. Our task is clear.

Your partnership in this task is essential. We call on you regularly for support. You are the sustaining energy which keeps the NDE witness strong.

This is another call for your support at this time. We need you now to help carry our programs through the summer. We need you now to enable our participation in the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance. See "GANA" article in this newsletter.

We need your gift in whatever amount feels right to you. We give you our thanks, even as we receive your thanks for keeping the witness moving—for, by, and with all of you.

NDE Staff Peter and Mary and the NDE Board

_____ I want to help sustain the NDE program through the summer. Here is my gift of _____

_____ I want to help with the cost of the travel to the GANA meeting. Here is my gift of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please send me LDE X tapes: #1 ____; #2 ____; #3 ____; #4 ____; #5 ____; #6 ____.

Enclosed is _____ for tapes.

AUGUST DESERT WITNESS VII

August 2-4, 1991

HIROSHIMA, HIBAKUSHA, AND HEALING

A RETREAT FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

**led by Pamela Meidell and Peter Ediger
with sharing from Hibakusha* and Retreat Participants**

Drawing on the contemplative traditions of Christianity and Buddhism, we will invite participants to engage in a rhythm of reflection and engagement with the images and memories of Hiroshima and all that it represents. We will hear from Hibakusha, see films, work in small groups, and do creative expression seeking healing for ourselves and our world.

St. James Catholic Church • 821 H Street • Las Vegas

Friday 7-9 pm • Saturday 9 am to 9 pm

Sunday 8 am ecumenical worship at Nevada Test Site
civil resistance action*****

Registration: \$20 includes Saturday meals, \$25 at the door

Housing: sleeping bag space at church; or arrange your own

Transportation: we will car pool and arrange airport pickups

*Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

** Health Concerns: Medical and Scientific experts differ on evaluation of health risks related to going to the Test Site. Please note article in the Desert Voices newsletter.

***Legal Information: We are invited to be present at the Test Site by the Western Shoshone Nation; nevertheless persons crossing into the Test Site area face arrest and citation for trespass. For the past several years, charges have been dropped. All indications are this policy will continue.

Please mail to: **NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE**
Box 4487 • Las Vegas, NV 89127 • (702) 646-4814

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

_____ \$20 registration enclosed

Additional information will be sent to registrants.

Transportation

_____ I will provide my own

_____ I need pick up, arriving
date _____ time _____ flight _____

Housing

_____ I will arrange my own

_____ I need floor space

Letters

In the Fall issue of Desert Voices, Denise's call for reflection on Darkness and Light came at a time my consciousness was centered on those very questions. I have failed at many resolutions, but I have a need to record my unique journey. It is a journey not unlike other Downwinders have shared in the Marshall Islands, in Kazakhstan, in Utah. But it is a circle now completed not by an unknowing victim, but rather an acknowledged activist of some 15 arrests...the repeated trespasser who knows in the depth of my soul that the progressing degeneration of my body-my temple-my oncoming blindness, a true confrontation with darkness, began 36 years ago with that flash of light...while I grew in my mother's womb. That blinding light must have burned into my soul as well as my immune system for there it has festered and often blistered into civil disobedience. Non-violent in deeds onto others, but my heart has never been at peace--the hatred remains and sustains me through 30 minutes of Light Amplification by Simulated Emission of Radiation as it burns to save my vision. I have cried out as Downwinder friend after friend has accepted radiation therapy for their radiation-induced cancers, the irony Scott Matheson termed "a strange wrinkle." And now I accept the visible light spectrum of quantum physics with wavelengths just somewhat longer than x-ray. Light over Darkness. Evil instead of accepted peace and grace?

Jamie Stewart, St. George, Utah

I suggest that we refer to "tests" as "bombs" and the "Nevada Test Site" as the "Nevada Bomb Site." The word "test" sounds so benign; it does not help us in communicating the gravity of the situation. We need a vocabulary that expresses truth, so messages are delivered with corresponding emotional response. "Test" sounds benevolent and keeps us asleep and in denial.

Joan Monastero, Saugerties, New York

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