

# DESERT VOICES



The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience

Number 11, Fall, 1991

## Impact of Low-Level Radiation At The Test Site Keeps Generating Hot Debate

Health effects from radiation exposure are not easy to assess. Scientists are finding evidence that suggests long-term exposure to low-level radiation results in genetic changes and is harmful to the immune system, possibly leading to future illness.

During Lenten Desert Experience X, Dr. Rosalie Bertell brought up the health issues surrounding exposure to low-level radiation. Her studies indicate that cancer deaths, the usual indicator of radiation exposure, may not have risen, but lowered monocyte counts (detectable through blood counts) may be a result of radiation exposure. This count, although within the normal range, may be lowered due to radiation exposure and may indicate a suppressed immune system, making one more susceptible to a range of illnesses. (For more information, contact Rosalie Bertell, Ph.D., International Institute of Concern for Public Health, 830 Bathurst St, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5R 3G1.)

Thomas Graham, Radiological Safety Officer at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, says there is no absolute certainty about the risks of radiation from the area around the Test Site gate. He agrees there are concerns about the immune system and that sufficient research has not been done on any indicator other than cancer. His conclusion continues to be that the health risks are roughly proportional to the amount of exposure.

Richard Belsey, M.D., Department of Pathology, Oregon Health Sciences, Portland, OR., stated in the last newsletter (Summer, 1991) that the "cosmic radiation from the airplane trip to Nevada is likely greater than what is received in a few hours at the Test Site gate." He and Tom Graham feel that going to the Test Site in order to register disagreement with the policy of nuclear weapons testing is worth the risk.

Davida Coady, M.D., NDE Board member, recommends that people do not go to the Test

Site barefooted. She also does not drink the water provided and usually refrains from eating while at the Test Site because of the possibility of ingesting particles that could (See Page 2)

## MEDITATIONS AT THE NEVADA TEST SITE

1  
In the holy hush  
of desert dawn  
peace hearts stand tall  
and straight as candles,  
flames reverent, unwavering,  
mute witnesses  
envisioning the Kingdom dream,  
in sacred silence  
lighting the path of truth.



2  
In Time's desert we have lost our way  
blind as its barren face, arid as apathy.  
Beneath, the demons howl  
for blood, for death,  
searing the future with their withering breath,  
(And John cries in the wilderness  
"Repent! Repent!")

3  
How can we heal the self-inflicted plague,  
staunch the long wash of engulfing grief  
over a darkened world?  
In this stone-visaged place  
there are no sign-posts to the promised land;  
but search the secret caverns of your soul-  
the guide-map lies within:  
Pour out as oil the therapy of love  
and stretch the cramped horizons of the heart.

Marion Storjohann, ss.cc.

## Radiation Debate Will Continue

(From Page 1)

do internal damage. (Smoking increases the risk of ingestion also.)

The Environmental Protection Agency's 20 radiation monitoring stations surrounding the Nevada Test Site indicate nothing above background radiation levels result from activities at the Test Site.

This effort to assess the health risk will continue. We will have more information as it becomes available. Thank you to the participants!!



## U.S.S.R. CLOSES TEST SITE

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan, decreed the Semipalatinsk nuclear weapons testing range is closed. He has demanded compensation for birth defects and health problems caused by fallout from the more than 500 tests at the site since 1949. The tests he said, "damaged the health of thousands of people." No tests have occurred at the site for the last two years due to public protest.

In the United States, legislation has been passed to compensate victims of the American testing program which include "downwinders", atomic test veterans, test site workers and uranium mine workers. However, money has not been authorized for payments to the victims.



## 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

**Newsletter Staff:** Mary Lehman, Peter Ediger, Leslie and Jon Klusmire

## NDE News Notes

**TAKING IT TO THE STRIP** A weekend Retreat, vigils, and actions at the Nevada Test Site, and a Memorial March and Rally on the Las Vegas Strip marked the annual commemorations of Hiroshima-Nagasaki from August 2-9, 1991. Nevadans for Peace and American Peace Test joined Nevada Desert Experience in sponsoring the event.

**CALDICOTT TO SPEAK** A coalition of peace and justice organizations is sponsoring a lecture by Dr. Helen Caldicott<sup>M</sup> at the Artemis Ham Hall at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on October 14.

**NATIVE AMERICAN RETREAT** "Re-Discovering America: A Native American-Reflection on Culture" is the theme for a Retreat October 18-20, 1991, at Pace E Bene. Sr. Geraldine Clifford, OSF, a Lakota Sioux, is the presenter. Contact Pace E Bene, 1420 W. Bartlett, Las Vegas NV 89106; 702-648-2798

**ATOMIC VETS TO WITNESS** The Alliance of Atomic Veterans and American Peace Test are planning a Veterans Day Witness at the Nevada Test Site, November 9-11. For more information contact APT, P.O. Box 26725, Las Vegas, NV, 89126; 702-386-9834.

**A FAST WALK** On Hiroshima Day, August 6, several persons began a fast and walk around the test site area. They hope to complete the 500 mile walk during the 46 day fast, one day for every year of the bomb.

**WHO DISCOVERED WHOM?** The Native Americans Discovery of Columbus will be marked by a series of events at the Nevada Test Site in early October, 1992. The Western Shoshone Nation and other indigenous peoples are planning healing ceremonies; the European Peace Pilgrimage and Walk Across America will be arriving at the Test Site at that time; and an international meeting of the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance is being explored.

**BE THE 100TH MONKEY** The 100th Monkey is planning a Stop Nuclear Testing Event in Las Vegas April 10-12, 1992, followed by a Walk to the Test Site, April 13-18. For more information contact The 100th Monkey, PO Box 402, Arcata, CA, 95521; 707-826-2641.

# Shoshone Sisters Square off Against the Federal Government Over Their Land and Their Rights

On the eve of the Quincentenary of Columbus coming to America, the Western Shoshone Nation is facing further invasion of its homeland in the Great Basin region of the Western US. The Bureau of Land Management has served the Dann sisters, members of the Western Shoshone Nation, with a trespass notice charging them for grazing cattle on land which was recognized as Western Shoshone land by the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley but is now claimed by the federal government.

In 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Western Shoshone had been paid for its lands because the Indian Claims Commission awarded the tribe \$26 million dollars (about \$1.15 per acre) in damages for the "taking" of the land. The Western Shoshone never accepted the money. "Our Mother Earth is not for sale... not now, not tomorrow, or not ever," said Carrie Dann. She recalls that they have been "grazing cattle on these lands since we were girls, just as our grandmother did before us. We have always used our treaty lands without paying fees or getting federal permits. I am grazing livestock on land which the federal government claims, but which we own."\*

The Western Shoshone National Council is asking supporters to join a nonviolent resistance to the threatened impounding and auctioning of the Dann's livestock.

This federal government action is only the latest in a series of incursions on Shoshone land. The most blatant is the ongoing bombing of the land occupied by the Nevada Test Site (NTS). Members of the Western Shoshone Nation are active in the resistance movement at NTS. "We do this as a demonstration of our belief that this land is sacred, and that it is wrong for the United States government to be detonating nuclear devices within Mother Earth," said Raymond Yowell, Chief of the Western Shoshone National Council.

The Western Shoshone Nation has issued "an urgent call for action and support to defend our homelands from unlawful U.S. government actions...Our land is being environmentally destroyed by the U.S. for nuclear testing, strip

mining, water exploration, and military land grants. These activities affect the health, well-being and culture of our people while giving very little, if anything, in return."

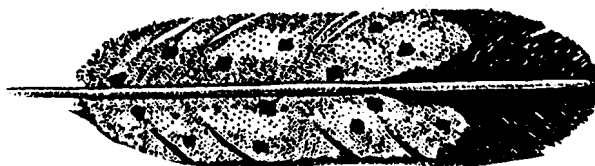
Nevada Desert Experience is joining in this call for support of the Western Shoshone Nation. Actions suggested include writing to the following public officials:

- **Julian Burger, Center for Human Rights, Palais de Nation, Ch-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland**
- **Rep Barbara Vucanovich, Committee on Insular Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-6155**
- **Senator Daniel Inouye, Select Committee on Indian Affairs, 722 Senate Hart Building, Washington, D.C., 20510, 202-224-3934**
- **Senator Harry Reid, Select Committee on Indian Affairs, 324 Senate Hart Building, Washington, D.C., 20510, 202-225-5609**
- **Rep. George Miller, Committee on Insular Affairs, 2228 Rayburn House, Washington, D.C., 20515**
- **Sen. Richard Bryan, 364 Russel Bldg., Wash. D.C., 20510, 202-224-6244**

...and to your congressional representatives.

Those interested are also invited to come to Nevada to join in the nonviolent resistance planned by the Western Shoshone National Council at such time as the BLM takes action against the Dannels. For more information contact: Western Shoshone National Council, P.O. Box 140068, Duckwater, NV 89314-0068; phone 702-863-0301.

*\* for more information on the legal struggle for Shoshone land rights, see the video 'To Protect Mother Earth' narrated by Robert Redford. Contact NDE for rental information.*

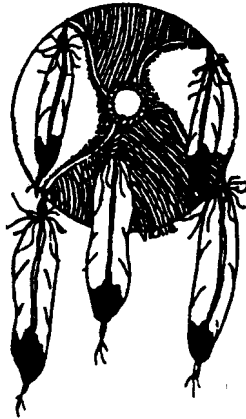


# HEALING THE EARTH-- HEALING OURSELVES

## Lenten Desert Experience XI

March 4-April 19, 1991

- Franciscans: March 13-15
- Lutherans-Episcopallians: March 20-22
- Friends: March 27-29
- Methodists: April 9-10
- Holy Week: April 12-19



DESERT VOICES  
NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE  
P.O. BOX 4487  
LAS VEGAS NV 89127-0487

### More News of Note:

France and South Africa have recently agreed to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, furthering the importance of continuing the NPT beyond the review conference in 1995. Zambia and Tanzania have both recently signed. (Source: VERTIC) China has also agreed to sign the NPT.

NDE sponsors the Common Agenda Coalition. Efforts include (1) cutting the military budget in half (2) using that money to fund programs to meet human and environmental needs and rights, and (3) supporting economic conversion to create an economy based on non-military production with the goal of employment for everyone at a decent wage. Contact CAC with National Jobs with Peace, 76 Summer St, Boston, MA 02110, (617)-338-5783.

NDE seeks a full-time organizer to develop regional action networks to promote a faith-based campaign toward the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as a 1995 Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemoration at the Nevada Test Site. Starting Winter/Spring, 1992. Contact NDE.

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 1009  
Las Vegas, NV

Tom Pabreza  
2300 Garden  
Santa Barbara CA 93105

