

DESERT VOICES

The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience

Winter 1992

CONGRESS CONSIDERS NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING MORATORIUM

The Nuclear Testing Moratorium Act (HR 3636 & S 2064) calls for the US to stop testing nuclear bombs for a year unless a "successor state of any part of the Soviet Union tests." Boris Yeltsin has said nuclear bombs will not be tested in Russia at Novaya Zemlya. The President and Parliament of Kazakhstan have decreed an end to nuclear weapons testing at Semipalatinsk. This means there will probably be no nuclear weapons testing in all of the former USSR.

The 1991 Test Ban Treaty Conference at the UN was thwarted by the US's stubborn refusal to join other nations' discussion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Passage of this present Congressional legislation will signal the world the American people want an end to nuclear weapons testing.

In the House of Representatives, HR 3636 has 177 sponsors. This is a tremendous response which indicates the House, may actually get the bill out of committee and passed. Special congratulations to Representatives Gephardt (MO) and Kopetski (OR) for introducing the legislation.

The bill has been sent to the House Armed Services Committee and assigned to the Subcommittee on Procurement and Military Nuclear Systems. Representative James Bilbray (NV) is on this Subcommittee and is opposed to the bill, but, we are hopeful this bill will pass in the House.

We are not as optimistic about the Senate and plan to focus our attention there. The Senate's Nuclear Testing Moratorium Act, S 2064 is in the Foreign Relations Committee. Senators Hatfield (OR) and Mitchell (ME) deserve credit for introducing this bill. Presently, there are twelve Senate sponsors, none from Nevada.

TEST SITE CONVERSION: Senator Harry Reid (NV) has been cited as a major block to stronger action in the Senate. Nevadans need to work to lessen the opposition of the entire Nevada delegation. One way is to encourage legislation for conversion and retraining programs at the Nevada Test Site.

Jobs at the Test Site and with the Department of Energy (DOE) are of major concern to everyone in Nevada. Test Site contractors are meeting with Nevada's Congressional delegation to plan for a smaller future testing program. Concern for workers is the tone, but "national security" based on deterrence is still part of the rhetoric. The environmental degradation created by each nuclear weapons explosion results in another nuclear waste site. This has not been part of the rationale to end testing, but is real.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS: Presidential candidates Tom Harkin, Larry Agran and Erik Thompson support an end to nuclear weapons testing. Ask all presidential and congressional candidates about nuclear weapons testing.

REASONS TO SUPPORT THE MORATORIUM: (1) One nation's more sophisticated nuclear weapons encourages other nations to look at nuclear weapons as a solution. Nuclear weapons testing brings about instability and proliferation. (2) To check on the "safety" of a nuclear bomb does not require an explosion. Scientists know how to make the bombs safe for transportation and storage. (3) Reliability is a bad argument for continuing testing; of the more than 900 nuclear weapons tests at the Nevada Test Site, only one has not exploded. (4) The money saved from this obsolete program

What You Can Do to Stop Nuclear Testing NOW!

Nuclear Testing Moratorium Bill (HR 3636)/(S 2064): If your Representatives or Senators are listed as a sponsor, write or meet with them to thank them and to ask that they take a leadership role on getting the bill passed. If your representatives are on a subcommittee, encourage them to sponsor and support this legislation.

House: Three sponsors of the nuclear testing moratorium bill are on the Subcommittee on Procurement and Military Nuclear Systems: (1) IL-Evans, (2) IN-McCloskey, and (3) NY-McNulty; and need to be persuaded to take a leadership role. Others on the subcommittee are AL-Dickinson, CO-Hefley, FL-Ireland, GA-Ray, GU-Blaz, KY-Hopkins, MS-Taylor, MO-Skelton, NJ-Saxton, NY-Martin, OH-Kasich, PA-Weldon, SC-Spratt, TN-Lloyd and Tanner, TX-Bustamante, VA-Sisisky, and WI-Aspin (chair of Committee and Subcommittee).

Senate: Sponsors of the Nuclear Testing Moratorium Bill are: AZ-DeConcini, CA-Cranston, IL-Simon, IA-Harkin, ME-Mitchell, MA-Kennedy, MN-Wellstone, OR-Hatfield, SD-Daschle, VT-Jeffords and Leahy, and WA-Adams. Ask Senators Simon and Cranston to take a leadership role in the Foreign Relations Committee. Other targeted members on the committee and senators who may be persuaded to sponsor or support this bill are: AR-Bumpers and Pryor; CA-Seymour, AZ-McCain, CO-Brown and Wirth, CT-Dodd, DE-Biden, GA-Fowler, HI-Akaka and Inouye, ME-Cohen, MD-Sarbanes and Mikulski, MA-Kerry, MI-Levin and Riegle, MO-Danforth, MT-Baucus, NE-Kerrey, NJ-Bradley and Lautenberg, NY-Moynihan, NC-Sanford, ND-Burdick and Conrad, OH-Glenn and Metzenbaum, OR-Packwood, PA-Wofford, RI-Pell (Chair) and Chafee, TN-Gore and Sasser, VA-Robb, WV-Rockefeller, WI-Kohl.

can be utilized to retrain workers and convert the Nevada Test Site to post-Cold War uses.

The 102nd session of Congress ends this Fall. These bills will be part of the process until then unless they are voted down in committee or on the Senate/House Floor. It is also possible that they "die" in committee with no action taken.

We do not pretend to be satisfied with a one year moratorium, but it is a step in the direction toward a Comprehensive Test Ban. This legislative approach is yet another opportunity for us to act against preparations for military solutions to world problems.

Sources: Chris Brown, Citizen Alert; David Culp, Plutonium Challenge; Burt Glass, Sane/Freeze, David Hartsough and Mary Lehman, Nevada Desert Experience; Ben McMakin, Rep. Mike Kopetski's office; Steve Schwartz, Greenpeace.



STAFF NOTES

REGIONAL ORGANIZER POSITION OPEN. NDE is accepting applications for a Regional Organizer to develop faith-based action networks in targeted states to help end nuclear testing. Contact the office for Job Description.

INTERNSHIPS AVAILABLE. Interim help for LDE XI will be needed from February through April. Call the office for information, (702)646-4814.

NONVIOLENCE WORKSHOP. PACE E BENE, Franciscan Service in Nonviolence, is planning an intensive workshop, "Nonviolent Change - The Spiritual Journey of Social Transformation," June 13-21, 1992. For information contact Pace E Bene, 1420 W. Bartlett, Las Vegas NV 89106. (702) 648-2798.

JIM DOUGLASS TOURING FOR NDE. Jim Douglass, Peace Activist and Author of THE NONVIOLENT COMING OF GOD, will undertake a speaking tour of selected areas in June, July, August. Tentative plans include several Eastern and Midwestern states, and the Pacific Northwest. The Tour will promote Nonviolence and the campaign for a Comprehensive Test Ban. Contact the NDE office.

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, Jon and Leslie Klusmire.

CALENDAR

January 31: Longest Walk at Nevada Test Site; Vigil.

February 22: John Michael Talbot Benefit Concert for NDE, at St Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco. Contact Anne Symens-Bucher, (510)536-1266.

March-April: LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE XI

- March 4: Ash Wednesday Vigil At the Test Site
- March 13-15: Franciscan Weekend
- March 20-22: Lutheran-Episcopalian Weekend
- March 27-29: Friends Weekend
- April 9-10: Methodist Witness
- April 12: Palm Sunday Worship & Witness at the Test Site
- April 12-19: Holy Week: Hundredth Monkey Walk to Test Site
- April 17: Good Friday Liturgy, Action at the Test Site
- April 19: Easter Liturgy, Action at the Test Site

May 1-3: Benefit Workshop on Enneagram, Helen Palmer Independence MO. Contact Anne: 510-536-1266

May 30: Benefit Concert, Oakland CA.: Colleen Fulmer, Jesse Manibusan, Karen Miller, Lidia Carlos Reyes. Contact Anne.

June-July-August: Jim Douglass Speaking Tour for NDE: East, Mid-west, Northwest

July 17: Methodist Western Jurisdictional Conference in LV, Witness at Test Site.

August 7-9: August Desert Witness

September 11-13: Benefit, Men's Retreat, Richard Rohr, Oakland, CA. Contact Anne.

October 2-12: HEALING GLOBAL WOUNDS: Indigenous Forum and Ceremony, Las Vegas & Nevada Test Site.

- 2: European Peace Pilgrimage & Walk Across America arrive in Las Vegas
- 3-4: Indigenous People's Forum
- 5-9: Walk to Test Site
- 10-12: Healing Ceremony & programs at Test Site

MARY LEHMAN LEAVING NDE

Mary Lehman plans to end her three-year tenure with NDE at the end of January. Mary has brought so much to NDE, her political action skills, working and networking with local Nevada groups and much needed organizational skills. Whether marching with our friends from the Soviet Union in Kazakhstan or speaking at a U.N. Conference, Mary carried the spirit of NDE with her toward an end to nuclear testing. We will miss Mary and her significant contribution to NDE's success, and wish her a most exciting and fulfilling future.

Those of you who want to bid Mary farewell may continue to write through NDE and the staff will forward her mail.

Announcing an Important New Video on the Global Campaign to End Nuclear Testing

BOUND BY THE WIND, a newly completed 40-minute video by award-winning San Francisco filmmaker, David L. Brown, is a powerful educational tool for activists involved in the Comprehensive Test Ban campaign.

The video portrays for the first time the fully international citizens' movement working for a CTB. With extraordinary footage and the impassioned voices of anti-nuclear activists from several countries, it captures the historic rise of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement in the Soviet Union as well as the launch of the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance (GANA) at the New York Test Ban Treaty Conference in 1991.

The video documents the terrible health and environmental impact of nuclear testing throughout the planet, and tells the moving stories of several "downwinders" turned activists. It demonstrates clearly that a Comprehensive Test Ban is possible and verifiable now, and that the Bush administration policy is the only obstacle to achieving it.



Despite the collapse of the USSR and the recent disarmament initiatives, the U.S. Department of Energy and the Pentagon continue to oppose any restrictions on nuclear testing. Grassroots organizing and pressure on Congress are critical in the upcoming election year, especially as nuclear testing moratorium bills come to a vote in both houses of Congress. **BOUND BY THE WIND** is an informative and empowering media tool to assist the educational efforts of the campaign to end nuclear testing.

"BOUND BY THE WIND is a very moving, well-crafted and inspirational video on the global CTB campaign. It will be an invaluable tool for activists and organizations working to bring about an end to nuclear testing." --Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation

"BOUND BY THE WIND is much more than an excellent documentary on nuclear testing. It is a spirited manifesto delivered by citizens around the world who are standing their ground in the places they love, peacefully and forcefully, to bring an end to nuclear testing for all time."

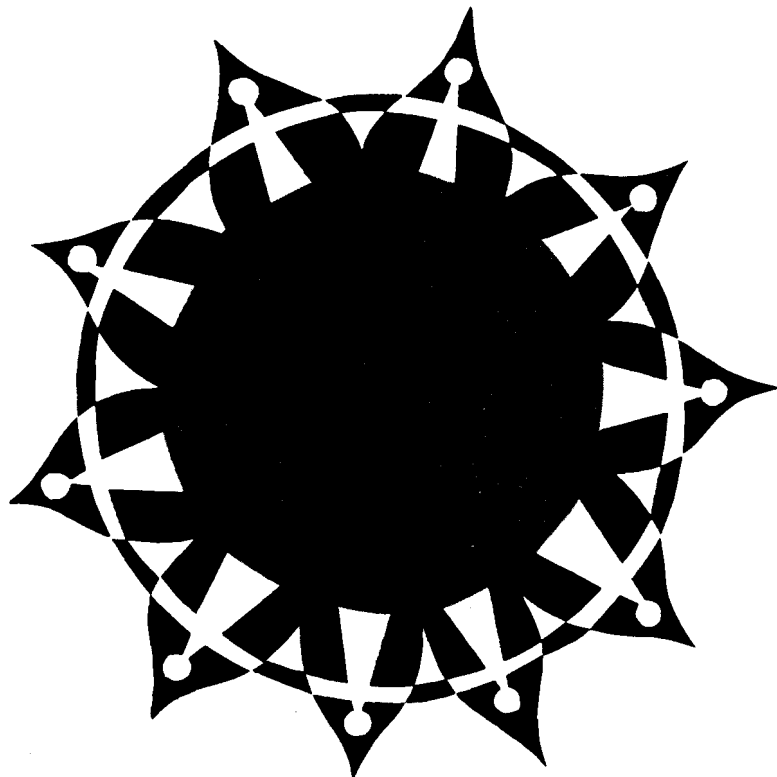
--Terry Tempest Williams, Naturalist, Author, *THE REFUGE*

To Order a VHS cassette of **BOUND BY THE WIND**, send a check for \$15 payable to Nevada Desert Experience, Box 4487, Las Vegas NV 89127. 702-646-4814.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

HEALING THE EARTH HEALING OURSELVES



LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE XI MARCH 4 - APRIL 19, 1992

The nuclear bomb has deeply wounded our earth, ourselves.
Join the Lenten Desert Experience XI in seeking healing,
and expressing prayerful protest at the Nevada Test Site.

Schedule*

March 4..... Ash Wednesday
March 13-15 Franciscan Weekend
March 20-22 Lutheran-Episcopalian Weekend
March 27-29 Friends Weekend
April 9-10 Methodist Witness
April 12..... Palm Sunday
April 13-19 Holy Week

*"We have only one planet: one water, one air, one land.
If we don't take care of it, it won't take care of us.
I pray for forgiveness from the water, the air, Mother Earth.
I pray for healing for the people."*

—Corbin Harney, Western Shoshone Spiritual Elder

IS THE RADIATION AT THE TEST SITE DANGEROUS?

When coming to the Nevada Test Site for an action at the gate, you may have wondered about the risk to your health. There is ongoing discussion about the situation, but it is generally agreed that unless there has been a recent (within 72 hours) detonation of an underground nuclear weapon, the danger to your health is minute if the following guidelines are observed:

- Small children and pregnant women are not advised to go to the Test Site.
- Dances and circle rituals would best be held on paved areas, so as not to raise dust.
- Food should not be eaten at the Test Site. If it is, it should be kept wrapped until eaten. Do not drop food to the ground and then eat it. Liquids should not be contaminated by particles from the ground.
- Keep ceremonies short if the wind starts up.
- Do not plan any action which results in security personnel raising dust with off-road vehicles.

The danger to health from exposure to radiation at the Test Site boundary is very small. 1989 research by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment ("The Containment of Underground Nuclear Explosions") states:

If the same person had been standing at the boundary of the Nevada Test Site in the area of maximum concentration of radioactivity for every test since Baneberry (1970), that person's total exposure would be equivalent to 32 extra minutes of normal background exposure (or the equivalent of 1/1000 of a single chest x-ray.)

This report has not been discredited either by the government or activists. Some scientists and philosophers believe the greatest danger from radiation exposure is our loss of freedom in that we are not given the option of exposure. Our government imposes radiation on us!

For reports dealing with the above in greater detail, please review the last year's newsletters and write NDE.

Sources: Z Kripke, MD, MPH; LaJolla, CA; Letter to NDE, Sept, 1991. Arjun Makhijani, Ph.D; Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, Takoma Park, MD; Letter to NDE, Oct, 1991. Carl Sagan, letter to NDE, August, 1991. US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, "The Containment of Underground Nuclear Explosions, OTA-ISC-414 Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, October, 1989.

"We don't really test bombs, we do physics experiments."

**---Dr. Robert Kuckuck, Associate
Director for Nuclear Test-Experimental
Science, Lawrence Livermore National
Laboratory.**

LDE XI

"Healing the Earth-Healing Ourselves" is the theme for the eleventh annual Lenten Desert Experience beginning Ash Wednesday, March 4, and concluding on Easter Sunday, April 19. The following constituent groups are planning programs with Nevada Desert Experience: Franciscans: March 13-15; Lutheran-Episcopalian: March 20-22; Friends: March 27-29; Methodists: April 9-10.

Vigils, liturgies and civil resistance actions will be included in the events, and will also be held at the Test Site on Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. For more complete programs on particular events and registration forms, contact the NDE office.

The Hundredth Monkey is planning a series of events in Las Vegas the weekend of April 10-12, a Walk to the Test Site April 13-18, and action at the Test Site on Easter Sunday- Earth Day April 19. For more information contact Hundredth Monkey, PO Box 402, Arcata CA 95521, (707)826-2641.

HEALING GLOBAL WOUNDS

*International Events in Las Vegas and Nevada
Test Site October 2-12, 1992*

A Coalition of Native American Nations together with the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance are planning a series of events in Las Vegas and at the Nevada Test Site for October 2-12, 1992. They will be joined by people from the European Peace Pilgrimage and the Walk Across America for Mother Earth.

An Indigenous People's Forum and Global Anti-Nuclear Conference on the weekend of October 3-4 in Las Vegas will be followed by a walk to the Nevada Test Site. The Test Site occupies land belonging to the Western Shoshone Nation. Spiritual Elders of the Western Shoshone Nation will lead an All Nations Healing Ceremony at the Test Site.

KUDOS TO ANNE

Anne Symens-Bucher ended her chairpersonship of the Nevada Desert Experience Board at its November meeting. The immense impact Anne has had on NDE is hard to over-value. She has been on board since the beginning, more than ten years, at times working on-site in Nevada, and more time working in the Bay area.

Anne has been staff person, organizer, activist, goodwill ambassador, best friend and NDE's most dedicated promoter. Others of us have been involved at various degrees of intensity and at various times during NDE's ten-year history. But Anne has been totally committed and involved for the whole time. It was Anne's personal and persistent relationships with many significant figures in the peace movement that brought about their involvement in the Test Site protest.

When the Franciscans began the current witness at the test site no one else was doing it. Now it is a world wide event. No one deserves more credit than Anne.

This is not the end of Anne's involvement with NDE, for she has once again become a staff person, taking on the role of fundraiser. Once again Anne we are most grateful for your ongoing service to NDE.

---Louie Vitale, ofm

Chris Dempster Cherrington: October 3, 1952 - December 1, 1991

from her friend, Anne Symens Bucher

I remember the day I met Chris Dempster during Lenten Desert Experience III. I can still see her standing in the warm sunshine at the Nevada Test Site. I had met Chris's sister, Didi, and when I saw Chris, knew they must be related. I approached her and introduced myself. When I mentioned she looked familiar, she told me she was raised in Oakland, California. Within minutes we discovered we had attended the same high school and she was Didi's sister. We were instant friends.

Chris was a person of endless talents. She spoke Italian fluently and was an accomplished musician. But for us at NDE, Chris's best known talent was as chef extraordinaire. It's never easy to cook for the large groups attending various NDE events, but Chris did it with enthusiasm and delicious results. I had invited Chris to return as chef for our Decade in the Desert event. She was planning to come until she discovered in the fall of 1990 that she had cancer.

Chris battled this disease with dignity, courage and optimism. Her letters to me were always positive, so much so that I underestimated the seriousness of her illness. Thus it came as a huge shock when I received a Christmas card from Chris's husband, Howard, telling me Chris died in her home, peacefully, with her family and friends by her side.

Once, many years ago now, Chris and I were part of a small group gathered at the test site when an underground test had been scheduled. We began to pray and spontaneously moved to the ground. Silence enveloped us, broken only by weeping. Chris was next to me; we gripped each other's hands and cried openly for the earth beneath us, for the destruction of nuclear testing. After some time, we moved back to our benches, not knowing if the test had been exploded, and had a closing prayer. I've thought a great deal about that morning at the test site. The power of love was so tangible within myself and the others in the circle, the energy of God's love welling up within my heart, coursing through me to those next to me, completing the circle and then draining into the earth from our bodies. It was a complete experience of being a vessel of love and healing, an instrument of peace; we were exhausted. Chris and I reflected later that we could only sustain that energy for a short time, that we needed more people, more discipline and a deepening of our own nonviolence to create the energy needed to heal the earth.

I will now remember that day with more emotion, I recall that Chris was by my side. I know she is still there, by my side, smiling in the warm sunshine at the Nevada Test Site, giving me the courage to keep working for peace. Thanks, Chris.

In honor of Chris Dempster Cherrington, Nevada Desert Experience has created a memorial scholarship fund in her name. The scholarships will be made available to those unable to afford the costs of coming NDE events at the test site. Donations may be set to Nevada Desert Experience. P. O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127, and earmarked for this memorial fund.

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