

University students demonstrate at testing site

Last Tuesday night I found myself standing on the back porch of Growers Market in Eugene waiting with a dozen people I'd never seen before for a car caravan from Corvallis. We were headed for the atomic badlands of the Nevada Test

Site to participate in The American Peace Test demonstration.

I traveled in the largest caravan: 38 people packed into six cars and vans. After a solid 22-hour drive through snowed-in mountain passes and down

400 miles of Nevada highway, we arrived at Heritage Hall in Las Vegas, a community center the APT had rented as sleeping quarters for the protesters.

The exit to the site splits off from a precise line of highway, 65 miles north of Las Vegas. A

road leads into a flat expanse of fenced-off desert and to Mercury itself: a white cluster of low white buildings three miles away.

Reporter's notebook by Will Holbert

A cattle guard set into the concrete marked the boundary 438 protesters crossed. The difference between trespassing and civil disobedience depended on which side of the line protesters were on that day.

We arrived in time for the press conference held by Carl Sagan, Martin Sheen, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and other big names luring the media en masse to the demonstration.

Clark denounced the Tuesday test with an angry eloquence: "Testing is the most dangerous thing we can do with

a weapon except employ it against people... this test yesterday was the sign of a sick soul."

Sagan was the star speaker, saying the American political system has contributed to the arms buildup. Congressmen are bullied by defense contract money and consider the future only as far as their terms in office, he said.

Toward the end of the press conference, the "non-press" was given a chance to ask questions. One person asked Kris Kristofferson how he felt about acting in the television melodrama, "Amerika," while at the same time being involved with the peace movement. Kristofferson said he thought he could do more good by being a part of the movie than by staying in the background and criticizing it.

Earlier, Green Peace activists attempted to invade the area in a hot air balloon. They landed 200 yards past the fence and were immediately arrested.

The task of organizing the demonstration fell to blue-shirted "peacekeepers," who had been trained to keep the entire event non-violent and to register those planning "CD," civil disobedience. Equipped with walkie-talkies, they ironically mirrored the Nye County deputies on the other side of the cattle guard. The police even placed a board over the cattle guard for the protesters' convenience.

It lasted two hours. In a form of assembly line mass arrest, the people stepped up to the boundary, were warned of arrest if they crossed it, and were fitted with a pair of disposable plastic handcuffs.

Seven students from the University committed civil disobedience with more than 20 other Eugene residents.

The national press focused on the arrests of the celebrities, who were bused 60 miles north to Beatty along with the other protesters.

None of the students expressed any regrets over the experience.

"I was breaking a smaller law to prevent a larger one from being broken," said Kristin Teigin, a University freshman.

Student Kim Sargent said committing civil disobedience gave her a chance to do something about the nuclear problem.

"You just have to open your eyes and do something about it, otherwise you'll feel guilty," she said.

A community center in Beatty had been turned into a jail. It took five hours to process all

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