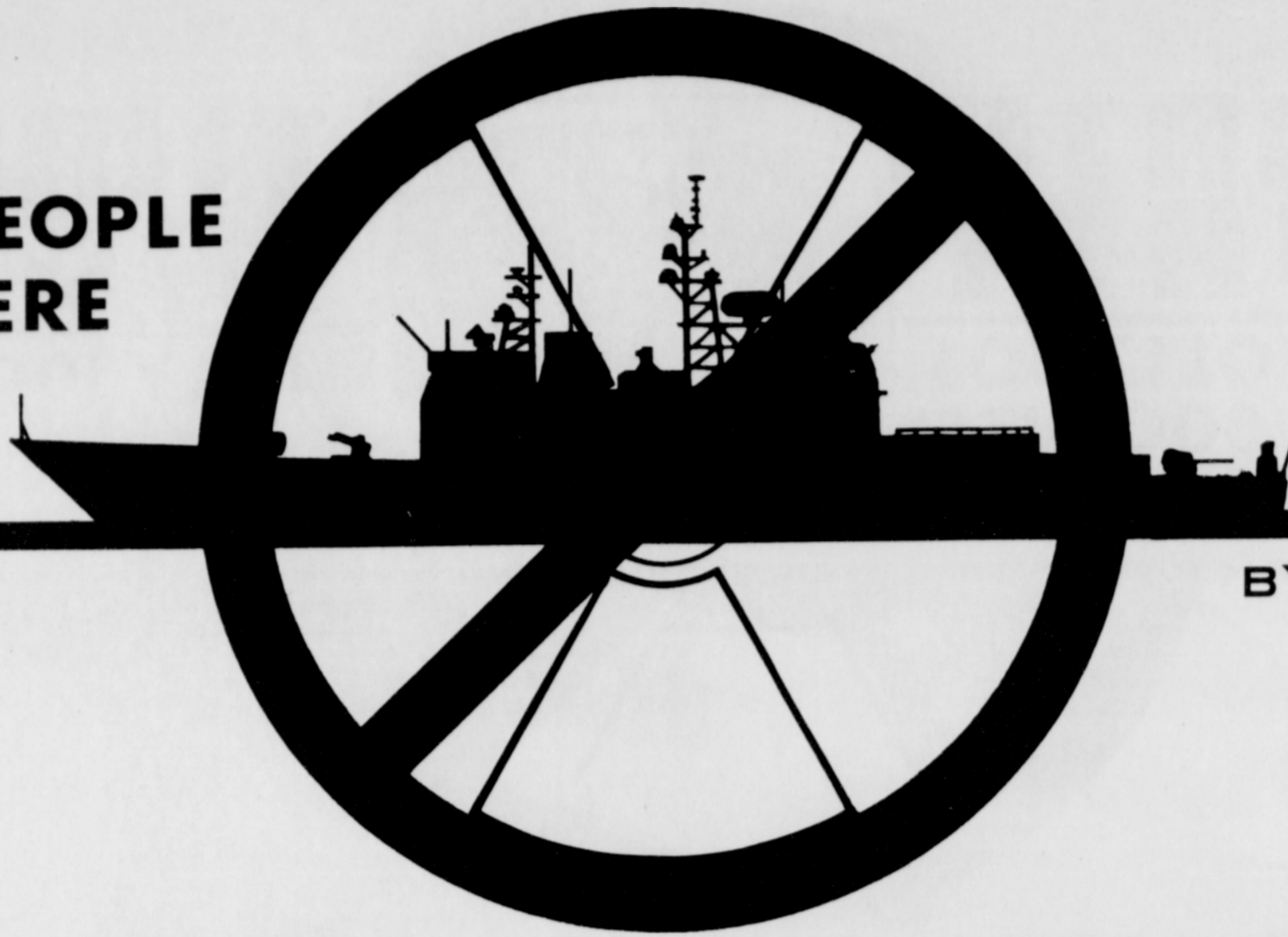


# THE GREENPEOPLE WERE HERE



BY JIM WILKINS

## NUCLEAR WARSHIP IN PORT

The call came Friday afternoon from a member of the local environmental group Nuclear Free Harbors. "Would you be willing to provide office space for Greenpeace for a few days next week?" It sounded fun to me so I agreed that I would be interested. "I'll call their people right now in Seattle and they'll contact you." Within ten minutes I was on the line with Kris Deeble, who said that her organization would be staging some sort of rally to protest the presence of a Navy ship carrying nuclear weapons. "We have some special needs for this action," she said, "specifically, direct line of sight to Cape Disappointment, the Columbia River Bar and the Astoria-Meglar bridge." As she named each location I glanced out my office window at Cape D, the bar and the bridge. "I think I have the perfect spot for you." "Great," she replied. "I'll have our man in San Francisco get in touch with you."

The next morning, as I was working at a Rotary Club volunteer project sprucing up the old fire hall in Uppertown, the mobile phone in my car sounded the horn. I ran out to receive the call, which turned out to be from Dick Dillman, who said he would be coordinating the action here for Greenpeace. He said my office space sounded ideal for his needs and he would fly up the following day for a first-person look.

I had no idea what the action was, or what these people had up their sleeve. I do know that nuclear weapons are insane and have no place on this planet, especially a few hundred yards from my window aboard a Navy ship of a design that tends to explode at random inter-

vals, and I am always ready to help anyone who shares this opinion. I'm not a member of Greenpeace, and, at the time, knew little about the organization; my image of them was something of a hippy type, with raggedy clothes, long hair, and a slightly goofy look about them. Boy, I had that all wrong.

The next afternoon Dick arrived in a rented station wagon filled with radios, antennae, transmitters, and all the accouterments one would expect a professional electronics man to carry. I was on my way to get take-out pizza, so I quickly showed him the room we would provide, actually the office of my wife, Regina, who was kind enough to clear all her papers out of the way.

The next day was Monday, which for me meant going back to work trying to stay on top of my construction business. I visited with Dick off and on during the day as he set up an amazing array of communications gear. He is a thirteen year veteran of Greenpeace and a former member of their board of directors. He is very bright, very articulate, and clearly, very committed. He, and most of the others I met, are on salary; doing this kind of stuff is their job. We found we had a lot in common; we both are private pilots, we're both about the same age, we have a similar education, and we both see the survival of the human species as somewhat questionable given the current trend in world society. My type of activism can be described as "think globally, act locally." Dick thinks globally and he acts globally; Greenpeace is a worldwide outfit, with an annual budget, in this country alone, of about forty million dollars.

Tuesday, the rest of their people started filtering in from around the country. Some stayed in motel rooms, others stayed with local citizens. Our Mayor was quoted in The Daily Astorian saying that since most of the protestors were from out of town, they did not represent the views of the people who live here. I talked with a whole lot of locals who were very receptive to Greenpeace, and quite appreciative of their presence here. I doubt, however, that the four county commissioners who trampled the will of the people by gutting our nuclear free zone ordinance, shared this feeling. Nor, I suppose, did the three Astoria city council members who ignored a clearly represented majority of opinion by voting to clearcut 30 acres of publicly owned timber inside our city limits. Nor, come to think of it, does the judge who suspended the constitutional and statutory right of people to bail to keep the protestors in jail illegally. But I'm getting ahead of myself. The Greenpeople, as I had started to call them, found an unusual amount of support locally, and were delighted at the reception they were receiving in Astoria. Dick told me they had never felt so welcomed by a community.

Wednesday was the day of the action. I was having a hard time doing business while, in the next office, I could hear the Greenpeace spotter plane report the first sighting of the battleship "New Jersey" about ten miles off the coast. Finally, about ten that morning, I told Dick I had to go check on a job. "You better stick around," he said. "It will start to happen in about a minute." I didn't know what "it" was, so he told me to focus my binoculars on the center span of the bridge. Just as I did I saw three white vans come to a quick stop, equally spaced across the span. The side doors burst open and six or eight brilliantly clad people jumped out of each one. The vans roared off toward the toll plaza and within a minute or two eight people were dangling down on ropes, with one person, or addendee as they were called, staying above each climber to make sure all the knots stayed tied. As the ramifications of this scene started to become clear to me, my respect for these greenper-sons climbed several notches. The image of the lone Chinese student facing a very large tank in Tiananmen Square came quickly to mind. Within ten or fifteen minutes the local law enforcement agencies jumped into action. From our perch we could watch as they tried to sort it out, and listen to them as they considered their options. Throughout the rest of the day the police would continue to operate in a very professional and compassionate manner.

Word quickly reached the "New Jersey," delaying its entrance to the river until the situation became more clear. There was a lot of concern about what these people were going



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