

to do and what they had in the black bags dangling under each climber. One by one, the greenpeople reached into their bags and unfurled a banner saying "Nuclear Free Seas: Greenpeace." That answered the question of the contents of the bags, but would these folks actually lower themselves down to impede the passage of the battleship? "We will neither confirm nor deny," was the response given by Dick Dillman, the same phrase used by the Navy when asked about the presence of nuclear weapons on their ships. Joining us that morning was Brian Hinnman, from Washington, D.C. He was constantly on the phone to someone back there, relaying a play by play of the action. The radios were really beginning to hum about now. We could hear the "New Jersey" talking to the Coast Guard, the climbers talking to their attendees, the attendees relaying questions from law enforcement people on the bridge to Dick here at command central, and Brian on the phone to the mysterious presence from Washington, all at the same time. Dick had an UHF transceiver, a VHF transceiver, a UHF/VHF/AM/FM programmable scanner, an aviation transceiver, and a couple of handheld radios, all wired to a small forest of antennae clamped to my desk. A constant stream of greenpeople came and went, trying to keep up with the action on several fronts while preparing for the rally planned for noon under the bridge at Uniontown Park. The energy level was approaching maximum right here on Floral Avenue.

The Navy finally put one of their people aboard a Coast Guard helicopter for a first hand look at the situation. After a few close flybys, the Navy man returned to the battleship, which then decided to commit to the channel. I am not really sure, but I think at this point the greenpeople had met their objective; to delay the entrance of the ship into the river channel. The rest of the action would revolve around the "neither confirm nor deny" game with the Navy. Dick would continue to claim that the climbers would make their own decision, individually, whether to lower themselves into the battleship's path, but I think that decision had been made much earlier.

We watched the "New Jersey" as it crossed the bar and worked its way up the channel, a small flotilla of boats accompanying it but no closer than two hundred yards. Some carried American flags, others carried banners with such sayings as "Peace Is Patriotic" and "No Floating Chernobyls". A report came in from one of the greenpeople zodiacs that an Exxon oil tanker tied up at the face of Pier 1 at the Port was sporting a banner, visible only from the river, saying "Fuck Greenpeace." The irony of that banner was not lost of the greenpeople.

Slowly the massive ship approached the bridge. The thing sticks out of the water about one hundred and sixty-five feet and the bridge span is about two hundred and five. The two middle climbers had to shinny up their rope a little to leave a safety margin. The "New Jersey" had turned off its powerful fire control radar system, which could have turned the climbers into little toasty greenburgers. The passage was slow, uneventful and anticlimactic. The crowds dispersed, the climbers clambored up to be arrested, and the radios were shut down. Those greenpeople not in jail gathered across the river, where they had rented some cottages, to review the action and maybe have a tall cold one.

In a move far more illegal than trespassing on the Astoria Bridge, Judge Cole announced that afternoon that he was suspending all bail for misdemeanor charges, and then promptly



**NUCLEAR  
FREE SEAS**

**GREENPEACE**

left town. This action was apparently requested by the district attorney's office, but I am not sure why. These greenpeople are bright, educated kids, fully patriotic in the best American tradition. Many of them were raised in small towns like Astoria, and like many of the best and brightest of our local young people, left their hometowns after high school to learn more about the big world out there. What they learned was that we humans have backed ourselves into an exceedingly tight corner on this planet, and if large changes are not made very soon, civilization as we know and love it, will have a hard time surviving the next couple of hundred years. Substantial changes are needed, worldwide, in our societies, our institutions, and our consciousness, and the greenpeople are trying everything they can think of to effect these changes in a timely manner. This, to me, is real patriotism.

After the eight climbers, and two attendees, spent the night as the guests of Joe Brunick at the Clatsop County jail, their attorney, Beth Baldwin, finally rounded up a retired judge, who agreed to recess a jury trial early to hold a bail hearing. Doug Jensen, from the

DA's office, demanded thirty thousand dollars bail for each climber, for a misdemeanor charge. His ability to keep a straight face while making these demands amazed me, as well as the Judge, who finally set bail at five thousand per defendant late Thursday afternoon. This meant posting a little over five hundred bucks for each greenperson. Greenpeace organizers came prepared to post that bail amount and within an hour all ten were back on the street.

That night I was reclining in front of the TV watching the second Blazer game in Detroit. Things didn't look good for Clyde and the boys as the final minutes of the game approached. Lambier made a three-pointer to put the Pistons in the lead, but Clyde made those two free-throws to pull the game out in O.T. Just at the buzzer, the phone rang; it was Dick calling from the Columbian Cafe. "We're all down here eating and drinking beer," he said over the sound of a loud and happy crowd. "We would really enjoy it if you would come on down and join us." I drove down to the Cafe, and as I walked through the door they all stood up and cheered. Dick gave a spiel about the pleasure of meeting such a fine group of people in Astoria, and I gave a spiel about the pleasure of meeting such a fine group of people not from Astoria, and the beer was good. I'll keep memories of that evening, and that week, for a long, long time.

Jim Wilkins lives in Astoria. He owns a construction company and half of an airplane. His most recent contribution to the NCTE was in the March issue on behalf of preserving the Astoria city forest.



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