

Putting It On The Line In Nevada

Test site arrests reach new high

BY CATHY CEVOLI

John Mack, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Harvard psychiatrist, was the first member of his family to hear of the Nevada Test Site demonstration. After consulting with his wife, Sally, the couple called their three sons—Ken, Dan and Tony, all in their 20s—and following discussions that lasted “every night for two weeks,” decided to head west from Massachusetts together. “We thought it was important to take a stand as a family,” explained Sally, a social worker. They also knew their joint appearance would make good media copy.

But it was the boys who first decided to get arrested. Introducing themselves to their affinity group on the eve of the June 2 civil disobedience (CD) action at the test site, both parents paused and said they were there “for support” only.

Mack admitted that one reason for his indecision was professional. Author of one of the first surveys of children's fears of nuclear war, Mack is academic director of Cambridge Hospital's Nuclear Psychology Program. “There is a danger of getting identified as too much of an advocate, one of those people who gets arrested,” Mack said. “It could make me seem subjective or isolate me from people I work with.”

Sally Mack faced a different struggle. “I realize that my fear of thinking about the nuclear threat is behind my fear of civil disobedience,” she explained. For Sally, doing CD would mean admitting once and for all that nuclear war was really possible, a psychological step that seemed more frightening than getting arrested.

FIRST-TIME OFFENDERS

Held from May 31 to June 2, the action was the first national event organized by the American Peace Test (APT) since its formation in January. Saturday's event, a demonstration held at the test site, was co-sponsored by the national Freeze Campaign (APT's founders were formerly Freeze Campaign organizers). Staffers of the fledgling group hope to spark a nationwide CD campaign, one that will attract new participants from “mainstream” peace groups. Economist Lester



Heat and bust: Nevada peace tester

Thurow, who donated \$2000 to APT last year to help it get started, has written a direct-mail appeal calling on others to help him raise \$50,000 for the group.

Almost everyone at the action seemed to have both political and personal reasons for coming. Many activists mentioned the imperative of the Soviet testing moratorium, and the conviction that CD needed to start playing as large a role in the test ban fight as it did in the civil rights movement. “We need to be more militant,” said teacher and Freeze volunteer Russell Storll, who spent two-and-a-half days on a bus *en route* to Nevada. “I'm so damn tired of feeling I'm not doing enough.” Like Storll, many in the largely middle class crowd, which ranged greatly in age and included several parents with grown children, had never been involved in CD before.

“I'm sick of yelling at the TV,” said television writer and producer Annie Druyan. “I've been studying this issue for five years, and I haven't done enough to stop what I think is evil.” Druyan was arrested for the first time, with her husband Carl Sagan, who did not get arrested, accompanying her as a support person. (The couple spent their wedding anniversary on the site.)

Another first-time offender was Harvard psychiatrist Lester Grinspoon, a

leading writer on nuclear psychology. Since getting arrested to stop the arms race hasn't acquired the legitimacy that it has for issues like apartheid, many newcomers were taking a giant step. “My colleagues will probably say I'm acting out again,” Grinspoon said, half-joking.

“People in the past have viewed CD as a radical step that only the fringe of any movement takes,” said APT national coordinator Jessie Cocks. “But more people are realizing that we can't achieve our goals without it. Lots of people came here who'd been afraid of getting arrested, or who said ‘I never thought it would have to come to this.’”

These first-timers joined such CD veterans as Daniel Ellsberg, Harvard psychiatrist Margaret Brenman-Gibson—who had encouraged her colleagues Mack and Grinspoon to join the action—and 77-year-old Lawrence Scott, one of 11 people arrested at the first test site action in 1957.

Since the demonstration site is 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas, not the least of APT's accomplishments was attracting so many to a remote location in the middle of the desert. Over 700 people from 35 states (and six countries) attended Saturday's demonstration, and 149 were arrested on Monday, setting a test site CD record.

Saturday's crowd gathered on Camp Desert Rock, the place where soldiers involved in aboveground tests were once rained on with radiation, and heard speeches by Ellsberg, Sagan, and Freeze Executive Director Jane Gruenebaum, among others. Oregon Representative Jim Weaver seemed to impress the crowd with his almost religious condemnation of nuclear tests, as well as for facing the 100° weather in a suit.

After the rally, while a third of the group stayed to camp just outside the site, the rest faced the culture shock of returning to hotels in the capital of psychic numbing. But Mae Gautier of New York City was delighted to find that the paper crane she had given her hotel clerk after her first arrest was still pinned to the hotel's bulletin board a year later.

CROSSING THE LINE

For much of Sunday, during an all-day strategy session in preparation for civil

disobedience, debate centered on what form the action should take. Most activists wanted to cross the DOE's arbitrary white line and surrender peacefully to the authorities, but others favored options that would make the demonstration more difficult for the police and/or allow people to venture further onto the site. After several hours of overtime discussion, consensus was finally reached on the first, more cooperative action.

Despite—or because of—this ordeal, a growing sense of unity and purpose was palpable on Monday morning. After a long early-morning drive, the group of about 300 activists (both those intending to do CD and their "support people") gathered along Highway 95 at 6:00 a.m. to "vigil" arriving test site workers.

For many activists, the real meaning of the location of this action had been hard to grasp. While everyone knew what goes on at the site, it nonetheless looked eerily benign. "The beauty of the desert gives you a sense of serenity," said Helga Moore, a New York activist, "but then there's the horror and the hell underneath." Less than two months earlier a faulty test in an underground tunnel had vented radiation, causing millions of dollars in damage and contaminating three workers. The recognition of hidden menace seemed to hit home as the activists—many clearly emotional—approached the white line.

Holding hands, small groups of protesters crossed the painted line and were led away, sometimes amid the cheers of friends, to waiting busses to be "processed." (Nye County Court Judge William Sullivan, popular among activists for his temperate demeanor, has stiffened his sentences in the last two years, due to—APT suspects—federal pressure and his own frustration at dealing with escalating arrests.) First-time offenders faced six days in jail or a \$150 fine.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

Since APT organizers view the event as only the beginning of a long-term campaign, they are reluctant to gauge its effectiveness. Locally, the events received good media coverage, due perhaps to growing antinuclear sentiment in Nevada, where stories of waste-dump selection have helped create what APT feels is a growing dislike of the DOE. But with the exception of *USA Today*, the *Chicago Tribune* and a small blurb hidden in the *Boston Globe*, the national media ignored the event. Still, it's difficult to ignore the number of people who came to Nevada because of someone else's example. "This has an effect on people's lives," said Ed McClain of Corvallis, Oregon, who was warmly welcomed back by workers he'd met doing commu-

nity service for his last arrest.

Cocks believes that nonviolent CD needs to be more integrated, along with lobbying and other tactics, into movement strategy. Already, the ongoing actions at the test site have raised the visibility of the test ban issue at a critical time in congressional deliberations, according to one key Capitol Hill aide. And, Cocks added, "each of these people will go back to their communities and organize with that much more passion. I have incredible faith in the experience. It can't not work."

In the end, it "worked" for John and Sally Mack, who finally decided on Sunday night to get arrested on Monday. "I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing," Mack admitted an hour before he crossed the line. "I may regret it. But there just don't seem to be any considerations more important." Besides, he added, "it just seems the height of parental irresponsibility to watch my sons get arrested and wave at them from the other side of the line." The Macks were arrested—and later faced Judge Sullivan—*en famille*.

One week later, John Mack described the process as liberating. "I feel like I've crossed an important line within myself," Mack reported. Since returning from Nevada he has written an article on CD and read a lot of Thoreau. "We have a barrier about breaking the law which seems formidable," said Mack. "But when times become desperate, it's essential that people say 'no.' I wouldn't just recommend this to my colleagues," he added. "I'd tell them it's absolutely critical to take every opportunity to do this." □

Profile: Peace Petitioner

BY ROBIN WIEN

Camilla Taylor cannot remember a time when she was not upset about the threat of nuclear war. "I have always been angry that human beings could be so stupid," she says with a 15-year-old's candor, "and I'm angry with adults who act as if [the threat of nuclear war] isn't very important."

But Taylor is not one, as she says, to "bottle something up inside" herself. Instead, following the example provided by generations of frustrated American citizens, the teenager from Cleveland, Ohio, exercised her constitutional rights to petition.

In two and a half years, Taylor has amassed 81,500 signatures from children in 40 countries on a petition calling for

a bilateral nuclear weapons freeze. (Her original goal was a modest 2000 names.) She began by circulating the petition in her all-girls school. Then she started speaking at area schools, churches, and



Camilla Taylor

various community gatherings. Word got around, and other students took up the cause. Noel Celeste, the daughter of Ohio Governor Richard Celeste, for example, circulated the petition among children of U.S. governors. As a result of several

write-ups about Taylor in local peace newsletters, teachers from more schools requested copies of the petition. Taylor also sent petitions to friends of her parents in Holland, West Germany, and Israel. The dozens of stacks of paper—including 2400 letters from Soviet-bloc countries—piled high in her bedroom tell the rest of the story.

"A lot of times, I don't even know who's sending the petitions to me," Taylor says. "They come without a note or anything on them."

But Taylor, an honor student who enjoys drawing and playing the flute, hardly sits at home waiting for the mail to arrive. She's done a good deal of the footwork for the project herself, delivering petitions (and/or carefully rehearsed speeches, sometimes in other languages) to Congress, the Soviet Embassy, the United Nations, and groups in Holland and Hungary, where she spoke at the 1985 International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) conference, as well as several international youth camps.

"All the kids [campers] signed the petition readily, and weren't afraid to put their names and addresses on the petition of an American girl," Taylor says. "I wouldn't expect that American children would be so trusting of someone from an Eastern bloc country."

Taylor, now a seasoned public speaker, has appeared on Soviet and Dutch television, and has been covered by publications in France, Canada, Japan, the Soviet Union and Italy. She's probably less well known in the United States. Of her 81,500 signatures, roughly 10,000 are domestic, a situation Taylor attributes to an indifferent American press.

Taylor wants to accumulate 100,000 signatures by the fall, and plans to deliver them to President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev at their next summit. In this way, Taylor says, "we can make a difference, even though we can't