



VETERANS FOR PEACE  
HUMBOLDT BAY  
CHAPTER 56

# THE FOGHORN

AUGUST  
2015

*“Cutting Through the Fog of War”*

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## *LANTERN FLOATING CEREMONY FOR PEACE AND REMEMBRANCE*

### *SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 2015*

*By Maggie Shaffer*

*The annual Lantern Floating Ceremony will take place at Klopp Lake in the Arcata Marsh on Saturday, August 15, from 7:30 p.m. until about 10:00. As in past years, materials and help for making lanterns will be available during the Farmers' Market on the northwest side of the Arcata Plaza on the morning of the ceremony, from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.*

*Introduced 33 years ago by Arcata's Nuclear Free Zone Committee to commemorate the tragic loss of life in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ceremony is now sponsored by the City of Arcata with the Humboldt chapters of GI Rights Hotline, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Society of Friends (Quakers), Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Action Committee, Shin-nyo-en, USServas, Veterans For Peace Chapter 56, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Many other dedicated community members also assist.*

*Lantern floating ceremonies have been traditional in Japan for many centuries. An event is held annually in Hiroshima to honor those who suffered and died in the bombing, but long before that, the lanterns carried messages of loving remembrance of friends and family who have passed away. Arcata's ceremony now includes this older meaning, as well as being an occasion for the community to rededicate itself to the cause of peace.*

*All are invited to gather at the lake for a program including music and poetry, followed at dusk by the launching of the lanterns.*

*Although chairs are provided at the lake, lawn chairs for personal use would also be appropriate. Because space is limited at the parking lot adjacent to the lake, carpooling is strongly encouraged, as is parking at one of the several I Street parking areas closer to the Marsh entrance, and walking to the lake. Those who plan to walk should bring a flashlight.*



## VA to grant benefits for Agent Orange exposure

By Patricia Kime

After years of battling the Veterans Affairs Department for health care and compensation for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure from aircraft flown after the Vietnam War, a group of up to 2,100 Air Force personnel and reservists finally will receive service-connected benefits.

VA announced Thursday it will expand eligibility for benefits to Air Force members who flew in C-123 aircraft after they were used in Vietnam to spray the toxic herbicide.

The move could provide health care and disability payments for 1,500 to 2,100 former service members, some of whom are suffering illnesses listed among the 14 presumed to be related to Agent Orange exposure.

Earlier this year, the Institute of Medicine concluded that the veterans had been exposed to dioxins in Agent Orange while flying the aircraft after they had been used in Operation Ranch Hand.

### MILITARYTIMES

Agent Orange report comes after years of VA denials

The report's conclusions were similar to those reached by another federal agency in 2012.

But VA has insisted for years that trace amounts of dioxin on internal aircraft surfaces were not "biologically available for skin absorption or inhalation because dioxin is not water- or sweat-soluble and does not give off airborne particles."

VA paid multiple consultants and the Institute of Medicine more than \$1 million to study the issue, all the while denying claims or questioning their validity.

At one point, Alan Young, a consultant hired by the Veterans Benefit Administration to study possible exposure on the aircraft, labeled the airmen seeking compensation "freeloaders" and said the only reason the reservists were seeking presumptive compensation is so they could "cash in on tax-free money for health issues that originate from their lifestyles and aging."

"There was no exposure to Agent Orange or the dioxin but that doesn't stop them from concocting exposure stories hoping some congressional member will feel sorry for them," Young wrote in an email in 2011.

But Air Force documents dating as far back as 1994 noted that tests on at least one C-123 aircraft came up positive for dioxin; in

fact, the Air Force destroyed 18 of the aircraft in 2010, smelting them out of concerns about potential liability for Agent Orange, according to service documents.

Still, it took years for VA to do an about-face. But now that has happened, according to the newly published regulation. Veterans will be eligible to file claims starting Friday.

VA Secretary Bob McDonald called the personnel a "deserving group of Air Force veterans and reservists," saying that ruling their illnesses are service-connected is "the right thing to do."

"We thank the IOM for its thorough review that provided the supporting evidence needed to ensure we can now fully compensate any former crew member who develops an Agent Orange-related disability," McDonald said in a statement released Thursday.

Under the new rule, flight, medical and ground maintenance crew members who served on C-123s are presumed to have been exposed and for any reservist who is ill, the exposure is presumed to have occurred while they were training, making them eligible for VA benefits including disability compensation, medical care, dependency benefits, indemnity compensation and burial.

Affected reservists may have served in these units from 1969 to 1986: the 906th and 907th Tactical Air groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift squadrons at Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base, Ohio; the 731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts; and the 758th Airlift Squadron, Pittsburgh.

Some active-duty personnel may be eligible as well. Those who served in a regular Air Force location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned and who had regular contact with the aircraft and now have an Agent Orange-related illness are encouraged to apply for benefits.

Retired Air Force Maj. Wes Carter, a former C-123 officer who has led the charge for health benefits and compensation for C-123 veterans, called the VA decision "a relief" that is unfortunately "tempered by the grief felt for lost comrades."

Carter remains outraged that VA ignored conclusions in the 2012 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry that swabs taken of the planes in 1994 tested 182 times higher for dioxin than the screening values established by the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine.

Those samples represented a 200-fold excess cancer risk.

Carter is also angered the Veterans Benefits Administration ignored an email from the Defense Department's Joint Service Records Research Center in 2013 that contained information concluding that at least one of the aircraft tested in 1994 came up positive for dioxin.

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# Dick Cheney Should Be Prosecuted for War Crimes: Former International Court of Justice Judge

*Renowned human rights expert Thomas Buergenthal said Cheney and a number of CIA agents 'should appear before the ICC.'*

*by: Sarah Lazare, staff writer*

Former ICC judge Thomas Buergenthal said he believes that the architects of mass torture during the George W. Bush era, such as former vice president Dick Cheney, will eventually face prosecution. (Photo: Gage Skidmore/flickr/cc)

A former judge for the International Court of Justice and renowned expert on human rights law told a reporter this week that former vice president Dick Cheney should be prosecuted for war crimes and torture.

Eighty-one-year-old Thomas Buergenthal told Newsweek journalist Robert Chalmers that “some of us have long thought that Cheney, and a number of CIA agents who did what they did in those so-called black holes [overseas torture centers] should appear before the ICC [International Criminal Court].”

“We [in the USA] could have tried them ourselves,” added Buergenthal. “I voted for Obama but I think he made a great mistake when he decided not to instigate legal proceedings against some of these people.”

The former judge added that, despite the inaction so far, he believes eventual charges are inevitable: “I think—yes—that it will happen.”

Buergenthal was born in the former Czechoslovakia and currently lives in Maryland where he works as a professor of law at George Washington University. He served for a decade as a judge for the International Court of Justice—the main judicial arm of

the United Nations—before retiring in 2010. Chalmers described him as the “most distinguished living specialist in international human rights law.”

The occasion for the interview was the release of Buergenthal’s new memoir, *A Lucky Child*, about surviving the Holocaust. The conversation covered far more territory than the war crimes of the former U.S. vice president, touching on the plight of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, as well as anti-black racism in U.S. police departments.

Buergenthal also described former President George W. Bush as “an ignorant person who wanted to show his mother he could do things his father couldn’t.”

*Agent Orange.....continued from page 2*

“Every medical and scientific fact that convinced the Institute of Medicine of our Agent Orange exposures in 2014 had been presented to the VA years earlier but was ignored. This is wrong,” Carter wrote in an email.

“We ask Secretary McDonald and [Under Secretary Allison] Hickey for their careful review of VA actions to insure that toxic exposure veterans never again face such an unhappy struggle,” Carter said.

Claims will not be awarded retroactively. Individuals with questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123 aircraft can call VA’s special C-123 Hotline at 800-749-8387 or e-mail [VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov](mailto:VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov), VA said.

Next VFP56 meeting will be held on Thursday, August 6th at 7:00 PM. Meeting will be held at 24 Unitarian Fellowship Way, Bayside, Jacoby Creek Road. Veterans and non-veterans are more than welcome to come and help us dialogue about what we together can do to bring about peace in this complex world.



# Vets For Peace Restore First Peace Ship

by Arnold Oliver

“What Golden Rule said was, ‘We are not telling you WHAT to think, but we are saying, in the most dramatic way we can, that there is a NEED to think.’” Albert S. Bigelow, *The Voyage of the Golden Rule*, 1959.

Most readers of *Peace In Our Times* are probably familiar with Veterans For Peace (VFP) and their exploits. But it is less likely that they are aware that VFP now has a navy. Thanks to an improbable chain of circumstances, the sunken wreck of the modern era’s first peace ship was donated to the organization, and then lovingly and laboriously rebuilt over the past five years.

In a dramatic ceremony, On June 20th the Golden Rule was rechristened and slid down the ways of the Zerlang and Zerlang boatyard into the chilly waters of Humboldt Bay in Northern California. The event inaugurated a ten year voyage of peace-making and peace education around the waters of North America, and perhaps beyond.

The story behind the event is worth telling.

First, some background. During the height of the Cold War during the late 1940’s and 1950’s, the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union were all conducting above ground tests of very large nuclear weapons which were producing readily detectable clouds of radioactive fallout that circled the entire planet. Radiation contamination began to turn up in cows’ and mothers’ milk. Despite U.S. government assurances that there was nothing whatsoever to worry about, public concern grew, and many began to question the wisdom of the nuclear arms race.

In response, a group of anti-nuclear activists purchased a 30 foot ketch which they named the Golden Rule and set sail toward the Marshall Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean. Their goal was to openly sail into the target area of the U.S. hydrogen bomb blasts, and to sacrifice the boat and their own lives if necessary to stop the tests. They informed the U.S. Government of their plans, and publicized the impending voyage widely.

On February 10th, 1958 the Golden Rule set sail from San Pedro, California toward the Marshall’s, but she never made it to the test site. She was twice boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard near Hawaii, and the crew were arrested, tried, and jailed in Honolulu.

But the message began to spread. While docked in Hawaii, the Golden Rule crew met and became friendly with the Reynolds family, who were circumnavigating on board their Phoenix of Hiroshima. Skipper Earl Reynolds, a scientist who had studied atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and his wife Barbara witnessed the jailing of the Golden Rule crew and became inspired by their example. Earl and Barbara concluded that they “had no choice” other than to continue the mission and sail the Phoenix toward the test zone. They made it to the target area, but were detained as well. Their lives would never be the same, and they became lifelong activists for peace.

But far from being defeated, the examples set by the Phoenix and the Golden Rule helped to ignite a storm of world-wide public outrage against nuclear weapons that resulted in the cessation of United States atmospheric tests in 1958, and led to the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. The pact banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater, and outer space. No nuclear tests took place in the Marshall Islands after 1958.

These non-violent direct action voyages fired the imagination of a generation, and many peace and environmental protest craft followed, from New Zealand’s Vega, to the Australian Pacific Peacemaker, to the Sea Shepherds and Free Gaza flotillas.

The connection to Greenpeace is direct. In 1971, Golden Rule supporter Marie Bohlen attended a meeting in Vancouver, Canada of people concerned about nuclear weapons testing. She suggested a voyage toward the U.S. nuclear test site in the Aleutian Islands à la the Golden Rule. Soon, the rusty trawler Phyllis Cormack was renamed the Greenpeace and headed north toward the Alaskan Archipelago. The rest, as they say, is history.

Just as importantly, the use of nonviolent direct action as a fundamental guiding principle of the crews of the Phoenix and Golden Rule would also influence future generations of activists, as would their abiding respect for the humanity and dignity of those with whom they disagreed. The seas of the world have never been quite the same since.

## The Original Crew

The Golden Rule’s first crew richly deserves honoring. They stood firm for peace and nonviolence before it became fashionable. Two of them, Albert Bigelow and James Peck, were later among the original 13 Freedom Riders in 1961 in the American South.

The other crew members were equally noteworthy. One led United Nations development programs, and another became a founder of Peace Brigades International. Several were conscientious objectors during World War II.

Skipper Albert Bigelow, a former U.S. naval lieutenant commander, had a moment of epiphany in 1945 upon learning of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima. “It was then that I realized for

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the first time that morally, war is impossible,” he wrote. Bigelow came to believe that the nuclear arms build-up by all sides was a “race to extinction” that had to be stopped.

Bigelow was also deeply affected by his family’s experience in hosting two “Hiroshima Maidens,” young women who had been exposed to atomic blast and radiation effects in 1945, and had been invited to the U.S. for corrective surgery. Eventually he joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and adopted their principles of nonviolence.

While contemplating the upcoming voyage toward the test zone in 1958 Bigelow wrote, “How do you reach men when all the horror is in the fact that they feel no horror? It requires, we believe, the kind of effort and sacrifice that we now undertake.”

And with that, they sailed away.

The Boat is Lost Then Found

After the voyage, the Golden Rule was sold in Hawaii late in 1958. Her whereabouts after that are somewhat unclear until she turned up in Eureka, California, in such a state of neglect that she finally sank in a storm in 2010. She was raised from the depths by shipyard owner Leroy Zerlang.

As he was preparing to dispose of the wreck, Zerlang did some research on the title, and was startled to realize that the Golden Rule had played an important role in the history of the Cold War. He put out some feelers over the internet to a number of museums and historic boat groups.

Shortly after that, longtime Veterans For Peace activists (and non-sailors) Fredy and Sherry Champagne dropped by the Zerlang boatyard. They had heard something vague about a peace boat and walked over to the wreck. Fredy swears that, when he put his hand on her keel, the Golden Rule spoke to him, and asked for another life. They approached Leroy, whom they had never met. Fredy and Sherry asked whether Leroy would provide yard space and facilities if Veterans For Peace handled the restoration. They shook hands on the spot, and thus began the revival of the Golden Rule.

Soon, other Northern California Veterans For Peace members learned the damaged ketch was nearby and might be salvageable. Chuck DeWitt began the restoration work in 2010, and was soon joined by others. From the start, the intent was to restore the boat to its former peacemaking glory, making use of the boat and its history to once more educate and inspire.

In 2012, the Golden Rule became an official National Project of Veterans For Peace.

The Restorers

The Golden Rule restoration team is an eclectic mix of veterans, sailors, shipwrights, historic boat lovers, and peace activists. Although the project receives support from a diverse collection of

people and groups, Veterans For Peace is the sponsoring organization. We share common values and goals, and most Golden Rule Committee members belong to Veterans For Peace. But the project welcomes new perspectives, and is open to anyone interested in working to operate and maintain the boat and promote its mission.

Chuck DeWitt and the Zerlang’s, Leroy and wife Dalene, were the driving force behind the lengthy reconstruction effort. The Zerlang’s donated space in the boatyard, a work shop, tools and expert advice. Through their local contacts, they lined up support from a number of lumber yards, and marine supply and hardware stores. Chuck DeWitt worked on the boat almost daily for five years, planning and directing the re-build, and providing the necessary relentless determination. Many other volunteers, too numerous to mention individually, joined the project.

The Launch

On June 20th, 2015 the re-born Golden Rule was re-christened, launched and floated in Humboldt Bay. The mood was festive, to put it mildly (See photos). Atomic bomb survivor and Hiroshima Maiden Shigeko Sasamori broke a bottle of champagne over the bow and spoke movingly. Long time peace activists David McReynolds and Bradford Lyttle, who knew the Golden Rule voyagers, were there. Original crewman Orion Sherwood, who is still going strong, attended, as did a number of family members of the 1958 crew. Spokespeople from Greenpeace, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Veterans For Peace paid their respects.

What Comes Next

Now that the re-build is complete, the Golden Rule will soon ride the waves again as a living museum and floating classroom. As she did 58 years ago, boat and crew will educate future generations on the risks of nuclear technology, the importance of the ocean environment, and above all, the power of peace-making.

Following sea trials in early July, the Golden Rule will sail south 700 miles to San Diego (California is a big state!) for the Veterans For Peace convention, August 5th to 9th.

Visitors are most welcome.

-END-

**[Arnold “Skip” Oliver is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, an avid sailor, and member of Veterans For Peace and the Golden Rule Committee. He can be reached at [soliver@heidelberg.edu](mailto:soliver@heidelberg.edu) and you can visit [VFPGoldenRuleProject.org](http://VFPGoldenRuleProject.org) for more information.]**

**On page 6 of this publication you can see the results of the restoration project. The Golden Rule sails proudly in Humboldt Bay, getting her sea legs for the voyage which will take her to San Diego and ultimately around the world on its peace mission.**

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*Photo courtesy of Skip Oliver*

# War Veterans Discard Medals in Rejection of Militarism and War

*On Friday 10 July 2015, three members of Veterans For Peace UK met in Trafalgar Square, London and walked down Whitehall towards the residence of the Prime Minister.*

*Once at Downing Street the veterans lined up, faced the police barricades and made the following statements.*

*“We are members of Veterans For Peace UK, an ex-services organisation of men and women who have served this country in every conflict since the second world war. We exist in the hope of convincing you that war is not the solution to the problems of the 21st century. We have come here today to hand back things, given to us as soldiers, that we no longer require or want.” Said Ben Griffin.*

*“This is my Oath of Allegiance, it is something I had to recite in order to get the job as a soldier. At 15 years old I had little understanding of its true meaning. Now I fully understand the words, they have no meaning at all.” Said John Boulton who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.*

*“This is my Oath of Allegiance, this was a contract between the Monarchy, the British Government and a fifteen year old child. I am no longer loyal to the Government or the Monarchy.” Said Kieran Devlin who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.*

*“This is my Oath of Allegiance, I made this oath when I was 19 years old. It required me to obey orders without question. I am no longer bound by this contract.” Said Ben Griffin who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.IMG\_7913*

*“This is my Army hat, it defined me as a soldier and a cog in the military machine. I reject militarism” Said John Boulton who then discarded his beret.*

*“This is my Army hat, this was given to me as a sixteen year old boy. I reject militarism, I reject war. And it means nothing to me.” Said Kieran Devlin who then discarded his beret.*

*“I used to wear this hat as a soldier, it used to have great significance to me. I no longer want to keep hold of this symbol of militarism”. Said Ben Griffin who then discarded his beret.*

*“These are the medals given to me for the sick dichotomy of keeping the peace and waging war. They are trinkets, pseudo payments. But really all they represent is the self interest of those in there, who hold power.” Said John Boulton who then discarded his medals.*

*“These are my medals, these were given to me were given to me as a reward for invading other peoples countries and murdering their civilians. I'm now handing them back” Said Kieran Devlin who then discarded his medals.*

*“I was given these medals for service on operations with the British Army. This particular medal here, was given to me for my part in the occupation of Iraq. Whilst I was over there, I attacked civilians in their homes and took away their men, off to be tortured in prison. I no longer want these despicable things.” Said Ben Griffin who then discarded his medals.*

*The three veterans then walked away from Downing Street leaving the oaths, berets and medals lying scattered on the floor.*

*John Boulton served in the Armoured Corps. He deployed on operations to Cyprus and Afghanistan. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.*

*Kieran Devlin served in the Royal Engineers. He deployed on operations to the Gulf War and N Ireland. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.*

*Ben Griffin served in the Parachute Regiment and the SAS. He deployed on operations to N Ireland, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.*





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# LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to [turtldncer@aol.com](mailto:turtldncer@aol.com), in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

**Veterans For Peace**  
**30th Annual Convention**  
**August 5-9, 2015      San Diego, CA**  
**Town and Country Resort & Convention Center**  
**Keynote Speaker: Seymour Hersh**

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