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Chapter I: Summer-Fall 1982

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Chapter I covers the 1982 Livermore Weapons Lab action and the formation of Livermore Action Group. **This chapter is not — we repeat, *not* — the beginning of the book**. The story starts with a Prologue. Don't skip the Prologue!

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Photo: April 2011 protest at CPUC hearing on Diablo Canyon. By Luke Hauser.

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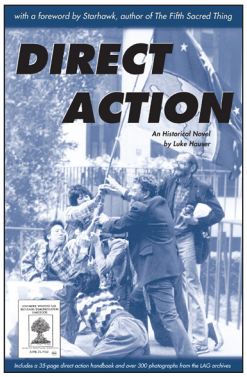

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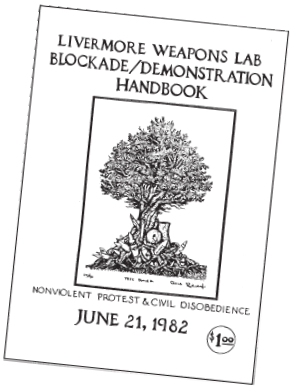
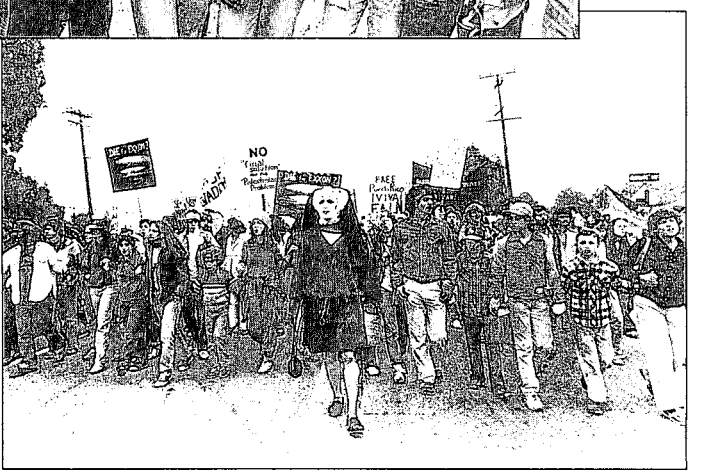


Blockade Livermore Lab!

June 21, 1982

Over 1300 protesters were arrested in a nonviolent blockade of Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab on Summer Solstice.

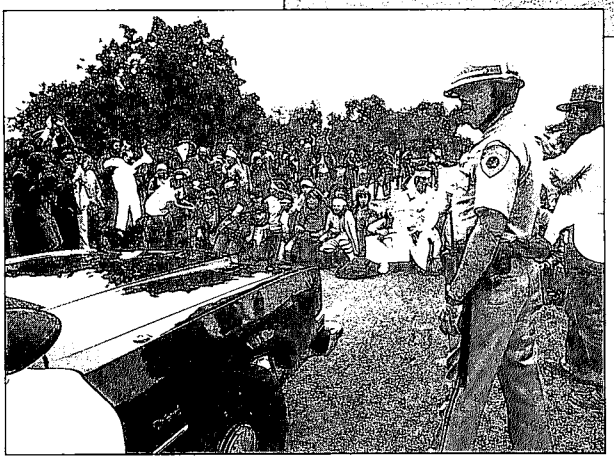


Top: Janet Delaney
Center: Keith Holmes
Bottom: Bette Lee

Over 100 affinity groups (AGs) blockaded all four entrances to the Lab.

Top: Keith Holmes
Center: Ted Sahl
Lower: Keith Holmes

Youth AGs were a dramatic part of the action. Blockaders under 18 were arrested, booked, and released into their parents' custody.



BLOCKADE LIVERMORE LAB!

JUNE 21, 1982

All photos: Bette Lee

Any connections between the people pictured in the photographs and the characters in this book are purely coincidental. The characters are fictional. No photo should be taken as implying that an individual is in any way connected to a fictional character.

A few of the 1300 arrests at Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab, June 21, 1982. Another 80 people were arrested in a follow-up action the next day.

Top: Keith Holmes
Center: Ted Sahl
Bottom: Ted Sahl

One / 1982

In politics, obedience and support are the same.

— Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem

Tuesday, May 25, 1982

"STOP THE BOMB Where It Starts — Blockade Livermore Lab!" The poster stood out from a clutter of paper and tape on the Berkeley phonepole. Demonstrations happened all the time in the Bay Area, but in 1982, anti-nuclear protests were special. For the first time in my adult life, large numbers of people were doing civil disobedience.

I'd heard about CD since I was young — Henry David Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Berrigans. Inspiring, sure. But something that other people did. Heroes and martyrs.

In the late 1970s, in the wake of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, activists on both coasts turned to civil disobedience in their protests against nuclear power. But the actions weren't in the Bay Area, and I didn't hear much about them. It wasn't until February 1982 that the spirit reached me. The newly-formed Livermore Action Group sponsored its first action at Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab, forty miles east of San Francisco. One hundred seventy people were arrested, and the local papers gave it front-page coverage.

One hundred seventy people? That changed the equation. The part that worried me most was being alone in jail. If there were one hundred seventy others with me, well, that felt different.

I'd been out of the political loop for a few years after being involved in campus-type organizing at Indiana State in the mid-1970s, mainly cultural work like coffeehouses or literary journals. I got my degree in political science, but that didn't seem to mean much in the real world.

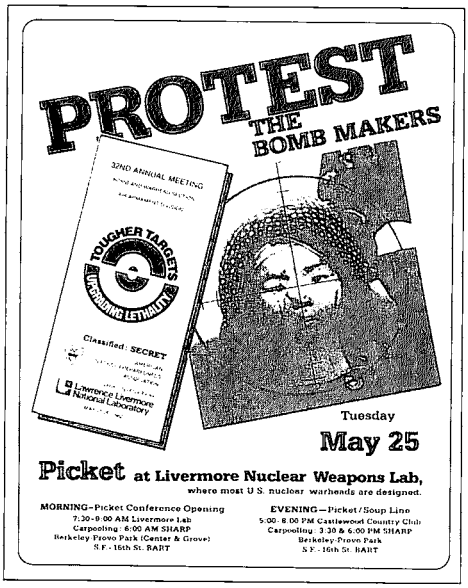
Music seemed more promising. Since college I'd been writing blues and folk songs satirizing Republicans, landlords, generals, and other obvious

targets. In 1980, I got serious about it. I dropped out of grad school in Berkeley and took a maintenance job in a Southside apartment building. Two or three nights a week I performed at open mikes or played with a couple of friends at a pizza joint down by the Bay. I liked seeing people laugh and nod as I sang, but something was still missing.

Soon after the February 1982 Livermore blockade, I saw a flyer for a LAG meeting in Berkeley. Why not go by and sing them a couple of anti-nuke songs? When I arrived, there were fifty people crowded into the community room of the Savo Island co-op, overflowing couches, leaning through doorways, filling the floor. Most were White, and they ranged in age from students to seniors.

I asked for five minutes on the agenda, and someone said, "Why don't you sing now while we're waiting to start." I didn't even have time to get nervous. I wasn't sure if it was nuclear power or weapons they were protesting, so I covered both.

The cheers rang in my head for days afterward. Singing to a roomful of protesters, I felt involved. If my singing inspired them, and they went and shut down a nuclear plant, I'd had an effect. Sure, it was indirect. But you have to start somewhere. The memory stuck with me all Spring, and when I saw a poster for a protest co-sponsored by LAG in May, I decided to take the afternoon off my maintenance job and go.



LAG joined the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) for this non-CD protest of a Livermore Lab weapons conference.

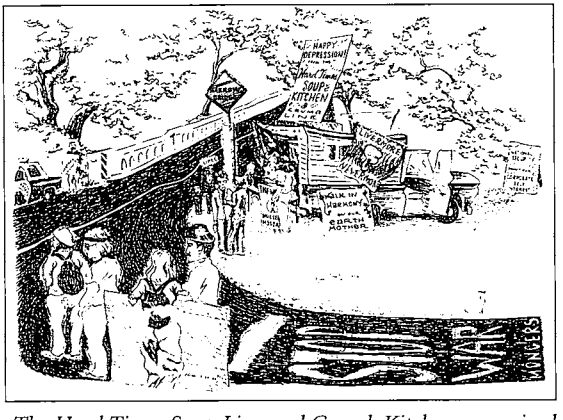
Livermore Lab was hosting a weapons-research conference entitled, unbelievably, "Tougher Targets: Upgrading Lethality," a title which eloquently captured the mission of the federally-funded Lab — the creation of ever more deadly weapons for the U.S. government.

LAG joined with several Central America solidarity groups in calling a protest of the weapons conference, which wasn't at the Lab itself but at a nearby country club. I'd been hoping to witness my first arrests, but apparently no one in the crowd of a hundred was planning to blockade.

We lined the roadside, chanting and singing for

ourselves and a couple of dozen police. Off to one side, a group called Overthrow Cluster set up the "Hard Times Soup Line and Crumb Kitchen" to dramatize the sudden increase in homelessness as the Reagan administration slashed social spending to fund the arms race.

Seven o'clock came and went, and I was wondering whether the conferees had snuck out a secret exit. Suddenly two police cars came cruising down the road with their lights flashing, followed closely by several chartered buses. From both sides of the road, people surged forward, chanting and yelling and finger-pointing. The police fell back a step before bracing and bringing their clubs to attention. Through the narrow corridor crept three shiny tour-buses. As they came parallel with our lines, our shouting coalesced into a chant: "U.S. bombmakers, you can't hide! We charge you with genocide!"



The Hard Times Soup Line and Crumb Kitchen, organized by Overthrow Cluster for the May 25 protest.

From behind their sealed windows the delegates gawked and nervously laughed. A few even waved or flashed the peace sign as the buses inched past.

"U.S. bombmakers, you can't hide!" For a minute, I felt a jubilant sense of release. Then they were gone. My eyes turned back toward the direction from which they'd come. There had to be someone else to yell at. But the cops were packing up. Clearly they thought the action was over. Now what?

"The delegates are going to Howard Johnsons!" The rumor swept the crowd. People scrambled for the cars. No one seemed to mind who rode with whom, and quickly an entire caravan was speeding down the highway with the state police hot on our trail.

We found Howard Johnsons, and were out of our cars before the last bus emptied. Several dozen of us descended like locusts on the delegates. Most of them scurried for the cover of the cocktail lounge, but a few of the thicker-skinned ones stopped to explain themselves.

"What about the Russians?" a condescending delegate in a gray jacket argued. "We're supposed to stop our research while they move ahead?"

"We could stop for a while," a protester countered, "and see if the Soviets do the same. Someone has to take the first step for peace."

I was still pumped up from the earlier scene, and cut loose in a loud voice.

"Why bother with him? He's a sellout. He gets paid big bucks to talk the government line."

The man inspected me through a veneer of imperturbability. Other protesters elbowed me away. "Come on, let the man talk. Let's hear what he has to say."

I waved my hand. "It's a waste of time. He's paid not to think."

A picket line formed in front of the lounge. Although a row of police barred the doorway, we could see the delegates through the windows. I joined the ranks, and we chanted and sang as the cool Spring evening set in. Maybe we couldn't get directly at the bombmakers, but at least they couldn't ignore our presence.

Gradually the protest wound down, and I caught a ride in a van heading back to Berkeley. As we got settled in the back, a tall woman whose brown hair showed streaks of gray looked over at me. "I heard you hassling that delegate," she said pointedly. "You weren't facilitating communication."

Other eyes were on me. "No, I guess not," I admitted. "I was just sick of him acting so calm and casual about designing weapons."

"But do you think it's nonviolent to yell at him?"

Another woman spoke up. "Come on, Melissa, anger isn't violence. Anger shows respect. It can open communication."

"There was no communication going on out there," Melissa said. "Shouting at someone just creates an us-them dynamic."

"But we *are* against them," I said. "I'm totally against what that guy does."

She looked at me as if she'd had to explain herself one too many times. "That can be expressed in an open and caring way. If we truly want peace, we have to show it in our own lives, in the way we treat our adversaries."

"Oh, come on," an older guy in the front seat said. "We have to have some release or we'll all get ulcers."

"Then we have to find a better way," Melissa responded. "That's why I get arrested. Yelling and chanting doesn't accomplish anything. But civil disobedience shakes their whole system. If they prosecute us, we clog their jails and courts. If they drop the charges, we go back and do it again. Getting arrested is the only time I've ever felt like I was being heard by the government."

That got my attention. "You've been arrested?" I said. "What's it like?" No one else in the van had done civil disobedience, and we peppered Melissa with questions. She had been busted in LAG's February blockade at the Lab. She'd gotten a seven-day sentence, which she served with dozens of other protesters. She had a misdemeanor on her record, which wouldn't keep her from getting a job anywhere. The police had been rough, the jail guards were liars, but the other inmates at the county jail had mostly been supportive.

She told us about the next action, a blockade on the Summer Solstice. By the time we got back to Berkeley, I was ready to go. Maybe not to get arrested right off, but at least to be part of the protest.

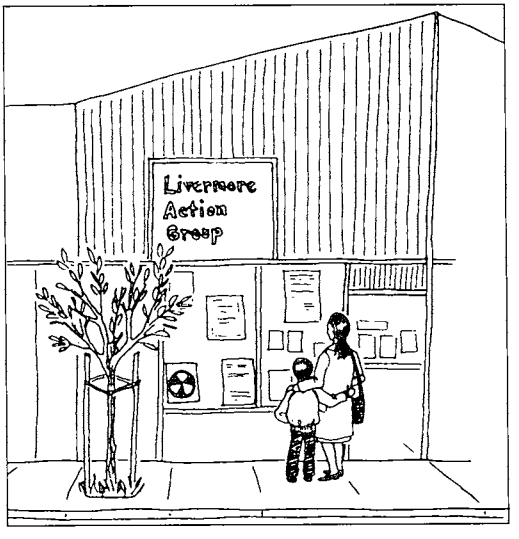
"You should call the LAG office and sign up for a nonviolence prep," Melissa told me. "Everyone involved has to have one. It gets you ready for the police and jail."

What a concept. When I thought about civil disobedience before, the idea of a prep session hadn't crossed my mind. Had I thought people just showed up at the Lab and sat in the road? And the possibility of being a supporter hadn't occurred to me before today. No wonder I was hesitant! But here they were, offering a do-it-yourself CD workshop. How could I turn that down?

IT WAS ABOUT a month till the June 21st blockade at Livermore. I thought I'd probably get arrested, but I didn't tell anyone right away, in case I changed my mind. It worried me in some ways. I'd never had a run-in with the law, not even a speeding ticket. They didn't have my fingerprints or anything. So why should I turn myself in? Wouldn't it be more effective to stay anonymous, underground?

But I had a nagging feeling that I wouldn't take myself seriously if I didn't do it. I knew that the world had to change, and that I had to do something about it. But what? Music? I wanted to *do* something, not just sing about it.

After a week of thinking it over, I decided to visit the LAG office. It amazed me that LAG had an office. Unions have offices, and political parties. But a group whose major purpose was breaking the law?



The LAG office in 1982.

There it was, though, a small storefront on Shattuck Avenue, right at the Oakland/Berkeley border. The front windows were pasted over with posters for the upcoming blockade, and for the big June 12th anti-nuclear march sponsored by the Freeze and other mainstream peace groups. I pushed on the front door, which stuck. I gave it a harder shove and made it into the office.

The space was about forty feet long and fifteen feet wide, with an exceptionally high ceiling. Desks and file cabinets lined the walls. Worktables filled most of the rest of the area. The space was shared with Berkeley Citizens

Action, "BCA," a left-leaning electoral coalition. In their half of the office, several older Black women worked on a mailing while a high-powered young White guy talked on the phone.

I made my way to the LAG area in the back, where half a dozen young White folks were working amidst posters, mailings, tangled phone lines, and a hundred important scraps of paper.

"Who's in charge?" I asked. A couple of people laughed.

"Hi, I'm Caroline," said a tall, round-shouldered woman. "I'm *not* in charge. What can we help you with?" She had an open, welcoming demeanor, and I felt like I'd come to the right place.

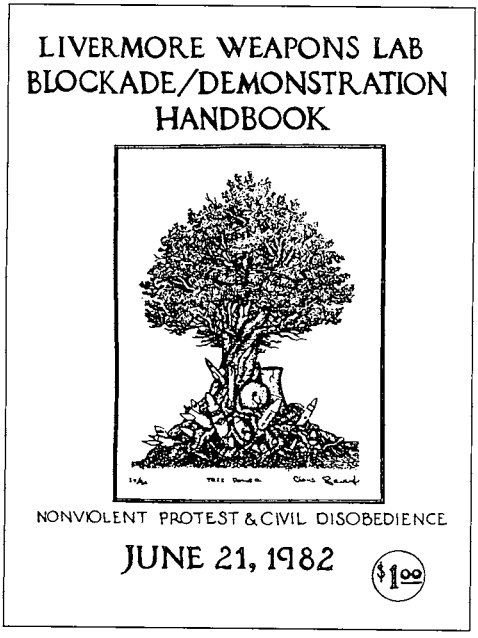
"I want to sign up for a training for the June blockade," I said.

"You mean a nonviolence prep?" She turned to another woman behind her. "Claudia, where's the sign-up sheet for preps?" Claudia rooted around on her desk and produced a handwritten list of twenty names. "Can you make it June 19th?" Caroline asked.

A flicker of disappointment passed over me. I was counting on the prep to make up my mind about getting arrested or not. "That's only two days before the blockade. Isn't there one sooner?"

"No, they're all full. That's the next open one in Berkeley."

"Okay, I'll be there."



The Livermore handbook was based on the Diablo and Seabrook handbooks that came before it.

"It's from ten till six," she said. "Make sure you're there on time and can stay for the whole prep. It's really important." As I finished signing the list, she gave me a newsprint booklet. "You should read this, too. It covers the action and consensus and stuff. It's one dollar."

I paid the dollar and thanked her. She turned back to the mailing she was working on. As I headed out, I looked around at the posters tacked over every inch of LAG's wall-space — from Germany, Japan, Italy, New York, Wyoming, everywhere the same message: No Nukes, Not Here, Not Anywhere.

When I got back to my apartment, I watered the

plants, made some popcorn, and opened the handbook. I leaned forward on the table and flipped through the pages, catching glimpses of the titles: Consensus, Nonviolence, Feminism, Nonhierarchy, Jail Solidarity.

I'd been wanting this for a long time. I came into political awareness at the tail end of the Vietnam era. The protests were over, but the world was still a mess. What should I do? Campaign for the Democrats? I tried it during college, and I felt like a cog in a rusty machine. Work on a referendum? If it could really change anything, it would never be allowed to pass. That much I understood. Electoral politics was hopelessly corrupt, chained to the pocketbooks of the rich.

Through my music and writing, through studying history and economics, I groped for a handle: How to shape my talents and interests into a tool to change the world. The quest had its own rewards, like my recent awakening to Medieval art. But sometimes I wondered how much I clung to "searching for a niche" to avoid having to *do* anything.

Since Reagan's election in 1980, I had been experiencing flashes of anxiety. One day it was the spectre of nuclear war or toxic disaster. Other times it was more personal, a devastating car accident or a brutal mugging. Always the images were haunted with a sense of the entire world falling apart.

I knew I had to do something. But what? I wasn't a pacifist, but neither was I going to pick up a gun and head for the hills. Acting alone or with a few friends, the only options I saw were to be an artist exposing the injustices of society, or a social worker struggling to alleviate the suffering.

Leafing through the handbook, I caught a fresh vision. A vision of a better future — and of a new way of living and working right now.

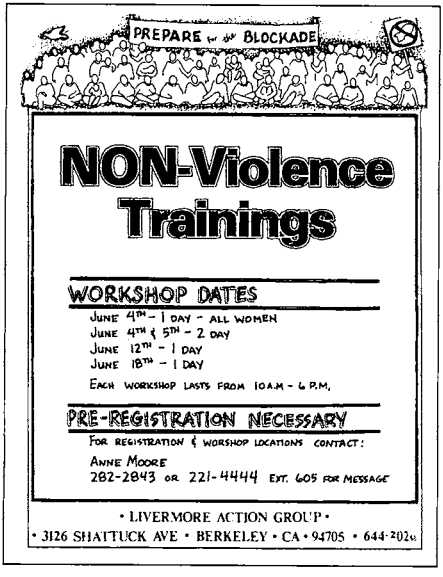
I read about the Seabrook and Diablo Canyon actions, where thousands of people raised their voices against nuclear madness. I read again about the February blockade at Livermore. 170 arrests. My wake-up call. And I read about the plans for the June blockade. What would that be like? Two hundred people? Five hundred? Maybe these LAG folks were on to something. Maybe it wasn't hopeless after all.

Saturday, June 19, 1982

THE DAY-LONG nonviolence prep, held at the North Berkeley Quaker meeting hall, brought it all together for me. There were twenty of us, aged seventeen to fifty-five. Two were Asian American, and one woman identified herself as

Latino. The rest seemed White. Most looked middle-class, which somehow didn't surprise me.

As far as our daily lives, we were pretty diverse: a couple of teachers, a couple of students, a mother and daughter, gays, straights, and bisexuals, a wealthy couple from Marin County, the secretary of a plumbers' union, several underemployed marginals, and even one man who confessed to voting for Reagan. One thing united us — no one had ever been arrested at a protest.



Nonviolent direct action preps were held all over Northern California before 1980s actions such as Livermore and Diablo Canyon.

The preppers were two veteran activists. Maria was about my age, twenty-eight. She had helped start LAG, and been arrested at the Lab in a small action on Mothers' Day after chaining her wheelchair to the front gate. Nathaniel was around fifty, a staff member at American Friends Service Committee with an arrest record dating back to the Civil Rights and Vietnam eras.

The prep included some theory and discussion of nonviolence, but mainly we role-played protests — dealing with the cops, talking with Lab workers, making consensus decisions under pressure, getting arrested, and jail solidarity actions. We formed an affinity group, calling ourselves Spectrum. I was so inspired that I even volunteered to be one of our AG spokes at the final spokescouncil the next day.

For all we covered, I still had a hundred unanswered questions at the end of the prep — not the least of which was, am I going to get arrested? Several times during the day, I was sure I'd blockade. But I could see the wisdom of going to my first action as a supporter. Check out the real thing before jumping in headlong. It wasn't like nukes were going to disappear overnight. And neither was I. With the prep, the handbook, and all the great people I was meeting, something more was awakening. Some long-buried desire not simply to take action, but to be part of a movement dedicated to changing the world. I was especially struck by the emphasis on consensus and feminist process, which seemed like a blueprint for building a new, cooperative society. We weren't just protesting — we were forging an alternative.

Knowing that this movement existed — or was coming into existence — how could I be anywhere else? Sure, no one had asked me to sign anything or pay any dues. I could walk away at any time. But we had a chance to make a difference. Wasn't that the whole point of my studies and writing and music? I'd found my calling.

Sunday, June 20, 1982

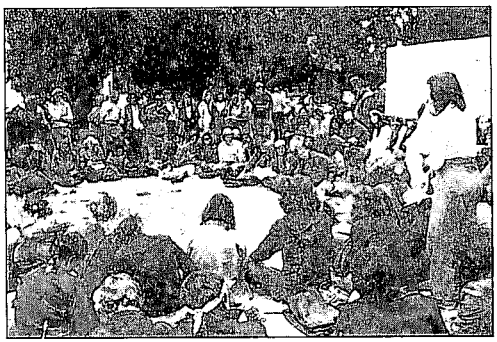
AROUND TWO HUNDRED people gathered for the spokescouncil in Berkeley's Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. It was lunch break, and I was sitting around in the warm grass with people from other affinity groups in our new cluster, "Change of Heart." The name came from a documentary film being made about Noah's Ark, one of the AGs in the cluster.

Karina was in Noah's Ark. She was in her early twenties, with bright eyes and thick brown hair that fell over her shoulders. Her laughter summoned a growing circle as she recounted episodes from the filming. "Can you imagine fifteen people trying to name an affinity group with video cameras capturing every word?"

"That's great," I said. "Sounds like a pressure test for consensus process."

"It was terrible," Karina said. "Everyone knew that we needed the cameras to be off for a while, but no one wanted to be the one to say that on camera!"

We got to talking about the number of people blockading the next day. Earlier in the afternoon the spokescouncil had taken an informal poll of AGs. Everyone hoped the number would significantly exceed the one hundred seventy arrested February 1st. But no one was prepared for the estimated total — nine hundred fifty!



Final pre-blockade spokescouncil in Berkeley, where spokes (reps) from dozens of clusters and over a hundred affinity groups worked out action and jail solidarity agreements. Spokescouncils met periodically for several months before major actions.

As the crowd erupted in applause, I inclined toward getting arrested. I could help push the total past a thousand. That would be pretty amazing, a thousand people. I smiled to myself — here I was, keeping a scorecard on the protest. Probably not the best motivation for my decision. But still....

The only bad moment came at our cluster meeting. I was so inspired by

June 19 pre-blockade rally, Mosswood Park, Oakland.

the gathering that I led a song and offered to facilitate the meeting. I called on other people to speak, but interjected my own opinions after most speakers. Finally a tall woman with long red-blonde hair interrupted me from across the circle.

"I don't think the facilitator should talk so much," she said plainly. "If you want to argue, you should let someone else facilitate."

I flushed. She was right. I awkwardly proposed that someone else facilitate, and didn't speak much for the rest of the meeting. I could see I had a lot to learn.

The main topic at the meeting was whether to non-cooperate during the arrests. Most people planned to get up and walk, but a few were talking about going limp when the cops came for them.

"Do you think they'll carry non-cooperators, or use choke holds?" someone asked.

Karina tossed her head back. "Choke holds? If we're lucky. They'll probably use wrist locks and other pain holds. They're not going to carry a thousand people."

I shivered. Even if I did get arrested, I didn't see the point in non-cooperating. Why bring on pain when they're going to make you move in the end?

A man next to me raised his hand tentatively. "Maybe we should consense that we won't non-cooperate?"

Hank, one of the other spokes from my AG, jutted his chin out. "No way," he said. Hank was about my age, a tall, muscular guy with a dark stubble. He worked as a electrician in a Berkeley auto shop, and looked like he'd had a few run-ins with the police in his day. "I'm not cooperating with a cop busting me for blockading a death lab."

"Amen," Karina said. "If they're going to arrest us, at least make them work for it."

The meeting broke up. For the first time all day I felt alone, lost in the

milling crowd. I wandered over to where a couple of AGs had prepared dinner for us. As I waited in line, I saw the blonde-haired woman who'd challenged me at the cluster meeting. She moved with casual grace as she surveyed the salads and breads, taking only a couple of small servings from the table. "You're not getting much food for your money," I kidded her, trying to show I didn't hold a grudge.

"No," she said, turning toward me. Her blue-green eyes were friendly, but I couldn't read any further. "I'm not supposed to eat wheat or dairy." She got a bowl of broccoli soup and some rice, then walked toward the last sunlit spot in the park.

Ordinarily, I would have taken it as a hint if someone walked away from me. But I couldn't drop it quite so easily this time. I'd been single for a year, wishing and waiting for the right person to come along. Maybe she just had. The graceful stride, the calm smile, even the gentle yet direct way she'd criticized me at the meeting — I better not let her slip away.

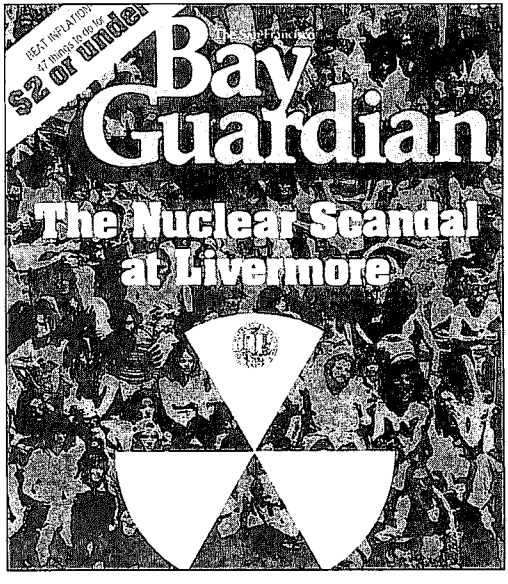
I went over and sat down on the ground next to her. "My name is Jeff," I said, reaching out to shake her hand.

She took my hand, which looked red next to the pale yellow of her skin. "I'm Holly." She seemed amused at our handshake. She was about my age, and had a calm, collected air about her. "I wasn't trying to give you a hard time at the meeting," she said. "I just thought you shouldn't try to facilitate and debate at the same time."

"That's okay," I said. "I needed someone to slow me down." There was a moment of silence. I bit off a chunk of bread and searched for something to say. "Is this your first arrest?"

She looked up from her soup with a thoughtful expression. "Yeah. I went to the Mothers' Day action at Livermore last month, but as a supporter. This time I'm blockading. How about you?"

"I'm not sure," I said quietly. I creased my brow. If she had been a supporter



Bay Area alternative media, especially the Bay Guardian, helped alert the public to Reagan's abrupt escalation of nuclear weapons programs.

the first time, why couldn't I? I changed the subject, asking her what drew her to LAG.

She looked at me thoughtfully. "Partly I was seeking community," she said. "I wanted to be in an affinity group. But it's political, too. I wanted to make a statement. I don't know if we can shut the Lab, even for a day. But I want people around the world to realize that not everyone in America is passively accepting the arms race."

I nodded. "That's the same for me, making a statement. Plus, if the world blows up, I want to die knowing I tried to stop it."

She smiled, and I relaxed a notch. I asked about her affinity group.

Holly's eyes sparkled. "We named it for a civil defense song from the 1950s," she said. "In case of nuclear attack, Duck and Cover! We've been meeting every week since our prep in April."

"Wow, my AG just met for the first time at our prep yesterday," I said.

We talked a while longer, till we finished eating. Then she excused herself to go meet with her AG. "We're leaving for Livermore at three tomorrow morning."

"Yeah, us too," I said. I wanted to ask for her phone number, but it seemed like pushing things. She hugged me lightly. As she turned to go, I called after her. "I'll see you out there in the morning."

She looked back and smiled. "Good. I'll see you then."

Monday, June 21, 1982

As we pulled off the freeway and passed through the sleeping town of Livermore, a cloud of foreboding crept over me. Was it a premonition, a warning to stay on the sidelines today? Or a projection of fears that I needed to face?

It was still dark as we stopped along a country road outside Livermore. I groped my way out of the car, and could make out a ditch and a field beyond it.

"The Lab is down this road," Hank said as he squeezed his big frame out of the car. "It's an easy walk from here."

Change of Heart was part of the first wave at the East Gate, and I wanted to get up there and see what the place looked like. The sooner I got to the site, the better

Supporters at the June blockade.

picture I'd have of my options.

"Don't worry, we're way early," Cindy said. "It's only four a.m. There won't be anyone to blockade yet." Cindy was a special-ed teacher in her mid-thirties, and she herded us together like we were kids on a field trip. She pointed down the road, away from the Lab. "We should go that way and block the road leading in. The police are expecting everybody at the gate. We could blockade a lot longer out here."

"But there's media and support people at the gate," someone argued. "The police can't be as rough."

I silently nodded. Going off on some unknown adventure made me nervous. Of course, if I weren't getting arrested, it wasn't my decision to make. But I still hadn't quite ruled it out.

"We agreed on the gate at our prep," someone else said. "It takes a new consensus to change our plans."

"If we're serious about shutting down the Lab, we should go down the road," Cindy persisted. But only Hank backed her, and they gave up.

We walked quietly up the road toward the gate. My angst had subsided. For most of us it was our first time at the Lab, a two-square-mile complex of office and research buildings surrounded by an eight-foot barbed wire fence. Even though I knew what went on at the Lab, it was hard not to be awed by this bastion of "scientific research."

We arrived at the gate, a simple two-lane asphalt entrance road with a chain-link fence on either side. A couple of hundred protesters were already bunched along the sides of the road. The police had set up barricades inside the gate, and were standing nervously at ease, waiting for the blockade to start. People were hurrying around making final arrangements and saying goodbye to friends. The AGs from our cluster, Change of Heart, congregated in the gravel area to the left side of the Lab entrance.

Two other clusters formed the balance of the first wave at the East Gate. Before our AG arrived, there had been a coin toss to see which cluster would go first. Sonomore Atomics, a cluster from Sonoma County, won the toss. Change of Heart came in second, which meant that there were fifty or so blockaders ahead of us. Good, I thought. Gives me time to see how it all works.

The affinity groups within our cluster needed to meet to determine the

A youth AG joined the June 21 Livermore blockade.

blockade order. Tony, the plumber from our AG, volunteered to be the spoke. The rest of us pressed up to the road. A row of police were stationed right at the gate, and some protesters harangued them about the arms race. Although it was barely dawn, a few cars were arriving, and everyone wanted the action to begin. Chants kept breaking out, then dissolving into shouts and applause.

Finally, the first AG from Sonomore Atomics strode into the street. A cheer went up from the crowd. Several dozen California state troopers buckled down riot helmets and pulled on leather gloves. The blockaders situated themselves across the Lab entrance and sat down in the road. The rest of their cluster chanted, "Shut it down! Shut it down!" A couple of cars pulled to a stop. The drivers leaned out of their windows, chagrined.

A squad of troopers marched in and surrounded the affinity group. "You are obstructing a public roadway," blared their bullhorn. "If you do not move immediately you will be subject to arrest."

"Shut it down! Shut it down!" the crowd yelled back. One by one the protesters were led away to an open area just inside the fence, where they were frisked and handcuffed. The lone non-cooperator was dragged by the arms.

As soon as the first AG from the Sonoma cluster was cleared away, a second took its place, followed soon by a third and a fourth. Lines of cars were backing up in both directions. As the drivers stopped their engines and settled in for the wait, protesters handed out leaflets. Some workers accepted them, some angrily threw them away.

Hank and Cindy and I stood at the edge of the road taking in the panorama. "We'll be up in no time," Hank said.

"Yeah," Cindy answered. "It's going too fast."

Too fast. My chest tensed. Should I do it? Why not? Well, for one, I hadn't actually asked for any time off work beyond today. I'd have to cite out after a day or two, and break solidarity. Let it go, I told myself. Don't be impatient. You don't have to get arrested at your first blockade. Use today to watch and learn.

I craned my neck for a better view as a man in a wheelchair was hauled

away by several police. The arrestees were being handcuffed with flexible plastic strips, disposable cuffs that looped together behind the back. The police must have figured they didn't need to handcuff the guy in the wheelchair. But as soon as they turned away, he steamed back into the intersection to the cheers of the crowd.

The second time, the police cuffed his chair to the fence. Fifty or so people were now in custody, and Change of Heart's turn was rapidly approaching. The last affinity group from the Sonoma cluster took to the street: animated high-schoolers with painted faces, balloons, and bright, hand-lettered signs pleading for the future of the planet. The police seemed reluctant to begin the arrests. When they began busting the teens, booing and cries of "Shame!" filled the air.

Tony, our spoke to the cluster meeting, rounded us up for the final briefing. "We drew straws, and we're the fifth AG," he said. "We're after Fish Without Bicycles, and before Duck and Cover. Look, there go the first people from our cluster."

A dozen people from Short Meetings AG stepped into the road, holding hands. The rest of Change of Heart applauded them, then joined in the old Pete Seeger song, "If I Had a Hammer."

We sang through several verses as the police arrested them one by one. I tried to picture myself seated on the concrete. Should I do it? If you're not sure, it's better to wait. Focus on supporting those who are arrested.

Next to me, Hank fidgeted and shifted around. "It's only been a half hour, and they've busted eighty people," he said. "It's barely dawn. We're walking right into their arms."

"It's kind of late to change our plans now," said someone else from Spectrum.

"No, come on," Cindy said. "Let's go back up the road. We could be way more effective if we got away from the cops."

As other members of our AG joined the debate, though, it was clear that most preferred to stay at the gate. People talked about their blockade plans. I drifted out of

People using wheelchairs were arrested and jailed with the rest of the protesters.

the discussion, having spotted Holly fifty feet away, circled up with Duck and Cover. They had their arms around each other, and looked very close-knit. I felt happy for her, but wished their meeting would break up so I could go talk to her before she got busted.

A woman from Fish Without Bicycles came over to us. "We're going now. You're next." A current ran through our group, blockaders and supporters alike. We huddled together. People grabbed drinks of filtered water, took vitamins, and got a final round of hugs. "One of our support people should go tell Duck and Cover that we're going," Cindy said as the moment approached.

"I will," I volunteered, seizing the opportunity. I hastened over to Holly's circle. "Spectrum is going next — then it's you," I told them, looking right at her.

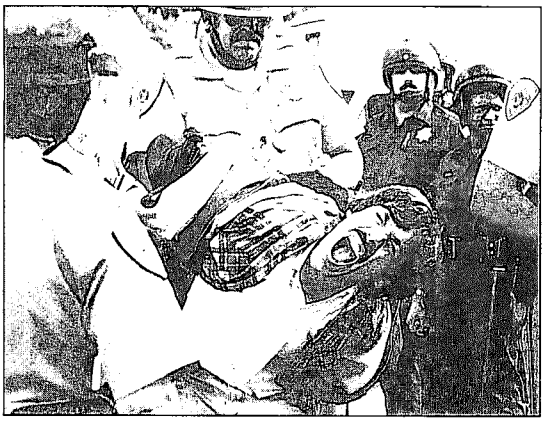
Holly looked back at me and smiled. "We're still discussing what we're going to do." She pointed past me. "There goes your AG. You better hurry!"

Sure enough, Spectrum had just walked out into the road. I looked back at Holly, still smiling at me. I held her gaze, and suddenly it was completely clear. I turned and headed toward the blockade.

"Come on," Hank hollered as he saw me hustling after them. I caught up and grabbed his hand as we circled in the intersection. In a glance I took in the faces of the others — excitement, fear, pride, concern. I shared all their feelings, simultaneously.

We barely got seated before the troopers surrounded us. Photographers darted in and out. We started singing a song we'd learned at our prep:

"Circle round for freedom, Circle round for peace...."



Some non-cooperators were dragged (opposite), others had pain-compliance holds used, depending on the police force making the arrest. Police were called in from all over the Bay Area, plus the California Highway Patrol.

My heart pounded, but I brimmed with confidence in what I was doing and in the people I was with. How could I have doubted that I belonged here? We gripped each others' hands, letting go only as the police pulled someone up.

The first few stood and were led away, but when they came for Hank, he remained seated. "Come on," came a cop's gruff voice. "You're under arrest!"

Hank stared straight ahead. The rest of us kept singing nervously. A helmeted cop bent over and wrenched Hank's arm behind his back. Hank leaned forward to ease the pressure. The cop yanked the twisted arm up and forced Hank to his feet. I sang in a thin voice, embarrassed that I planned to cooperate.

Our song faded. Heavy boots scraped the concrete behind me. "You're under arrest." Leather gloves gripped my arm. I staggered to my feet, scared and excited. On either side an officer held my lower arm, ready to twist. I walked with them to the waiting schoolbus, where other Change of Heart people yelled support through the windows. My wrists were pulled back and cuffed. A wave of elation swept over me. I was doing it.

The police did a cursory pat down, then pushed me up the stairs into the bus. There was a guard at the front, but otherwise it was all blockaders. I made my way past rows of laughing, shouting people to the back seats where the rest of Spectrum had gathered.

A woman from Short Meetings came toward us brandishing a pair of nail clippers. "Who wants out?"

Hank stood up. With a few quick snips, the clippers cut through his plastic handcuffs. He yanked free and massaged his shoulder. "Damn, I think they sprained it."

I leaned up in my seat, taking in the scene, joining in the songs and chants that kept bursting out. Karina from Noah's Ark was kneeling on the seat in front of me. Her hands were free, and she stuck a piece of granola bar in my mouth. "You want out?"

"No," I said, wriggling my bound wrists behind my back. "If I'm going to get busted, I want the total experience." I settled into my seat as best as I could, and a feeling of satisfaction wafted over me. We'd closed the weapons lab. They had to arrest us. It was official now.

The bus pulled out and headed across the Lab grounds. "They're taking us out the back way. I'll bet they have roads that aren't on the map." We cruised on for a few minutes, then came to a stop for no apparent reason. We were still yelling and singing, and it took a while to realize we weren't going anywhere.

"What's the delay?" griped Karina. "I want to get to jail."

"Yeah, come on," called out Hank. "I need to use a toilet!"

But we sat. The cop at the front of the schoolbus refused to answer

questions. Karina opened a window. She leaned out, then ducked back in and hollered, "It's blockaders! They're blockading our bus at the edge of the Lab!" A cheer went up and we pulled open more windows to shout encouragement.

It took ten minutes to clear the road, and we resumed our journey to the county jail. When we got there, we were led off the bus and into a small gymnasium to be booked. "Women this way, men over there!" yelled a guard. People quickly hugged whoever they were standing closest to, and we said goodbye to half of our cluster.

The guards clipped the plastic cuffs off the few of us who still had them on, and formed us into a long line facing a row of makeshift booking tables.

"Where can we go to the bathroom?" someone asked.

"Out there," a guard pointed.

"Against that wall?"

"Well, there's nowhere else," he shrugged.

A few of us started that way, but someone called us back. "Don't! It's a trick, they're gonna bust you!"

I hesitated, but Hank waved the guy off. "Come on, we've already been busted."

Apparently the guard wasn't tricking us. "There's our first lesson in arbitrary authority and the prison system," someone half-joked.

Booking went just like the role-play in our nonviolence prep. We gave our names and addresses, got weighed, measured, and photographed, and then were led to a long table where a row of deputies were waiting with ink pads and fingerprint cards.

"Right hand first. Just relax your hand and let me roll the finger over. Now the thumb." This was the creepiest part. I recalled how as a Boy Scout I had started working on the fingerprinting merit badge, but never got around to the final challenge: submitting my prints to the FBI. How lucky, I later thought. If I were ever involved in any illicit radical activity, my prints wouldn't give me away. So now here I was, donating a complete set to the government.

"Left hand, all four fingers together. Okay, wash up over there." The deed was done. As I wiped off my hands, I felt an unexpected wave of pride. No more hiding, no more dreaming of some hypothetical act of resistance. I was officially a protester.

After booking, the men were led back to the bus and driven across the Santa Rita jail grounds. We peered out the windows at the decrepit facility. To my right, behind a tall barbed wire fence, I saw a row of barracks.

Our bus drove past the barracks for a quarter mile or so and stopped in front of a big warehouse. "The inmates are kept in the barracks," someone said. "But they don't have room for us. We're probably being kept in this warehouse, and the women in that gym we saw."

The bright morning was rising over the valley as we filed off the bus to a round of applause from the fifty men who preceded us. The guards handed

each of us a sheet, a blanket, and a paper bag. I opened the bag in search of breakfast, but instead found a toothbrush, soap, paper, a pencil stub, and a shiny New Testament. "That's going to honk some people off," Hank said, holding his book at arm's length as if avoiding contamination.

The warehouse, which had a thirty-foot ceiling, was lined with row after row of olive-green army cots. We made our way down the narrow aisles and staked out a corner for our AG. Other Change of Heart AGs settled nearby, and we did a quick check-in to see if everyone in the cluster was accounted for.

"Wait," someone said. "There's only eight AGs here. We started with ten."

"Fish Without Bicycles was all women."

"But where's Duck and Cover?" I looked around. Sure enough, the men from Holly's AG were missing.

"We were supposed to blockade after them, but they were still discussing what to do, so we went ahead," someone from another AG said. "They're probably on the next bus. There it comes now."

We yelled and applauded as another thirty men disembarked and checked in. But there was no sign of Duck and Cover.

Several more buses arrived, and we hollered ourselves hoarse greeting them. The warehouse was filling up fast, but still no Duck and Cover. We asked the later arrivals if they knew anything.

"They were at the East Gate?" someone said. "Isn't that where the Oakland motorcycle cops were?"

"Oh, great," Hank said. "They can be real pigs."

It was hard to picture someone as tranquil as Holly tangling with motorcycle cops, but I was starting to worry. Once trouble started, everyone in the area would be in danger.

Another bus arrived, and I went out to ask if anybody had been at the East Gate and seen what was happening. No one knew specifically about Duck and Cover, but people talked about the cops getting rougher as the blockade went on.

The next bus pulled in, and I was hearing the same story, when suddenly the men from Duck and Cover emerged.

"Where were you?" I asked a young guy from the AG. "The rest of us got here an hour ago."

"We saw how fast the cops were scooping up people at the gate," one guy said. "So we hiked down to an access road and blockaded there. We shut down traffic for a long time before the police got it together to come arrest us."

Later in the morning the guards opened the doors of the warehouse and let us out into the yard, an old asphalt parking lot broken apart by sun-bleached weeds. Bales of hay served as the only seats. A token coil of barbed wire demarcated the yard. Obviously no escape attempts were expected.

"We're overflowing the warehouse," Hank reported. "There's more of us than they have beds for."

"They're putting the rest of the men in holding cells in the main jail," someone told us. "There must be over a thousand arrests." We felt great about the numbers, but it wasn't yet noon. A thousand arrests, and it would be over by lunchtime.

I thought about Cindy wanting to go up the road to blockade. "It would have been more powerful if we kept them out for the whole day," I said.

"That wasn't the point," said a man from our cluster named Antonio. He was in his forties, with sharp eyes and a precise, impassioned voice. "We reached their hearts. They may get into the Lab, but I don't believe they'll get any work done today. They'll be too busy talking about the blockade."

The shriek of a diesel horn almost drowned out his last words. Highway 580 was only twenty feet beyond a double fence at the edge of the yard. One protester was out by the fence pumping his arm at the trucks rolling by, and every few minutes a driver would blast his support.

I sat down on a bale of hay. I was finally winding down, and for the first time, the expanse of dead time hit me. An entire day with no guitar, no books, no baseball game on the radio, no beer or candy bars. I thought about what I'd eat when I got out. A burrito. No, a hamburger. And a big bowl of popcorn.

Some guys were talking to a guard behind me. "You wouldn't want to be in the general population," the guard was saying. "Those guys would hate you."

"Aw," someone argued back, "We passed a truckload of inmates going out on work detail and they were all cheering us. Well, except one guy who flipped us off."

"No, you'd see," the guard insisted. "The Blacks and Whites and Latinos, they all hate each other. It's a jungle. You're lucky to be out here."

Around eleven a.m., Change of Heart gathered for a cluster meeting. We reviewed the legal situation, which was simple. We were charged with a misdemeanor, obstructing a roadway. People who non-cooperated had an additional charge, but no one seemed to think it would stick.

Then we did a go-round to see who from our cluster needed to cite out. "They're expecting me on a job tomorrow," said Tony, the plumber from Spectrum. "But I could call the union hall and get someone to cover it. I'm good for at least one more day."

As my turn approached, I wished I'd told my boss that I might get arrested. She was pretty conservative, though. Probably best not to bring it up if I didn't have to. "I could take one more day off my repair job without having to explain where I am," I said. "After that, I might need to cite out."

Moonstone, who had been leaning back on a cot, sat up slowly. His tie-dyed shirt stood out against the muted canvas cot. Moonstone looked to be in his early thirties, with a long ponytail and a scraggly beard. "Time-wise, I could stay. But unless they serve vegetarian food, I may need to get out after a couple of days."

"Maybe we should make it a demand," someone suggested.

"No, we shouldn't ask for special treatment," answered Doc, an intense man with flowing hair and a long, graying beard. He was in Enola Gay, a self-described "faggot" affinity group. "We shouldn't ask for anything different from what the regular inmates are getting," Doc said. "But you could trade meat for bread or cheese."

Moonstone's AG, Deadheads for Peace, included a few CD veterans. They suggested that our cluster consense on some basic solidarity points to be considered at the first jail spokescouncil. "At Diablo last Summer," one guy said, "everyone agreed on 'no fines, no probation, and equal treatment.' No fines because it's economic discrimination. No probation because it keeps us from getting busted again. And equal treatment for everyone, including non-cooperators."

There was a bit of discussion, but we consensed to the solidarity proposals pretty quickly, and chose a couple of guys to be spokes at the meeting.

A little later, lunch was served — balogna and American cheese on white bread, plus an apple and Kool-Aid. I bartered for a triple-balogna sandwich, trading my apple to Moonstone for his cheese and balogna, then swapping both cheeses to another vegetarian for his balogna and Kool-Aid.

"Can we have your cup?" someone asked. "We're making a peace sign." A few guys were collecting all the styrofoam cups and wedging them in the chain-link fence to create a giant peace sign facing the highway. "If we get enough we can spell out a message."

After lunch, four of us from the cluster sat down together on a couple of cots: me, Hank, Antonio, and a guy named Daniel. Daniel looked and spoke like a college professor. "As impressive as this blockade is, it could be the seed of something greater still," he said. "What if each of us were to bring in five new people next June?"

Next June. It was in the air already, almost taken for granted. "Yeah, we should blockade again," said Hank. He was leaning forward, lacing up his hiking boots. "We oughta do it earlier in the Spring, though. Doing it on the Solstice is too new-age for a lot of people."

Antonio sat up on his cot. "No, no, we have to stay with the Solstice," he said. "It's a truly global day, beyond any one movement or nationality. It's in tune with the natural rhythms of the planet."

Hank started to reply, but Daniel preempted him. "We should call on other people to join us next June — locally and across the country — to band together on the Solstice to protest nuclear weapons. It's an idea whose time has come."

"Why focus just on nukes?" I said. "It would reach more people if it covered more issues, like the environment or unemployment."

"Nuclear weapons are the fundamental issue of our era," he said.

"I absolutely agree," Antonio chimed in. He ran a hand through his silver hair. "Other issues divide us. Nuclear weapons are the one issue that touches

everyone. We're all at risk. People who would otherwise never be in the same room can make common cause in opposing nuclear weapons. We have to set aside our differences and join together. If we can't stop the nuclear madness, no other issue will mean anything."

Hank tried to say something, but just then a cry went up from the yard. "Out to the fence! The guards are trying to tear down the peace sign!"

We jumped up and hurried out into the yard. Several hundred guys were packed against the tall chain-link fence, squared off opposite a dozen guards. Everyone was arguing about what to do, but we finally managed to choose two guys as spokes. They went over and conferred with the guards while the rest of us determined to go limp and non-cooperate if the guards tried to clear us away.

The spokes came back. "The guards say they have orders to remove the peace sign. They don't want to force us to move, but they have to obey their orders."

I was amazed that the guards would admit their reluctance. It was like confessing they were human. People started arguing again as the guards eyed us nervously.

"Let's not polarize the situation," someone said. "It's not their choice. This order came from higher up. There's no point in turning this into a confrontation."

"Let's just sit down in front of the sign," another guy suggested. "What can they do?"

Hank laughed rudely. "Step on us!"

Ideas were flying every which way, and the guards were getting itchy. It looked like we would never reach consensus, but Doc raised his voice to get people's attention. "Maybe *we* should take the sign down. That way we defuse the conflict, but keep the power of action ourselves. We don't turn it over to them."

Not everyone agreed, but no one had a better idea. The guards seemed mollified, and backed off. Slowly, one cup at a time, the peace sign was removed. As the last cups were taken down and turned over to the guards for proper disposal, someone started an "om," and it caught on. Several hundred men linked arms and formed concentric circles. The "ommmmm" filled the air, swelling and fading, swelling and fading. Here and there men let their arms float upward, reaching for the sky. As the tones finally faded, some people knelt and spread their palms on the ground. "Returning the energy to the Earth," one man explained.

I nodded to myself. That was an interesting way of seeing it.

Eventually people drifted away, but a few men stayed behind and built a small monument of stones at what had been the center of our circle.

A legal spokescouncil convened in mid-afternoon. I wanted to be right in the center of the action, and was hoping to be one of the spokes for Change of

Heart Cluster. But I didn't want to nominate myself, and two other guys were chosen. I wandered outside to watch. There wasn't much definite to discuss at the meeting, although we had heard some rumors from guards and late arrivals. One account had us getting a week in jail or a $500 fine. Another had our charges being dropped to an infraction — a jaywalking ticket — and all of us released with sentences of "time served."

"Rumor control, rumor control," called out Claude, a tall guy with graying hair and a long, sharp nose. Hank had pointed him out as one of the artists who had painted the great La Peña and People's Park murals in Berkeley, so I was especially inclined to trust his opinion. "This is all speculation. Let's stick to what we're sure of," Claude said.

The main order of business was determining what sentences we would consider acceptable. As the forty or so cluster spokes weighed in, I looked up at the stark sun. Compared to coastal Berkeley, the parched Livermore valley, with little shade and no cold water, felt like a desert.

As the meeting stretched on, I heard someone behind me mutter, "junior lawyers." I turned to see an older guy I'd met at lunch. He had been part of "peace navy" actions during the 1950s, sailing into restricted areas in the Pacific to delay atomic tests.

His remark about junior lawyers stung me, since I had wanted to be a cluster spoke. "What's the option?" I asked him. "We have to make decisions somehow."

"No, we don't," he tossed back. "Why not just sit in jail until the government throws us out? This legal dickering is just playing their game, playing by their rules. No matter whether we plead innocent or guilty, they win. We acknowledge their right to arrest and prosecute us. But suppose we said, 'You don't have that right, and we're not going to cooperate with you in any way. We're going to sit in jail until you get sick of us and throw us out.' What could they do? They'd eventually be forced to let us go, and that would be like admitting they were wrong to arrest us in the first place."

"They can force us to go to arraignment," I answered uncertainly.

"You think so?" he laughed. "If we refuse to cooperate every step of the way, do you think they can come in and force a thousand people to go to court? We've got them over a barrel. All this legal nonsense is just weakening us."

"Why don't you say that to the spokescouncil?"

"They don't want to hear it. They're too wrapped up in their own importance."

He turned away. It was a lot to take in. With a little less ardor, I refocused on the meeting, which was trying to discuss specific demands to make to the judge. A lot of spokes thought we should plea-bargain to get the charges dropped from misdemeanors to infractions, with a sentence of time-served. "We'd probably get out in less than a week," someone said.

But there was a sizable group of people who were demanding a mass arraignment, all thousand of us at once, prior to any plea-bargain. The most vehement proponent of this tactic was a man with a weathered face and white hair named Pilgrim. I heard he had been arrested over thirty times, and he certainly had the attention of the meeting. "Holding out for a mass arraignment might cost us an extra day or two in jail," Pilgrim said. "But it would get as much media coverage as the action did. If they refuse a mass arraignment, we'll all plead not-guilty and demand a thousand separate trials."

The proposal caused a buzz, but most people favored a plea bargain if it would get us out sooner. Someone pointed out that we didn't all have to do the same thing, but the overall sentiment favored unified action. "We have to stick together," Doc said. "Their whole strategy is to divide us."

The meeting continued until dinner, which was a warm plate of pasty spaghetti. I saw Doc talking with Claude, and went over to join them. I worked across the street from one of Claude's murals on Telegraph Avenue, and I couldn't help putting him on a pedestal, "the great Berkeley political artist."

Claude and Doc each looked to be twelve or fifteen years older than me, and I imagined them to be veterans of the Civil Rights and Vietnam eras. Both had worked on LAG all Spring, and they were talking about what would happen after the blockade. "Do you think LAG will organize more actions?" I asked, hoping it was the right question.

"That's assumed," Claude said in a nasal voice. "I didn't spend the last six months of my life working on a one-shot coalition."

I nodded, trying to catch his eye. "A lot of people will want LAG to keep going."

Doc furrowed his brows. "The question is, what will it be? Will LAG be an affinity group network, or will it turn into one more 'progressive' organization with an office and a permanent staff?"

"It has to go beyond affinity groups," Claude answered. "It's time to think in terms of building a movement, not just doing actions. LAG is the first step, a group that lasts beyond one action."

I was going to second that point, but a commotion at one side of the yard interrupted the discussion. A hundred men were already clustered around, and more were hurrying over.

"It's the lawyers! They let the lawyers in!" We finished our scant meal and headed over to where two members of LAG's volunteer legal collective were being mobbed. Walt, a recent law school graduate who was in one of the Change of Heart AGs, stepped up onto a bale of hay. "We really don't have anything solid to report. We just wanted to check-in with people."

Someone called out, "We heard that the two local judges have disqualified themselves and that there would be a new judge appointed."

"We heard that rumor too!" Walt laughed. "But that's all it is."

"Has there been an offer to negotiate?"

"Nothing definite yet," Walt said.

"What was the total number arrested?"

Kathleen, a short woman with wavy brown hair and a sharp jaw, waved some papers. "We show a little over thirteen hundred —" A cheer punctuated her remarks. "— And I've heard there might be fifty more tomorrow. There's a meeting tonight for people who want to get arrested."

There were more cheers from the hundreds of guys clustered around the lawyers. I wondered what the largest-ever anti-nuke protest was. I'd heard people talking about Seabrook on the east coast, and Diablo Canyon in southern California, but I didn't know much about them. Maybe we'd broken the all-time record.

I surveyed the five hundred men crowded around the lawyers, and suddenly felt the need for some privacy. Some room to think. I drifted away from the gathering, laid down on my cot, and mulled over the situation. How long would we be here? Could I really cite out? It would be hard to leave before the action was over. Maybe I should call in sick for the extra days. Or just tell my boss where I was and hope she'd be cool.

I looked around the warehouse. I had expected the average age of the blockaders to be mid-20s, but it seemed more like mid-thirties. Hair styles ran the gamut from blow-dried professionals to home-cut dropouts. Regardless of age and appearance, a pervasive politeness and tidiness made me think of my own middle-class upbringing.

Most of the men were White, with a smattering of Asian Americans and Latinos. I'd noticed two Black men earlier, both middle-aged. I wondered how they felt about being in such a minority. Had they expected it all along?

I thought about the "real" county jail, where most of the inmates were Black. In the February action, the one hundred seventy arrestees were mixed in with the general population. What a different experience that must have been.

A loud voice cut short my daydreaming: "You too can be sssssssssssucked up in the Tornado of Talent!" Earlier in the day, Wavy Gravy, a longtime activist who was a Merry Prankster in the 1960s and an emcee at Woodstock, had posted a sign-up sheet for an evening talent show. I had taken a slot, figuring to share a song, but I hadn't given it much thought through the day.

Now, as Wavy assembled us for the show, I hurriedly hummed a few scales, trying to get loose. The names were drawn out of a hat, and I wound up with slot number one, which seemed like a tough assignment. Luckily, Wavy warmed up the crowd. We packed onto the cots in the center of the warehouse. Knowing that we had all chosen to be there together, it felt like a big state-sponsored Summer camp. Wavy was the jovial head counselor, and the guards, who were standing off to the sides, seemed like the maintenance staff relaxing at the end of a long day.

Wavy told a few jokes, then launched into a story from the Sixties, when he was in Washington, DC, for a Vietnam protest. "I went inside a government

building and found an empty room," he told us. "I took off all my clothes and hid behind the door." Wavy pantomimed the scene. "Then one of my friends called in a bomb scare. They emptied the building, and the cops went room to room searching for the bomb. When they came to my room, I jumped out and screamed — scared the daylights out of them!"

I was on. I planned to sing one of my own songs, "After the Nuclear War." But as I stepped onstage and faced five hundred expectant faces, a different inspiration seized me. I grabbed a breath and launched into Elvis's "Jailhouse Rock." With no guitar, no harmonica, and no microphone, I had no idea what to do with my hands. I nervously snapped my fingers. Instantly dozens of people picked it up, and the raucous cheering as I finished told me I'd hit the mark.

Skits, poetry, mime, comedy, songs, magic, and dance filled the next two hours. "And this is only the first night," Wavy said late in the show. "Wait till we get warmed up!" We ended the evening in a huge circle around the perimeter of the warehouse, holding hands and singing the old Civil Rights-era standard, "We Shall Overcome."

Finally we reached the end of the longest day of my life. The blockade that morning was distant, and the previous night — before I'd been arrested — seemed like a prior lifetime.

We talked in lower voices as we settled in for the night. No one wanted to let go, but finally the guards insisted that we be quiet. They turned off a few of the overhead lights, but it was still pretty bright. I tried to get comfortable. The canvas cot was barely as wide as my shoulders. The building wasn't insulated, and the chill night air seeped through my army blanket. I pulled the blanket tighter, then decided to use the portajohn one more time. I got my shoes on and trekked to the far end of the warehouse.

A dozen other guys had the same idea, and were lined up at the door. "They're only letting us go one at a time," someone told me.

"Why? There's eight portajohns."

"Right. But they don't want us to forget who's in charge."

Tuesday, June 22, 1982

IT SEEMED like I was awake all night, vibrating with the rhythms of the action. But somewhere I dozed off, and Hank had to rouse me the next morning. "Come on, there's something happening out at the fence!"

I staggered up, pulled on my jeans and followed him out into the gray dawn, where we joined a crowd of men along the fence facing the highway. Out in the median strip a van had pulled over and a half-dozen Asian men with shaved heads and white robes were chanting solemnly to a simple drumbeat.

"It's a group of Buddhist peace monks from Japan," someone said.

"Japanese monks?" exclaimed Tony. He pushed his way up to the fence. "I was on a peace march last year with some monks from Japan." He squinted through the fence at them, then started waving and yelling. "It's him, it's Matsahiro!" Tony jumped up and down, waving and hollering.

At first the monks stoically continued their drumming. But then one of them took a few steps toward us. He peered across the highway, then started waving back. He ran over to his comrades and pointed at us excitedly.

People tried to pick up the chant. Most of us never quite got the words, but our toning voices filled the air as the State Police arrived and chased the serenaders away.

Soon after, the guards dispensed a breakfast of gummy oatmeal and white bread. While we were eating, a guy came around announcing the resumption of the spokescouncil. "Every cluster should send a spoke empowered to decide on our basic legal demands."

It made sense to me, but several people gave the guy a hard time. "Who are you, calling the meeting?"

"I was a spoke yesterday," the guy answered. "Don't get paranoid."

Sometime mid-morning, the guys who had been put in holding cells the night before were brought over to join us. Enough men were citing out to make room for them, but we still filled the warehouse. If as many women were staying, we still numbered a thousand.

We traded stories with the newcomers. Toward the end of the previous day's blockade, a Pagan AG, The Web, had spun a ritual web of yarn and string across the road where the Oakland motorcycle cops were harassing people. The cops thought that a web of yarn was no big deal, and one tried to ride through it. The web held, and the cop fell off his bike. Although a number of people got knocked around as the cops retaliated, it sounded like everyone was inspired by the action. "I think there's a metaphor somewhere in that yarn," said Antonio.

The guards brought in a few *Chronicles* and *Tribunes* so we could read about ourselves. We got banner headlines in both papers, with plenty of pictures. We were celebrities! It was the first time I'd ever been involved in a front-page story. The papers circulated around the warehouse, read aloud over and over.

Along with the papers, the guards brought two rumors: they told us eighty more blockaders had been arrested that morning, and the two local judges had in fact disqualified themselves from the case. The former information was soon verified by the arrival of about forty more men to new rounds of cheers. But no one could corroborate the story about the judges.

Several workshops got underway in the afternoon. The one that appealed to me was veterans of earlier movements sharing their experiences in a big circle out in the yard. I leaned back against a bale of hay as Nathaniel, my nonviolence prepper, told a story about a Civil Rights sit-in.

"In the Spring of 1960," he said, "I was working in Washington, DC, with a group of students from Howard University, a Negro College, as it was called then. By 1960, the lunch counters and cafeterias in Washington had been integrated, but those in Maryland and Virginia, just across the border, had not. Even diplomats to the United Nations, if they were Black, couldn't sit at the counters and be served.

"There had been some sit-ins in Maryland that Spring. We'd go down there for the weekend, get arrested, sit in jail singing freedom songs and sharing stories, and then on Sunday night they'd let us out and we'd go back to school for the week.

"But in Virginia, they passed a law saying that anyone arrested at a sit-in would get a $1000 fine and a year in prison. Also, the American Nazi party was active in Virginia, and had threatened to lynch people who came there. They seemed serious, so at first, no one tried.

"But some of us talked it over, and felt we had to stand up to them. We decided to do a sit-in after school ended that year. We did intensive nonviolence trainings, and asked anyone who didn't think they could maintain nonviolence not to take part. We actually punched people in the stomach during the preps, to test our responses. Finally, eleven Black students from Howard University and I decided to do it.

"In early June, we went across to Arlington, Virginia, to a place called, ironically, People's Drug Store. We went inside and sat down at a Whites-only counter. Within five minutes, the police arrived with paddywagons. But the owner said he didn't want arrests — it would be bad publicity — so he closed the counter.

"We decided to stay and wait. We wound up being there for two days, which were the two most challenging days in my life. Word got out fast, and people came from all around, Nazis and others. They harassed us, shoved and punched us, sometimes so hard you'd fall off the stool. Then they'd start kicking you. The worst part was when people put lit cigarettes down our backs. The police had left, of course. They had no interest in preventing the violence.

"The whole time we tried to respond as nonviolently as we could, looking people in the eyes, trying to treat them as human beings.

"For me, the peak came toward the end of the second day. A White guy came up behind me and called me a 'nigger lover.' I turned around and saw the most terrible look of hatred I have ever seen. He was holding a switchblade about an inch from me. And he said, 'If you don't get out of this store in two seconds, I'm going to stab this knife through your heart.'

"Luckily, I had a lot of experience by that time. So I looked him in the eye and said, 'Friend, do what you believe is right, but I'm still going to try to love you.'

"This guy was just shaking with hatred. When I spoke, his jaw dropped,

and his hand shook even more. He didn't say a word. He just turned on his heels and walked straight out of the store."

I released my breath, wondering if I could have thought so fast. And what if one of the Black students had said the same thing?

"Later that evening," Nathaniel continued, "we finally decided to leave. We were dead tired, after two days of this. We prepared a written statement, saying, 'We appeal to local religious and community leaders to get these eating establishments open and integrated. If nothing has happened in a week, we will be back.'

"There was a crowd of about five hundred people outside, yelling and throwing things at us. But there were also some friendly media people, and they helped cover us as we left. Otherwise, I don't know whether we would have gotten out of there alive.

"We went back to Washington, DC, and tried to resume our lives. Five days passed, and we wondered whether we had the courage to return. On the last day, we got a phone call from Arlington. People's Drug Store had decided to open its counters to everyone. The religious and community leaders had used their authority to bring it about. After hundreds of years of segregation, twelve students had touched their hearts."

The group of listeners was sitting in spellbound silence. Nathaniel paused and collected his thoughts, then concluded his story.

"As I reflected on my experience, especially on the man with the knife, I realized that what I did was the most effective thing I could have done to protect myself. If I had tried to fight back, I probably would have gotten stabbed. Even if I'd won the fight, his hatred would have grown stronger. But by reacting in this way, it made him realize he couldn't go through with it. He had to change.

"I've been involved in civil disobedience actions for over two decades now, but I have never seen such a striking example of the power of nonviolence. There's a crucial lesson here — if we treat our opponents as humans, there is a good chance that they will respond that way. It also shows the strength of a small, committed group of people — an affinity group, you could say. Together we were able to maintain our nonviolence and be there for each other with emotional and physical support.

"We weren't alone. Thousands of people went through similar experiences in those years, and helped bring about the transformation of society. I've seen it happen."

LATER ON, Daniel Ellsberg gave a talk about the arms race to a large gathering of men in one corner of the warehouse. Ellsberg was a former government employee whose revelation of the secret "Pentagon Papers" in 1971 had blown the lid off the lies and cover-ups surrounding U.S. policy in Vietnam, and helped turn the tide against the war. Since that time he had been a key

spokesperson against U.S. nuclear and military policy, taking part in civil disobedience actions on both coasts.

By the end of his talk, I was losing steam, and retreated to my cot to lie down. Two guys near me were playing chess with little pieces of paper. Antonio and Doc were rounding up Pagans to plan a new moon ritual, and some other guys in our cluster knotted a few T-shirts and headed out to the yard to play football. I lay on my back, exhausted but too wired to sleep. I wished I had something to read. I flipped through the New Testament they'd given us, but it didn't hold my attention. Too sketchy. I wished I had a Russian novel. Something by Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky to pass the hours. Or the days.

How long would we be in? People at the February action had gotten a week. Since the state had gone to the trouble of setting up the warehouse, they might just let us sit here for a while. By tomorrow, I was going to have to cite out or call my boss and tell her where I was. Not something I looked forward to.

Moonstone and some other guys were talking and laughing on a cot near me. I rolled over the other way. I thought about how long I'd craved my own apartment, which I finally got a few months earlier — and here I was spending my vacation in a five-hundred-man dormitory.

Try as I might, there was no way to tune it out. One guy talked about being arrested at the 1977 occupation of Seabrook nuclear plant on the east coast and enjoying the action more than the Livermore blockade. Moonstone, who was pacing around wearing his bedsheet as a toga, said he liked the 1981 Diablo action more, too. "There's something about a backcountry occupation that a street blockade just can't match."

Someone else said they had heard that our thirteen hundred arrests were the biggest one-day total ever for a California anti-nuke protest.

"Yeah," answered a younger guy. "But we didn't really disrupt anything. It was all so orchestrated. Put this kind of energy in downtown San Francisco and we could shut down the whole business district."

There was an idea, I thought. Shutting down the financial district. How about the stock exchange? If we disrupted trading, it could be statistically verified. We could make headlines in the business section.

A little later, word filtered around that the legal spokescouncil was reconvening. Sleep seemed hopeless, so I decided to go watch the meeting. As I headed outside, I heard Wavy Gravy decline an invitation. "I've been going to jail for fifteen years, and I haven't been to a meeting yet." He lay back down on his cot.

The spokes circled up. Many clusters had rotated their spokes, and it took an hour just to do check-ins and catch everyone up on the previous day's discussions. The main issue was still whether to bargain for lower charges and agree to plead no contest, or to accept the misdemeanor charges and demand a trial.

"We could use the courts to put Livermore Lab on trial," someone argued. "We could present evidence on why we blockaded, and use it to indict the Lab and the government."

Claude was standing with his arms folded across his chest. "That kind of testimony would probably be suppressed by the courts," he said. "They don't typically allow political defenses."

The spokescouncil discussed the trial question for a while, but there was no consensus on what to do. Luckily a couple of our lawyers arrived. They had some definite information: local judges Lewis and Hyde had voluntarily disqualified themselves, and Judge William Chotiner had been appointed to hear our cases.

"Chotiner's the judge from Diablo Canyon last Summer," Moonstone said, bouncing excitedly on his toes. "He's the guy who gave us four-day sentences."

Shouts and joking rang through the space, even though some people reminded us that we might be in jail for several more days.

"Lewis and Hyde had to step down, they couldn't take the heat," Hank said to Doc and me. "The county can't afford to keep us here, but the local judges can't afford to let us out or it would ruin their political careers. So they had to step aside."

Doc squinted. "Lucky for us they disqualified themselves," he said. "We could have challenged them, but that takes time. They could have kept us sitting here for a week or more."

The legal spokes reached consensus that we would all stay in solidarity until it was certain that everyone was getting equal sentences. The lawyers said they would convey our decision to the women's jail.

Dinner came and went, along with a great rumor that we were getting out that night with sentences of time served. The spokescouncil reconvened, but I stayed behind this time. The lawyers had brought in some books, and I was reading a copy of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* that had been torn apart and was being passed around serially.

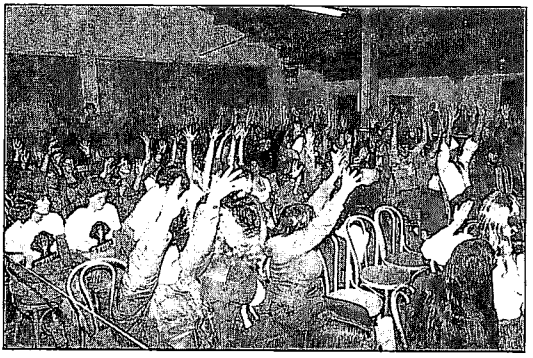
Around sunset the lawyers unexpectedly returned. From around the warehouse people converged, and the air was electric. Walt was urged up onto a chair to fill us in. "Your charges have all been dropped to infractions," he announced, "and all resisting arrest charges for non-cooperators have been dropped." Shouts and applause burst out, then subsided just as quickly so Walt could continue. "Judge Chotiner has indicated that he will give a sentence of time served to anyone who pleads no contest, and the arraignments can begin this evening if you accept the offer."

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. And it was icing on the cake when Walt added, "The judge has agreed to arraign you by affinity groups, in the order you were arrested."

I spontaneously hugged the guy next to me, a huge smile on my face. The warehouse echoed with cheers. Everyone was talking at once. There was no

question that most people were ready to accept the offer. A few people called for process, saying that spokes should check-in with their clusters and then reconvene to see if we consensed to the offer. But the warehouse was in chaos, with people laughing and yelling and hugging as if they were about to part forever.

The spokescouncil had barely gathered before a deputy with a bullhorn began reading the names of the first twenty men to leave for arraignment. The guys looked around for guidance. Some people still argued that we should coordinate with the women's spokescouncil and formally consense before anyone left for arraignment. Others argued that immediate arraignment was a major victory, and we should go for it. Clearly most people wanted to get the legal proceedings underway. With a final round of hugs, the first group of men left for court. The spokescouncil heard a few complaints about process and how we hadn't ever reached consensus, but gradually the debate wound down.



Blockaders in night-court for the June 1982 Livermore blockade signaled agreement ("consensus") with someone's courtroom statement by twinkling their fingers in the air.

Wavy got another talent show going, which most people gathered around for. My AG, though, stayed on our cots talking. We heard from the guards that about one hundred fifty men would be arraigned that night, and we had easily been among the first one hundred fifty brought to the warehouse the day before.

We talked in low, hurried tones about the action, mostly in the past tense, looking ahead to the next time. Everyone was pretty sure they'd get busted again, especially if there were a blockade next June at Livermore. I had no doubt, and even hoped there'd be another action before then. If all we were getting was two days, I could do it more than once a year. I wasn't feeling tired anymore.

It must have been about midnight when our names were called and we boarded a bus that drove us across the jail grounds to a makeshift courtroom. Fifty or so supporters and press people who had gotten jail passes greeted us with applause as we were led in and reunited with the women from our AG. We sat with our arms around each other as the judge read the charges. Then he called our names one by one, took our no-contest pleas, and asked if we had a statement to make before sentencing.

A few people gave short speeches on why they had blockaded — for their children, for the planet, for the future. The rest of us waved our hands in the air to signal support. But most of us skipped statements to speed things up for the people after us.

"Jeffrey Harrison," Judge Chotiner said as I stood before him, "If you have no statement, I sentence you in the name of the People of California to two days in the county jail. That time has already been served, and you are free to go."

I stepped away, hardly believing it was over. I thought back over my time in jail, the blockade, the Sunday meeting in the park, the nonviolence prep — what a long four days! I'd been swept into an alternate reality where every minute was packed with meaning, where every day was half a lifetime. My innocent bystander days were over. I barely remembered what it was like not to be involved.

We were led back out to the buses, men and women together. Everyone seemed to have extra bounce in their step. Even the guard driving the bus got caught up in the spirit, telling us "off the record" that he and some of his colleagues supported our action.

"Why did you jail us then?"

He laughed. "That's what you wanted, wasn't it? We didn't want to disappoint you."

"Join us next year! We'll be back — join us!"

"No comment," he said. "No comment."

The bus dropped us off at the edge of the jail grounds at about two a.m. The driver pointed up the road. "I think some of your people are over there." We started off hesitantly, then we heard shouts and calls. At least a hundred people were waiting for us. They welcomed us to freedom with hugs, extra jackets, and four types of trail mix.

We waited a couple more hours for later people, trading stories with the women from our cluster. Karina entertained me and Hank with a long story about some women who burned one of the New Testaments and were dragged away by the guards, setting off a big commotion. I didn't get the story quite straight, but I figured I'd hear it again at our AG meeting a week later.

I was hoping Duck and Cover would get arraigned so I could see Holly, but they were too far down the arrest list to get out that night. Finally, the last bus of the night unloaded, and we all headed home.

Karina offered me a ride back with a woman named Sara, whom I took to be her lover. Sara was in her mid-twenties, with dark, serious eyes. She was involved with Central America support, and made sure I got a handful of flyers when she dropped me off at my apartment.

It was past five a.m. when I finally made it to bed. I had scarcely slept for two entire days, but even after drinking a beer I lay awake for a long time

reverberating from the impact of the past 48 hours. I scribbled frantically in my journal, trying to capture every detail.

When I awoke that afternoon, I lay in bed for a while replaying my mental tapes of the blockade. A hundred scenes reeled past, and dozens of faces swirled through my mind. But one person in particular kept popping up: Holly. I couldn't wait to see her. I had no idea whether she was single or not, and I didn't even know how to get hold of her except that she volunteered at the LAG office. It seemed like a good time to do some volunteering myself.

Friday, July 16, 1982

THE FIRST FEW times I stopped by the office, Holly wasn't around, so I looked at the literature rack a while and then split. Finally one time she was there, working on a mailing about the LAG Congress that was being called for the first weekend of August. I offered to help, and afterward caught her alone for a minute and asked if we could get together later in the week.

She thought for a moment, a slight smile on her lips. Then she looked at me and said, "I've been wanting to go for more walks. How about Thursday afternoon?"

On our first couple of dates, we went for walks around South Berkeley and the UC campus. Conversation flowed freely, everything from theories of social organization to the nuts and bolts of the latest LAG mailing. Back in my day-to-day life, the blockade sometimes seemed like a dreamworld. But when I talked with Holly, it seemed as if it were only yesterday, and I was filled again with the passion, the power, and the hope.

The third time we got together, I met Holly at a house in South Berkeley where she was doing some gardening. We were going to a show at the Freight and Salvage coffeehouse that evening, but it was only about five o'clock. "Want to walk to my house?" she asked. She pulled on a gray sweater and zipped up her daypack.

We wended our way down to Grant, a quiet street that ran most of the length of town. An anarchistic array of flowers, shrubs, and little lawns crowded up against the sidewalk, enlivening the small wood and stucco houses. Kids were playing up and down the street, and music filtered out of an occasional window.

We hadn't talked much about the past, and I was surprised to learn how recently Holly had moved to Berkeley. Until the previous December, she had been working as office manager for an alternative energy company down in Monterey, and living with a guy named Frank. Their relationship mostly ended in late 1981. "I say 'mostly' because I'm still really close to Frank," she told me.

I felt a twinge of jealousy and steered away from the subject. "So you moved to Berkeley?"

"Yeah," she said. "I got laid off and was getting unemployment, so I had a lot of free time. I always wanted to live in Berkeley. It seemed like a place where so much was happening."

I nodded. "Did you know about LAG then?"

"Not initially. I went to a forum sponsored by a group called Urban Ecology, and I decided to join them. In fact, I wound up moving into the house where Urban Ecology has its office. Then some of us went out to Livermore to support the Mothers' Day action. Seeing the arrests was powerful, but what especially struck me was how the women doing the action were so intimate and caring toward each other." She slowed almost to a halt and looked at me. "That really touched me. I was searching for community. Being new in Berkeley, I felt like I was meeting people superficially, even in my house. I was looking for a deeper connection."

I could help with that, I wanted to say. But it didn't seem like the moment for a joke, even a serious one. "I know what you mean," I said, looking at her.

As I spoke, we reached University Avenue, the dividing line between south and North Berkeley. Four lanes of traffic interrupted our reverie. "A rude reminder of the state of civilization," I commented. "This city is getting overrun with cars."

"It sure is," she said. "Urban Ecology wants to get most cars out of Berkeley. We have a plan to route all traffic onto a few major streets. The rest would be plowed up and made into playgrounds or parks or community gardens."

"I like it," I said. "I had this idea for getting rid of cars entirely. Everyone who had to drive would park in underground garages at the edge of the city. Then, to get into town, there'd be these giant roller coasters running into the different neighborhoods. It'd be energy efficient, since gravity would do the work. And it would be really fast!"

She laughed and put her arm around my waist. I put my arm around her shoulders and breathed deeply. Along the sidewalk, flowers swayed in the evening breeze, drinking in the last sunlight.

We turned off of Grant onto Cedar and headed up a slight hill, approaching a two-story wood house set back about fifteen feet from the sidewalk. Behind a little picket fence was a yard full of wildflowers and an apple tree. "This is it, the Urban Ecology house," she said.

"I recognize this house," I said. "Didn't it used to have an old convertible parked out front that was filled with dirt and had a garden growing in it?"

"Yeah, the Veggie Car. We had to move it. It's in a park down in West Berkeley now." She unlocked the front door and ushered me into the living room. "I need to call Claudia at the LAG office."

"It's after six. Do you think she'll pick up?"

"I'll call on the night line. I'll be back in a minute."

She walked toward the back of the house. The night line. I hadn't heard of

that before. Was it a secret phone number for the initiates, or could anyone ask for it?

I stepped into the living room, which had high ceilings and lots of wood trim. The room was furnished with old couches and chairs draped with patterned cloths. More fabric hung on the walls. The aroma of baking bread wafted out from the kitchen, but it was overpowered by the scent of fish emulsion plant food, which had the house smelling like Ocean Beach at low tide. I looked around at the dozens of potted plants filling the living and dining rooms. "Why don't you use instant fertilizer?" I innocently asked Holly's housemate Randall.

"Are you kidding?" he asked, pulling his head back for effect. "You're feeding right into the petrochemical industry when you use commercial fertilizer. Fish emulsion is a sustainable resource and requires practically no processing."

I nodded noncommittally, wondering how you emulsed a fish. "Too bad the room doesn't get more light. The plants would do better."

"Funny you should say that," he said enthusiastically. "We're getting ready to knock out the whole front wall and build a greenhouse. It's a perfect southern exposure." He beckoned me out onto the front porch. "The apple tree will give it enough shade so the plants won't scorch."

I tried to visualize how a greenhouse would attach to the front of the narrow two-story house with its tiny yard. "It'll be two stories, all glass," he explained, "shaped like the front three sides of an octagon. It'll be a model for indoor gardening."

Holly came to the door. "Do you want to eat while we're here?" We followed her back into the kitchen. "There's miso soup heating up, and we have some tabouli..."

I tried to decline, having no idea what I was being offered. "I'll just have some tea," I said.

But Randall wouldn't hear of it. "No, no, try the miso soup, it tastes just like tamari, only more intense — you'll love it." He set a big bowlful in front of me. Holly helped out by offering me some crackers and cheese.

I wished we'd have some time to hang out, maybe up in her room. Our strolling conversations were great, a chance not only to relive the blockade, but to envision the next steps and brainstorm how to make them real.

Until the past month, sweeping social change had seemed like a remote fantasy. Talking with Holly, though, the radical reworking of our entire culture along the lines of peace and social justice was transformed into a challenging organizing problem to be solved by thorough discussion, careful planning, and direct action. I was grateful for our talks wherever they took place, but the idea of making love and then lying in bed plotting nonviolent revolution seemed wonderful.

When we finished dinner, though, Holly told me that she had to deliver a

phone list to the LAG office before we went to the show. "They need it for phone-banking about the LAG Congress. I should warn you, Belinda and Monique are there — we're probably walking into the middle of a fight over the Bible-burning."

The Bible incident was still being debated, especially since the Feminist Cluster announced that they weren't sending spokes to the LAG Congress. I had never formed a clear picture of the incident, and I asked Holly about it as we took a bus across town. I opened a sliding window, then turned in my seat to face her. Her eyes met mine, then drifted away.

"We were held in a big gymnasium. Two-thirds of the floor was filled with six hundred cots, and the other third was open space, for meetings, rituals, sharing circles, or whatever. Over in the back corner you had the Feminist Cluster. Their AGs had names like Revolting Hags and Sisters of Lesbos, and they were a lot more vocal than most of the women, chanting and yelling at the guards all the time. A lot of them already knew each other from the Women's movement. They stayed separate in jail, and there was definitely prejudice against them. They were seen by a lot of people as 'big, loud dykes' who were stirring up trouble."

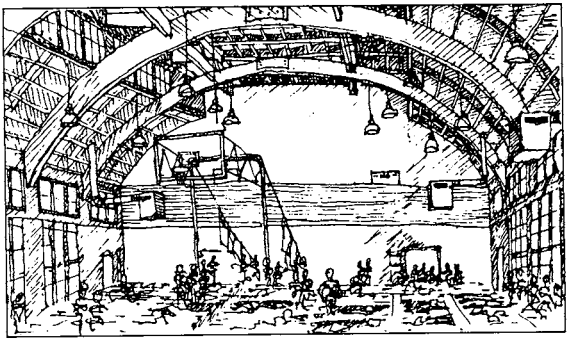
"So they burned a Bible?"

"We were never totally clear on what happened. After lunch on the second day, most people were napping or talking in small groups, waiting for some word from the legal team. Suddenly there was a terrible scream. Two women from the Feminist Cluster came bursting back into the gym from the restroom, chased by several female guards. Before anyone could react, the guards grabbed the two women and dragged them out of the gym."

Holly's voice was rising, and she seemed to check herself. "I still get wrapped up in it, three weeks later! More guards squared off, guarding the door. Women from the Feminist Cluster ran up and demanded to know what was going on. Most of the other women gathered around. The guards said that the two women had started a fire in the restroom, endangering everyone in the gymnasium."

"Did you believe them?"

"I didn't know what to think," Holly said. "The Feminist Cluster challenged it, and kept demanding



Since the 1300 arrestees would overflow the county jail, women were held in a gymnasium and men in a warehouse on the jail grounds. This drawing was done in the gym.

the return of their sisters. But some other women wanted to know what had been set on fire, which the guards told us — one of the New Testaments that everyone had been given."

"That's the part I heard," I said.

Holly nodded as the bus lurched to a stop. We shifted in our seats. "A spokescouncil was called to discuss what to do," she resumed. "Their cluster wanted solidarity actions, but others didn't want to hold solidarity with people they felt had violated the nonviolence guidelines by destroying property.

"Finally the Feminist Cluster got fed up. Twenty women walked out of the spokescouncil, marched to the front of the gym, and started pounding on the doors and chanting. The doors were locked, and the guards didn't respond. So the women kept pounding and yelling. Belinda and a few others went to support them, but most people stayed at the meeting. Some of us were just confused over what to do, but a lot of people were offended by the Feminist Cluster."

"So what happened to the two women who got grabbed?"

Holly laughed slightly. "Nothing. Toward the end of the day, with no explanation, they were returned. That was the end of it."

I shook my head. "Just like the whole incident never happened," I said.

We'd reached our stop, just up the block from the LAG office. As Holly had predicted, tensions were simmering as we entered and made our way to the back. Claudia, whom I'd met before, nodded in our direction. Holly introduced me to Belinda, who barely looked up, and Monique, who said hi and asked how we were doing.

Holly joined them around the worktable. I felt a little extraneous, and busied myself straightening the flyers on the literature rack, where I could hear the talk without interloping.

Monique was about my age. Unlike practically anyone else in LAG, she wore makeup and styled her auburn hair. Monique was a member of the Walnettos affinity group, which had its base in Walnut Creek, an affluent suburb east of Berkeley. I'd met her once before, and although I liked her, a geographic and cultural gulf separated us.

With Belinda there wasn't a gulf. We were from totally different planets, and I gathered there wasn't much room for me on hers. She wore a bright red T-shirt that proclaimed, "I Like Big Women." Belinda was a big woman herself, with wire-rim glasses and crewcut blonde hair. Her face flushed with anger as she turned back to Monique. "Who can blame the Feminist Cluster for boycotting the Congress," she said. "They got no support at all in jail."

"There was some support," Holly said. She spoke slowly, as if reluctant to enter the argument. "The spokescouncil consensed that we wouldn't leave jail until the two women were returned."

Belinda shook her head sharply. "It wasn't enough. Solidarity failed. When your sisters are singled out like that, you do everything you can to get them

back. The Feminist Cluster knew what solidarity meant. While everyone else sat around debating, they acted."

I nodded to myself. Abrasive as Belinda was, I liked what she said.

Monique looked distressed. "All their yelling just turned people off. And in the end the guards brought the two women back, anyway."

"Maybe that was because of what the Feminist Cluster did," Claudia put in. Claudia was a wiry woman with spikey brown hair. She was one of the two LAG staffers, with a sharp mind and sharper tongue. She eyed Monique. "The guards knew that if they didn't bring the women back, the Feminist Cluster would raise hell all night."

"I think that's probably true," Holly said, looking apologetically at Monique.

Monique turned to Holly with a pleading expression. "It split the group," she said. "They escalated the tactics, and then expected solidarity. That's coercive. We could have gotten the women back by less confrontational means, like refusing to go to arraignment until they were returned. The Feminist Cluster just alienated people."

"Well, the lack of solidarity alienated other people!" Belinda gesticulated. "Lesbians are subjected to this all the time. As soon as we stand out in a crowd, the authorities clamp down, and the straights stand by and say, 'Oh, they shouldn't have made such a scene.' Well, we're through being quiet. And if straights don't like it, who needs them? We'll go do our own work!"

Damn, I thought. What could anyone say to that? Monique seemed cowed by Belinda's tone, and didn't respond.

I caught Holly's eye, and nodded toward the clock. She looked torn between mediating the clash and trying to get as far away from it as possible. My hint about the time seemed to settle the matter. She gave the phone list to Claudia, and we said our goodbyes and took off.

We headed for the Freight and Salvage, which was down in West Berkeley. Originally Holly had suggested going to Ashkenaz to dance to a Cajun band. I didn't want to admit that I was incompetent on the dance floor, so I talked about how much I wanted to see the band that was playing at the Freight that night. To my relief, she went for it. Sure, sooner or later she'd figure out I couldn't dance — but not on our first musical outing.

Our route took us directly into the remnants of a patchy red sunset, and we walked along quietly. But my mind kept drifting back to the argument at the office. "That's intense," I said. "There was nothing like that in the men's camp. People argued, but nothing so divisive."

"Yeah," Holly said. "It definitely polarized people. When the guards brought the two women back that evening, Karina and I went over and welcomed them. But we were about the only ones from our cluster who did." Holly nodded to herself. "In a way, I felt intimidated by the Feminist Cluster. But not by their behavior — it was their experience and analysis. These

women had spent years discussing feminism and solidarity. They were way ahead of most people, and that caused problems."

"Kind of ironic that it was the women who had the conflicts, and the men who ran smoothly."

Holly yawned. "It wasn't all conflicts. That was the only divisive incident. Most of my time in jail was amazing. It felt so easy to connect with people. My cot was right next to a Buddhist AG from the Zen Center in San Francisco. I meditated with them on the second and third days. And there was a Pagan ritual led by people in Matrix AG who call themselves Witches."

I had met a couple of male "Witches" in jail, and although they seemed like nice guys, I was skeptical about the whole Pagan thing. But just then, Holly pointed to a poster on a phonepole. "Look, the San Francisco Mime Troupe is doing their new show in Berkeley next weekend. Want to go?"

"Sure," I said, glad to pin down a future date with her.

"How about Sunday? Because on Saturday, I'm going to the Future Actions work group. We're going to decide what actions to propose to the LAG Congress next month."

"Is that the coordinating meeting you were telling me about?"

"Coordinating Council? No, that's different. Coordinating Council is a meeting of spokes from all the work groups. It's an overview group that meets every Monday. I might go next week. We'll probably hash out the final plans for the Congress."

That was news to me. I had gone with Holly to a planning meeting for the LAG Congress the previous week. I went mostly to have something to work on with her, but I was starting to feel invested in the two-day Congress, which was charged with calling future actions as well as designing an organizational structure for LAG. It bothered me that some other group was setting itself up as the overseer, making the real decisions. I felt cut out of the loop. "Who's on this Coordinating Council?"

"Mainly spokes from work groups. But anyone can go," Holly said. "It's not a closed meeting."

"Do you think you'll go?" I figured that her presence would make me feel more at home if I decided to check it out. I had been going back and forth on how much to get involved in LAG, since it was taking up time that I wanted to be reading history or playing music. Still, if Coordinating Council was where the real decisions were being made...

The Good Old Persons were playing at the Freight and Salvage that night, singing bluegrass and country swing. My thoughts drifted off to my family in Indiana, who might like this music. A rare point of agreement. What would they make of LAG? I'd talked with my mother just before the blockade, and hadn't mentioned it. As far as she knew, I was still saving up money to go back to grad school. If I mentioned civil disobedience, she'd start talking about careers and how an arrest record would jeopardize my

brilliant prospects. Maybe I could tell my younger sister or brother about it, but what would it mean to them? They'd think it was one more weird thing that Californians did — sit in hot tubs, follow gurus, and get arrested at protests.

My family were your basic "good Americans," silently assenting to whatever the government did. Did they ever secretly imagine that things could be different? That their efforts could matter? What would it take to reach folks like them?

The one ray of hope was my newfound faith in LAG, that we were the cutting edge of a fresh wave of resistance. Despite Reagan's momentary ascendancy, people were waking up. Seabrook, Diablo, Livermore — we were lighting the torches of a new rebellion.

WE STAYED through two sets, then took off. Walking home, our conversation died more than once, which was rare for us. I wondered what she was thinking. Was she enjoying the silence, or was it making her uncomfortable?

Tentatively, I put my arm around her shoulders. She slipped her arm around my waist. Her hand lay lightly on my hip. I closed my eyes, letting my steps match hers. What was she thinking? Did she want me to kiss her? Or was she just enjoying my company? What would happen when we reached her place?

As we approached her house, she slid her arm from around my waist and reached into her pocket for her keys. "Do you want to come in?" she asked casually.

"Sure," I said nonchalantly. Holly stepped in and removed her shoes. I followed suit. "Let's make tea and go up to my room," she suggested. Despite feeling some jitters, I smiled to myself. This was more like it. A kettle of hot water was already on the stove. Holly made a cup of raspberry hibiscus tea for each of us, and then led the way up the stairs.

Her room was at the front end of the hall, overlooking the street. The old hardwood floor squeaked as we stepped through the doorway. She closed the door behind us. There were no chairs, so I sat down on the end of the big bed, which took up most of the room. A thick white comforter crumpled under me. Holly picked up a stack of papers from the bed and moved them to the orderly shelves lining one entire wall. A potted ficus tree arched out of one corner, and deep green vines circled the top of the walls.

"Looks like you're really into plants," I said.

"They do really well in here." As she reached out to light a candle, her hair tumbled over her shoulder, looking reddish against the light skin of her arm. "We have a garden in the backyard, too. It's all organic. I love it, it keeps me at peace with the Earth."

"Sounds spiritual to me," I joked, reminding her of a recent conversation.

"It is, it's a spiritual connection," she said, sitting down next to me on the foot of the bed. "We sang this song in jail, 'The Earth is our mother, we must take care of her.' I believe in that."

From our previous discussions, I knew we didn't see eye to eye on spirituality, and I regretted bringing it up. "Let's put on some music," I suggested, spying a cassette player on the shelves.

"There's some tapes over there," she pointed. "Pick whatever you want to hear." As I got up, she sat down on the side of the bed.

Most of her tapes looked like sound tracks for meditation. I picked North Indian flute music and put it in the player. "Do you meditate?" I asked as I sat next to her on the bed. The flute sketched a haunting melody, joined by tablas and an organ-like drone. I wished it were a little louder, but I didn't want to get up again.

She lay back on the bed, her hair fanning out and framing her face. She folded her hands across her stomach and gazed up at the candlelight flickering on the ceiling. "Yeah. I wish I did it more. I guess I'm a one-passion person. And right now, that passion is politics."

She lay on her back, breathing gently. A curl brushed across her forehead. Her eyes shimmered blue-green. I hesitated, then leaned down and kissed her lips. She slid her arms around my shoulders and looked up with an enigmatic smile, as if to say, "Yeah? Now what?" I eased down and pressed my body against hers. We kissed again. She rolled toward me, and the softness of her breasts against my chest sent a shiver through me. I threaded my fingers deep into her thick hair, then burrowed down to kiss her neck.

She laughed slightly, which caught me off-guard. "Are you ticklish?" I whispered.

"No," she answered. "It just made me laugh. Here we are on the bed together, we're probably going to make love, and neither one of us has spoken a word about it."

I looked at her intently. "Does it bother you?"

"No, it's just interesting." She leaned up on one elbow so our heads were at the same level. Her eyes were full of warmth, but I couldn't make out what she was thinking.

"Is there something you want to talk about?" I asked.

"Well, I guess there's one thing — condoms. I have some if you don't."

"I have one in my jacket." I went to get it, turning up the flute tape at the same time. Holly slipped out of her jeans and pulled back the sheets. She stretched luxuriantly on her back, arms behind her head, her breasts outlined through her T-shirt. An angel, I thought. Truly an angel.

As I slipped into bed, I flashed back to meeting Holly, in the park the day before the blockade — how lucky I felt to have met her, and how much I wanted to see her again. Here we were, in bed. Was this for real? She leaned over and kissed me sweetly on the lips. What a dream.

Wednesday, August 18, 1982

THE CROWD pressed in on both sides, singing and shouting. From the left they danced after flutes and drums, from the right a trumpet and sax. Attired in brilliant colors, they converged on the small double doors. A huge guitar played by two thick hands soared overhead. And from the flames above the doors rose a fiery phoenix.

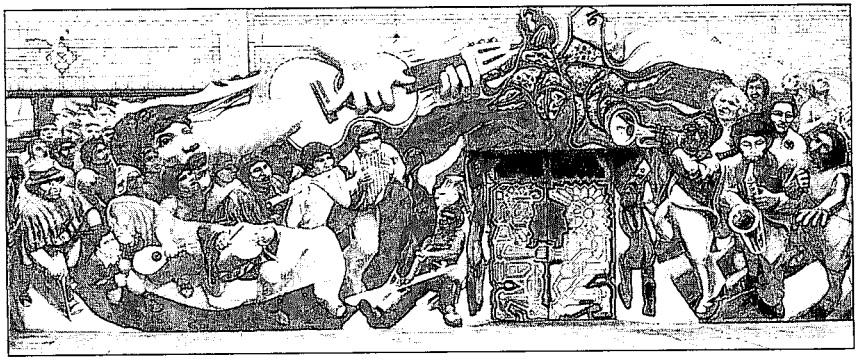
IT SWUNG like a rainbow over La Peña's facade, a mural commemorating the struggles of the Chilean people against their CIA-sponsored military government. The doors, the focal point of the mural, were carved with intricate Andean reliefs.

While Mort locked his car, Craig and I looked over the familiar painting. Craig pointed up at the weathered hands holding the big guitar. "Claude says he's going to renovate the mural next Summer. BCA swung a city grant."

We made our way into the crowded restaurant area of La Peña, the local Chilean cultural center and a favored watering hole for Berkeley activists. Craig went to the bar for a pitcher of beer while Mort and I found a table under a row of multicolored shawls hanging along the back wall. A photo collage showed the Guatemalan village where they were made.

We pulled up another chair for Hank, who was expected momentarily. Hank had engineered our gathering to share his blueprint for a giant Grim Reaper for the October Livermore protest, one of three actions we consensed on at the LAG Congress.

Three actions. If I had any lingering doubts, that hooked me — a radical organization with a full year of actions. Even before the Congress I was going to a couple of meetings a week plus stopping by the office every few days. Now we had three actions in the next ten months, each building off the previous,



The original mural on the front of La Peña, the Chilean cultural center that serves as a community gathering spot for South Berkeley. The new mural closely follows the original.

culminating in another June blockade of Livermore. With good organizing, who knew how many thousands might join us this time?

Not everyone was so sanguine. I knew that Mort and Craig thought we were spreading ourselves too thin. But how could there be too many actions? You can't hold back people's desire to protest.

Craig set the pitcher and mugs on the table and pulled up a chair. We were all practically the same age: Craig and I were twenty-eight, Mort twenty-nine, and Hank thirty. We shared a cultural history, growing up at the end of the Vietnam era, and I had gravitated toward them over the past month or so.

The other three had met earlier in the Spring, and I envied their easy rapport. I wanted to be part of their circle, and I was glad to have an hour or so to spend with them before joining Holly, who was at a meeting across the street at the LAG office.

Craig poured the beer into our glasses. "Cheers," he said. As we clinked our glasses and drank, I studied Craig. He was stocky, with neatly-trimmed brown hair, and wire-framed glasses. His green short-sleeved button shirt contrasted with the light skin of his arms. Craig had helped initiate LAG the previous Winter, and had been a staff member since the Spring. I'd met him at the office and a few Coordinating Council meetings. He was usually so brusque that it took some adjusting to see him leaning back in his chair drinking a beer.

By comparison, Mort seemed like an old friend. We worked together on the LAG Congress, and he'd given Holly and me a ride home from several meetings. Mort maintained a consistently unkempt appearance: long brown hair tucked behind his ears, a wispy Lenin-esque goatee, shirt tail falling out. Only a pocket-protector crammed with pens suggested that by day he worked as a solar engineer.

I asked Mort and Craig about their cluster, Overthrow. The idea of a socialist-oriented direct action group intrigued me. It had a lot more bite than the amorphous nature of Change of Heart Cluster.

"It started as a refuge for people who didn't like the new-age tone of most of the affinity groups," Craig said.

Mort nodded and set his glass on the table. "Our goal is to get discussions going about the wider context of LAG's work. No one ever talks about economic relations, or political power and social classes. The affinity groups just want to know when the next blockade is."

He was cut short by Hank, who loped up and said, "Let's see who's radioactive." He started scanning Craig with a small Geiger counter. Immediately it began clicking. "Jeff? Sure enough." The box clicked again as he checked Mort. "Good, I see you've all been getting your daily dose of radiation."

"How are you doing that?" Mort said, leaning over to see the dial of the instrument.

"I was turning the counter up to peak sensitivity," Hank explained. "It was

picking up background radiation. Reassuring, huh?" He pulled up a chair. "Hey, I just got tickets for the Dead shows next month. They'll probably sell out by tomorrow."

We poured Hank a beer and got to talking about all the great 1960s bands from the Bay Area — the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Santana, Country Joe and the Fish... How as teenagers living in different parts of the country, we'd listen to them and dream of moving to San Francisco and joining a hippie commune.

Growing up in Indiana, I nurtured an image of San Francisco and Berkeley: everyone was political, everyone was an artist, and the whole culture was steeped in radical creativity. Which wasn't far off the mark. But despite playing political music around Berkeley for several years, I had been doing it by myself or with others who were in it for the music, not the message. LAG was my first time being around a whole community of creative political people.

"I feel really lucky to be here in Berkeley," I said as I refilled our glasses. "Politics seemed so hopeless in Indiana. It probably does everywhere outside of a few liberal cities. What can you do?"

Craig sat up, and his eyes met mine. "People can take action anywhere," he said. "That's the message we have to spread. No matter where you are, you can find a few others and act."

"Five people can't go organizing a blockade," I said.

"Not at first. But you can do something. The key is to act, not just sit around talking. Do an event that unleashes people's creativity and gets them working together. Paint a banner and hang it off a rooftop. Perform a skit outside the student union. It doesn't take a thousand people to make your point."

Mort nodded. "In a place where nothing's happening, you might actually get some media coverage. You could reach a lot more people than you think."

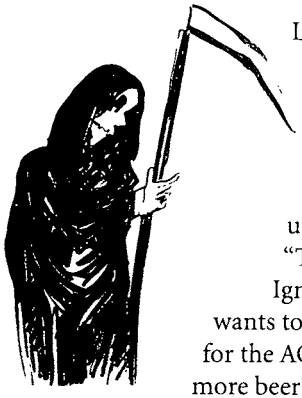
I thought back to my years at Indiana State. Not exactly prime organizing territory. Some friends and I had set up a coffeehouse and a couple of folk festivals, trying to rekindle the spirit of the '60s. Without a lot of luck. Oh well, I figured, I had to start somewhere. Look at it as a warm-up for LAG.

Craig doled out the rest of the beer and asked Hank, "What about this Grim Reaper idea of yours?"

"I'm glad you asked that question," Hank said. He pulled a sheaf of crumpled papers from the pocket of his leather jacket and showed us a sketch. "I'm picturing a ten-foot Reaper, with a long black robe and a death head. We mount it on a flatbed truck and drive it through Livermore in October — think they'd get the message?"

We all laughed. "I'll work on that," Mort said.

Craig emptied his glass. "I like it. But I'm worried about the October 9th demonstration, overall." October 9th was the thirtieth anniversary of



Livermore Lab, and Lab brass were planning a big celebration. People at the LAG Congress felt that October was too soon for another big CD action, so we consensed to a legal demonstration at the anniversary bash. "It's a fine idea," Craig said, "but hardly anyone signed up for the work group."

"There's still time," I said.

Ignoring my remark, Mort looked at Craig. "No one wants to work on a legal demo. It's not glamorous enough for the AGs." He pulled out a couple of dollars. "Who wants more beer?" Several more bills were tossed onto the table, and Mort made his way to the bar.

While Craig and Hank talked about the Reaper idea, I leaned back in my chair. Mort's disdainful attitude toward affinity groups bugged me. Even though Spectrum hadn't met since right after the blockade, Hank and Cindy and I had been spokes at the Congress, and I figured our AG would come back together for the upcoming actions.

Even more, I noticed that when the talk got serious, Mort and Craig talked right past me. Sure, they knew each other better and were in Overthrow together. But I'd had enough of politics as a spectator sport.

Mort returned with a pitcher. "I just ran into Pilgrim at the bar," he said. "His AG spraypainted another draft billboard last night. We should drive by and see it later."

I saw an opening. "Did anyone see the anti-nuke billboard that the Freeze bought downtown? The top says 'Stop the Arms Race.' We could alter the lower part so it says 'Blockade Livermore' instead of 'Vote Yes on the Freeze.'"

"No, we've got to support the Freeze, whatever we think of it," Craig answered. The Nuclear Weapons Freeze referendum was on the California statewide ballot for November, and Livermore Lab had joined a multitude of defense corporations in lobbying heavily against it. "If it loses in California, Reagan will claim that people are behind his insane escalation of the arms race."

"Sure, I'll vote for the Freeze," I said. "It's still a powder-puff."

"It's not that simple," Mort said. He shifted in his chair, slinging his arm over the back, but didn't look any more comfortable. "It's about building alliances. Civil disobedience is a fringe tactic. It's easy for the government and media to dismiss us. But if LAG is working with the Freeze, it situates us on the political spectrum. It keeps us from being totally marginalized."

Clearly they'd done more thinking about it than I had. At least they had responded to my idea. I shifted to a lighter vein. "I had an idea for a ballot initiative. How about a Northern California secession referendum?" They laughed, but I pursued it. "It would probably pass. We could secede from the

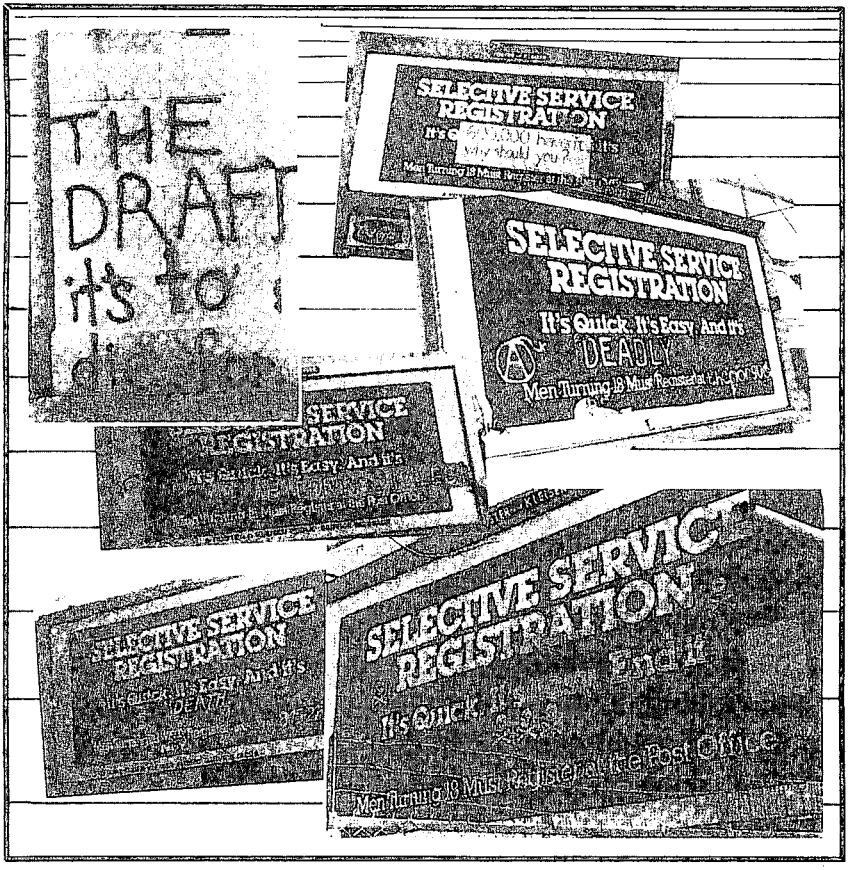
United States and start our own country. If it worked, other places would do it, and we could completely dismantle the U.S. government."

"Why couldn't they just blockade us?" Mort said. "The secession idea has been floated before. The problem is, if it's just the Bay Area, they could isolate us and starve us out. We have to build a national movement, not just focus on a few key centers."

"The government wouldn't need to blockade us," Hank put in. "They'd just cancel our military contracts, and our economy would collapse."

"We have all the farms in the Central Valley," I said as I filled my mug. "We could start our own economy."

"Think so?" Craig answered. "Take a look at Nicaragua. They had a socialist revolution in 1979. So what happens under Reagan? The CIA is spending millions of dollars funding right-wing guerrillas and terrorist attacks



Berkeley activists targeted draft billboards in 1982, eventually driving them from town.

to destabilize the Nicaraguan economy. We have to restructure our entire society, not just secede."

"Besides," Hank said, "if the Bay Area secedes, the U.S. would become even more reactionary."

"An excellent point," I said, glad to have a graceful retreat from my proposal. "As long as there's Berkeley, there's still hope." Just then I noticed Holly and Daniel walking toward our table. Holly had a bounce in her step, and was talking over her shoulder to Daniel, leaning back to tell him something over the noise of the crowd.

I smiled to myself as they approached. Holly greeted us warmly, her eyes sparkling as they lighted on me. Her buoyancy re-animated our table, and a ripple of pride ran through me as she came over and gave me a hug.

She pulled up a chair next to me, and I noticed how the others immediately included her in their conversation. Holly's opinions mattered. I slid my arm around her, feeling myself drawn into the inner circle by her presence.

Holly and Daniel were coming from a meeting to start planning the International Day of Nuclear Disarmament, the most ambitious of the proposals we'd consensed to at the Congress.

"How did it go?" Craig asked.

"Great," Holly said. "There were over twenty people. We did a long visioning process led by Antonio, sharing our greatest dreams for International Day. Then we formed work groups and started to draft a Call to send out to peace groups all over the world."

"Inviting them all to come to Livermore?" Hank joked.

"No, groups will do local actions, wherever they are. Some will blockade, some will do vigils or teach-ins." Holly's eyes were open wide, her cheeks full of color. "Schoolkids will paint murals and have festivals, churches will have special services — in a few years, it could become an international holiday."

"Precisely." Daniel's professorial voice came from behind me. "We're issuing a Call for groups to do local, decentralized actions on or around June 20th next year. We'll do another blockade at Livermore, but we envision actions all over the world."

"Isn't it premature to start organizing internationally before we even have a local coalition that we can work with?" Mort asked with a scowl.

Some of the color drained from Holly's face. "I think we can do both."

"I agree," Daniel said dryly. "And I suspect that we'll find more kindred spirits in other cities and countries than among existing leftist groups in the Bay Area."

"Depends on your definition of kindred," Mort retorted.

Craig gestured toward Mort, as if signaling him to ease up. "The time may be right for national and international organizing," he said. "The key is to reach out to local groups, too. We can't expect to shut Livermore Lab single-handedly."

"We're planning to do a lot of local organizing," Holly said. "Melissa and I are going to join the Outreach collective."

"Well, I hope so," Mort said.

"You could work on International Day if you have so many ideas," Holly said with no enthusiasm.

"I'm thinking about it," Mort said. He fidgeted with his napkin. "Is anyone seriously asking how we're going to organize an international coordinated action plus three actions of our own in the next ten months? People were consensing to everything at the LAG Congress. It'll amaze me if we can sustain this level of involvement for a year."

Craig nodded slowly. No one else responded. I wasn't sure what to think. Mort was pretty sharp, but he struck me as pessimistic. Why couldn't we sustain our momentum — even grow — over the next year?

We finished up our beers. Mort pulled on his jacket. "Well, I've got to work in the morning. Anyone want a ride?"

Craig and Hank got up to join him. Craig put his hand on Holly's shoulder. "We'll talk some more about International Day next time you're at the office. I have some ideas about publicity."

"Great," she said, regaining some of her élan. "I'll be in tomorrow afternoon."

As the others took off, Holly and I stood together on the sidewalk outside La Peña. She yawned, and I put my arm around her shoulders. "Are you meeting'd out?" I asked her.

"Just about," she said. "Three nights in a row is pushing it. But the meeting tonight was so good, it was worth it."

It had been a few nights since I'd seen Holly, and I was looking forward to walking home alone with her. But it turned out that she had invited Caroline, who was still over at the office, to walk with us.

Not that I didn't like Caroline. I remembered her signing me up for the nonviolence prep the first time I went into the office. Anyway, maybe she was only going a few blocks.

We jaywalked over to the LAG office, where Caroline was just emerging. Her shoulder-length brown hair was tangled on one side, and her glasses were slightly askew. Her forehead creased as she turned her key in the office door lock. "I finally got the books balanced," she told Holly. "It doesn't look very good."

"We need to get a mailing out right away," Holly said. "If we announce the actions, people will be excited about donating."

Caroline nodded, but her forehead didn't unfurrow.

"Don't think about it now," Holly said. "Leave your worries at the office."

We were all silent as we passed under a shadowy canopy of branches and leaves. As we emerged into the streetlight, Caroline looked at us beseechingly, as if to say, help me not obsess about LAG's finances!

Holly picked up the cue. "Let's talk about the actions," she said. "Are you going to do Vandenberg?"

Caroline twisted a strand of hair around her finger. "I think so," she said. "We could possibly stop the missile test, or at least delay it, if there are enough of us. So for me, well, I'm pretty sure I'll do it."

"Me, too," Holly said. "I want to do a backcountry occupation, to reclaim the land."

"The land" was Vandenberg Air Force Base, located on the central California coast near San Luis Obispo. A test launch of the new MX missile from Vandenberg was slated for late January 1983. Activists around the state were gearing up for it, and though it wasn't yet clear how LAG was going to relate to the Vandenberg Action Coalition that was taking shape, we had adopted the action as our Winter focus.

"Between that and International Day and Livermore, we're going to have our hands full," Caroline said. "Plus we consensed to start a regular newsletter."

The newsletter. I caught my breath. At the Congress, there was a proposal to expand LAG's periodic mailings into a newsletter that carried announcements and articles about our actions. There was even talk of doing a four-page tabloid newspaper.

Publishing a radical newspaper was a dream of mine since childhood, ever since I read about Ben Franklin and Tom Paine during the American Revolution. What better way to forge a new radical organization out of disparate elements? Give people a common publication, a meeting ground for all views, and let the truth emerge.

In college, some friends and I quit the stodgy student daily and started an "independent" tabloid. Alternative, yes. But radical, it was not. It mainly carried concert reviews, humor, poetry, and campus news, with only the occasional environmental or anti-nuke article.

This would be different. LAG had a vision not just of ecology and global peace, but of restructuring the world from the bottom up. Who better to launch a paper dedicated to nonviolent revolution?

After the Congress, Claudia had encouraged me to draw up a subscription proposal for LAG's September mailing. If enough subscriptions came in, we'd have the money to do a tabloid. I wrote a Dickens-esque spoof on the "ghosts of actions past, present, and future," helped stuff it into hundreds of envelopes, and crossed my fingers for a good enough response to pay for a real newspaper.

Caroline parted from us on Derby Street, where she was house-sitting, and finally I had Holly to myself. We stopped under a willowy tree and hugged. Holly gently kissed my face, then my lips. I sighed and held her close for a moment. Hand in hand we strolled the last couple of blocks to my apartment.

As we came into the lobby, the clutter of old newspapers and junk mail and litter distracted me. I had been neglecting my job. I resolved to devote more time to cleaning the place up.

Inside my apartment, I turned on some music and flopped onto the cushions in the living room. I tried to coax Holly down with me, but she seemed preoccupied. I looked up at her. "Is something wrong?"

She reached down and took my hand. "My mind is still racing from the meeting," she said. "Let me get some tea, and then we can go lie down." She let go of my hand and went into the kitchen.

I tried to be a good sport. She's here, I reminded myself. She's staying the night. Still, wouldn't you think that after three days apart she'd find me more irresistible?

She got her tea and we headed for the bedroom. Holly had an Urban Ecology project the next morning, so she set my rarely-used alarm. I put on a tape of troubadour songs and lowered the volume. At last we lay down together. I rolled onto my back and drew her to me. She nestled her face into my neck, and her fingers laced through my hair. I took a deep breath and slowly released it. The breath was followed by a deep yawn, which Holly echoed. I smiled to myself. At last, we were in synch.

Even though I'd pictured us making love, I wasn't disappointed that what evolved was cuddling and quiet talking. We spun a quilt-like conversation, meandering from the LAG newsletter and International Day to organic gardening and troubadour tunes, weaving together patches of our lives. In her thoughts and words, in her caresses and light kisses, I could tell that Holly was totally present. What more could I want?

At last she couldn't keep her eyes open any longer. She lay on her side, her hair flowing across the pillow. "I'm sorry, sweetie," she murmured. "I'm falling asleep. I love being here with you."

I kissed her goodnight, stroking her hair as she settled in. "I love you, Holly," I whispered. "Goodnight."

She was asleep in a minute. I lay beside her for a while, the threads of our conversation still slipping through my mind. Finally, I slid out of bed and went back out to the living room.

As I filled my pipe, I thought back over the evening with Holly. Now that she was asleep in my bed, my earlier worries seemed out of joint. I sat down in the big olive-green reclining chair I'd salvaged from a vacant apartment a couple of weeks earlier. The vinyl felt cool against my arms. My eyes played over a collage of Renaissance art prints that covered the longest wall in the living room, coming to rest on Botticelli's "Birth of Venus." The flowing blonde hair and graceful pose of the Goddess on the half-shell made me smile at her resemblance to Holly.

I took a hit off my pipe and reached for my journal. I leaned back in the recliner and gazed at Botticelli, then turned to a fresh page.

Saturday, October 9, 1982

On October 9th, Livermore Lab celebrated "Thirty Years of Excellence."

The Lab was founded in 1952 by Edward Teller and other nuclear scientists as a competitor to Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico. Los Alamos was the home of the original hydrogen bomb and other early nuclear weapons, but conflicts within that lab led Teller to persuade the government, then deep into the Cold War, to open a second weapons design facility.

I'd asked Claudia recently why the government ran research labs, when the actual production of nuclear weapons was farmed out to the defense industry. "Why not have defense contractors do their own research?"

"What would be the profit in that?" she answered. "Corporations can make a guaranteed profit on weapons production, but they don't make a penny off research. That's why the government set up the weapons labs, and why they put so much military research money into places like Stanford or MIT."

"The government controls the budget," I said. "Why don't they tell the defense industry that if they want the big contracts, they have to pay for their own research?"

"Who do you think the government is?" Claudia responded. "Practically every top-level official has come out of the corporate world, and is headed back when they leave office. Why would they want to cut corporate profits, when they can pass it on to taxpayers?"

To celebrate thirty years of creating nuclear weapons, Livermore Lab's brass invited the seven thousand employees and their families to a picnic at the Lab. There was a feeling in LAG that we had to respond, if only with a legal demo. A small planning group reserved a park in Livermore, organized a rally, and got a permit to march four miles through town and out to the Lab.

The work group chose a funereal theme for our march. People were asked to wear gray, black, or white, and to bring muted signs and props for a solemn procession through Livermore and out to the "Death Lab."

I had plenty of black clothes, so that part was easy. But even with the right colors, I was feeling weird.

What triggered it was Holly going on a two-day excursion to Monterey with her old lover, Frank. They were still occasionally sleeping together, which made me jealous. The night before she left to see Frank, Holly stayed with me.

The next morning, I woke with her, hoping we would make love. But she got right out of bed and pulled on her T-shirt and jeans. I propped myself up on my elbow and asked when she was getting back.

"Sometime Friday evening," she said. She flexed her shoulders and released them. "I need this vacation. I'm already getting obsessed with International Day, and it's only October. I've got to pace myself. Plus, Frank is going through a hard time, and he needs my support."

Good for Frank, I thought. "What about Friday night when you come back?" I asked. "Do you want to get together?"

"I'll probably get back late and feel like heading home," she said as she laced her shoes. "Maybe we can talk on the phone. We'll have all day Saturday together at Livermore."

I rolled onto my back. Holly had told me once that when she and Frank lived together, they couldn't keep their hands off each other. What a difference from us.

Holly folded her sweater and put it in her daypack. After a minute she looked at me. "I feel like you're trying to manipulate me," she said. "You're trying to make me feel bad about seeing Frank."

"I'm not manipulating you," I said. "It just gets me down that you're still sleeping with him, that's all."

She sighed impatiently. "Frank and I love each other a lot. I really like spending time with him, and if that includes making love, I'm not going to set artificial limits on it."

I couldn't argue with the logic, but I also knew that I wanted Holly to myself. Sure, she could go visit Frank. But did they have to sleep together?

"You know where I am with Frank," she said. "If you have questions, fine. But don't manipulate me."

Her words stung. I forced a smile. "I'm not trying to be this way. Can we let go of it?"

"We have to," she said. "I need to get going." She knelt down and gave me a quick kiss. I tried to pull her onto the bed and hug her, but she resisted. "I have to go," she said. "I'll see you in a few days."

"Yeah," I said. "See you sometime." Right away I was sorry for the sarcasm. There was no time to move beyond it as she picked up her daypack and headed for the door.

"I'll try to phone you Friday night," I called after her.

She turned and looked back for a second. "Okay. I'll be there later in the evening. We can talk then."

It made for a dismal few days. We did talk a little on Friday, mainly to make plans to carpool out to Livermore the next day with Caroline. On the ride out, we sat together in the back, holding hands and leaning together. She didn't seem anxious or upset. Still, I wished we'd had a chance to talk.

As soon as we got to the protest, Holly was swept into setting up the

International Day table. I didn't have a specific task, and I wandered off, feeling at loose ends. I walked to the edge of the rally area and looked over the panorama. After some early fog, it was turning out to be a beautiful Fall afternoon, a great day to hang out in a park and listen to music. Unfortunately, the "park" we had reserved — the only one the Livermore city government would let us use — was simply a huge parking lot outside of town, solid gravel as far as the eye could see. In the middle of the barren plain, two dozen assorted peace and anti-nuke groups set up literature tables. Opposite me, a woman played guitar from a makeshift stage on the back of a flatbed truck. A few hundred people milled around.

My shoulders slumped. I had expected the day to be like a blockade reunion. But everyone seemed standoffish, huddling in furtive cliques. I saw a couple of people from my affinity group whom I hadn't seen since right after the blockade. We talked about doing the Vandenberg action in January, but there was no spark, and they moved on.

If only I could disappear for a while, go do something else, and come back fresh once the event picked up some steam. But in the expanse of the parking lot, there was nowhere to disappear. What a perfect image for the protest — nowhere to hide.

I looked around for a familiar face. Over by the flatbed stage I spotted Hank. He was standing in front of the Grim Reaper that he and Mort and some other Overthrow guys had finished the night before: a ten-foot insectoid demon with white face, black cape, and a long silver scythe. The Reaper loomed ominously over the crowd, its beady red eyeballs flashing on and off like a sci-fi spectre.

As I started over toward Hank and the Reaper, Monique headed me off. I appreciated having someone actually walk up to me, and gave her a hug, feeling the springiness of her styled hair against my head. Her affinity group, the Walnettos, had organized a small blockade at the Lab earlier in the week, and she was still wired from the experience. "We were arraigned the same day, pled no contest, and our sentence was community service," she told me. "I'm doing mine at a senior center. Can you believe it? Next time we might trespass, so they have to give us misdemeanors and we can take them to trial."

Personally I wasn't real optimistic about our prospects of justice in the suburban Livermore area. Monique and the Walnettos were from the suburbs, though. "I don't know if we would win an acquittal," she conceded. "But we could bring a lot of issues like toxics and groundwater contamination before the local people."

As Monique walked off, Claudia and her partner Rebecca wandered by. "Is this supposed to be the rally?" Claudia asked.

I looked around. There were about five hundred people by now, but not much was happening. "Maybe it'll pick up," I said.

She wasn't buying it, I could tell, but it didn't bother me. I was still glad to

be talking with her. As one of the LAG staffers, Claudia was the center of our amorphous universe. I'd gotten used to her steering projects my way — press mailings, workshop flyers, typing up the mailing list. And now with the newspaper, I had a project of my own. It was happening. The subscription appeal had raised almost a thousand dollars. A work group with Craig, Holly, Caroline, Mort, Monique, and me had met a week earlier and consensed to produce a monthly four-page tabloid, starting in November. I volunteered to keep track of articles and paste up a subscription ad. "The first issue or two will be called the 'LAG Rag,'" I told Claudia. "We'll have a contest to pick a permanent name."

Claudia nodded and cracked a wry smile. "That's great. What amazes me is that no one has complained about it." She shared a knowing glance with Rebecca. "After a while, you start expecting criticism for whatever initiative you take."

As she spoke, Doc and Belinda walked up. I hadn't seen them since the Congress, and welcomed them warmly. But Claudia stepped back, acknowledging them with a sharp nod.

I wanted to ask Doc about the Vandenberg meeting he'd been to. Before I could speak, Claudia preempted me with a non-political query. "Where's Jeremy?" she asked.

Jeremy was Doc and Belinda's six-year-old son, raised according to the strict nonhierarchical values the two of them espoused. Doc and Belinda were a couple, a gay man and a lesbian who had joined to raise a family. I liked Doc a lot, and being around Belinda at the Congress, I'd gotten past my stereotype that she'd automatically hate me for being a hetero male. She wasn't looking to win any charm points, and she wasn't going to budge an inch when we disagreed. Still, I didn't feel any personal animosity from her.

"We left Jeremy at a friend's house," she said. "He decided he didn't want to come to the march. I think they're going to the zoo."

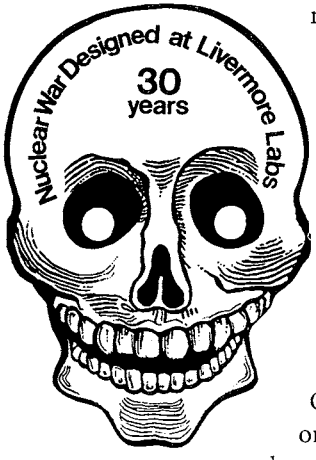
"Sounds like a tough choice for a kid," I said, looking around the little circle. Maybe this was what today was about, I thought. Bury the conflicts and spend the afternoon together. Comrades in the struggle.

Then Doc knit his eyebrows and leveled his gaze at Claudia. "Listen, I

The Grim Reaper rode through Livermore on the way to the rally. The signs came off to make the truck a stage.

need to talk to you. I heard Rudolph got treated pretty lousy when he took the Vandenberg Action Coalition proposal to Coordinating Council last week."

I was caught off-guard by his vehemence, but Claudia didn't seem fazed. "Well, no wonder," she said. "He parachuted into the middle of our meeting asking for $1500 for posters and a handbook. He didn't have any written budget, just a vague request for money that everyone knows we don't have. What do you think we are, a fund-raising committee? No one from VAC even comes to Coordinating Council unless it's to ask for money."



"What do you expect?" Belinda retorted. "When someone from VAC does go, look how rudely they get treated."

"Hey, everyone gets treated rudely at Coordinating Council," wishing they'd lighten up.

Belinda ignored me and glared at Claudia. "That's why no one wants to go."

"Well, someone needs to represent VAC," Claudia answered.

"I don't see why," Doc said. "Coordinating Council isn't in charge of the protest. VAC is the organizing group, and LAG is just one member of the coalition."

Claudia laughed without humor. "LAG has been paying all of the phone and postage bills. And we've gone into debt to hire Craig as a staffperson for — "

"That's exactly it!" Belinda cut in. "Hiring a staffer for Vandenberg is one more example of how Coordinating Council is trying to dominate the organizing. LAG doesn't own the action — it belongs to the people doing it. And that's who VAC represents."

She was cut short by a group of skeleton dancers. They wove through the crowd passing out laminated skull masks. I was relieved at the interruption. Did everything have to turn into a fight? I tried on a mask. Claudia walked away, and our circle broke up.

The argument stayed with me, though, and left me rattled. I looked around for Holly, and spotted her checking out the literature tables. I started over to join her, but Mort waved to me. He stood beside the flatbed truck holding a clipboard, coordinating the performers on the stage. The Reaper towered over him, its red eyes blinking relentlessly. "Looks like he's enjoying the show," I said as I walked up. "That's quite a creation."

Mort lifted a corner of the black robe to reveal the metal structure. "Check it out. Hank welded the frame at his shop, and I wired in the eyes. Tai and Lyle just finished painting the face this morning."

The welded frame under the robe caught the sunlight and reminded me of jail bars. Not that I'd actually been behind any. Not yet, anyway.

I turned back to Mort. He was working with Holly on both the International Day and Outreach collectives. I wasn't on either, but I had a bit of news. "Holly told me that she and Daniel and Antonio have a new version of the International Day Call," I told him. "She said it was a lot less 'new-age' than the first one."

"I don't see how it could be any *more* that way," Mort said, suddenly agitated. "The first version was just one long poem to Mother Nature, and how all conflicts are really only in our heads. There's no way we could do outreach to local groups with that Call."

His response caught me off-guard, and I was sorry I'd brought it up. He flipped through the papers on his clipboard. I looked around the parking lot. More people were arriving. A folk trio sang on stage, and a crowd had gathered to listen.

Melissa came by and handed Mort and me a flyer. "Are you going to the Vandenberg protest in January?" she asked us.

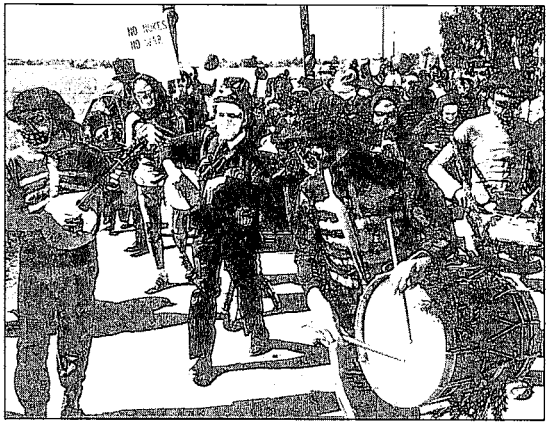
"No," Mort said, "I couldn't take that much time off work. But there's an action the same week out at Concord Naval Weapons Station. Some Central America groups are planning a demo against arms shipments to El Salvador. I'm going to the coalition meeting next week."

"Do you think it will pull energy away from Vandenberg?" I wondered aloud.

Melissa shook her head. Her olive forehead glistened in the sun. "No, it's different crowds. I've been talking to all kinds of people who are doing Vandenberg. It could be as big as Livermore."

I was weighing her assessment when Walt came hurrying up. He looked at us breathlessly. "Daniel and I just drove up to the Lab," he said. "The police have totally cordoned off the South Gate. They're not going to let us get anywhere close to the Lab's picnic."

Nowhere close? Why were we even here? The others started analyzing the situation,



Was it the proximity of Halloween that brought out so many costumes?

but I sagged. All afternoon I'd been holding my feelings at bay, but the latest development was too much. I kicked at the gravel. "Why'd we come to the middle of nowhere," I said. "We should have held our rally in Berkeley."

Melissa's eyes grew wide. "We don't have to obey the police," she said. "I don't think they're prepared to arrest a thousand people if we nonviolently walk around their barricade. The police depend on us obeying them. They only have as much power as we grant them."

"They don't have to arrest everyone," Mort scoffed. "They could bust a few people, press heavier charges, and use it to teach everyone a lesson."

Melissa started to respond, but she was drowned out by the thumping of drums. Just behind us, a Danse Macabre troupe led by a corps of drumming skeletons began a contorted, expressionistic Dance of Death. The crowd of a thousand gathered around to form an amphitheater. Some of the dancers drummed and chanted, while others mimed a nuclear explosion and its agonizing aftermath. Their silent moans swelled into an anguished cry, ending in a *tableau vivant* of death and desolation.

There was a smattering of applause when the piece ended. Clapping didn't seem appropriate, so I nodded my head. Beautiful, if not very heartening.

The troupe gathered themselves and began a spiraling procession, winding outward from the center. Through the crowd, people hoisted their banners and props, fell in behind the drummers and dancers, and headed down the road into town.

It was a somber procession, draped in mourning, trudging to the dirge-like beat of the Danse Macabre. Gray banners bearing skulls and mushroom clouds floated through the funereal crowd. At the rear, hovering menacingly over us from the flatbed truck, followed the red-eyed Grim Reaper.

Our route led through a residential part of town, but the streets were completely evacuated. From behind their tidy lawns, from behind the curtains of their suburban homes, the townspeople of Livermore peered out at the slowly-passing procession. A few adventurous souls came out and stood on their porches, pointing at us and talking in hushed tones. Some leaflets had been made up, but hardly anyone would come close enough to take one.

I was feeling adrift in the crowd, and I looked around for Holly. Finally I spotted her toward the back of the march talking with people from Change of Heart. She looked more like a gardener than an undertaker in her gray denim shirt and straw hat. She gave me a hug, but there was none of her usual vibrancy. "I'm really tired," she said. "I might have to go home early."

We walked along together, but it seemed like we were in different worlds. "The march feels weird to me," she said. "I wish we weren't using such negative images. That's what the Lab is all about, death. We ought to be about life."

I felt a twinge of irritation. "It's not like the Lab ever admits to what they're doing," I countered. "They paint this rosy picture of science serving humanity. Sometimes you need to use art as a mirror to say, here's reality —

The thousand protesters on October 9th marched several miles through the town of Livermore out to the weapons lab, which lay on the outskirts.

here's the true meaning of what you are doing."

"That's not the sort of art that reaches me," she said. "I need to see an alternative, a vision of a better future. What if we did a festival showing what we believed in, something really colorful, and invited the townspeople to come see who we are? I'd like to have some dialog with the people of Livermore, not just scare or guilt-trip them."

I didn't see much future in dialoguing with Livermore people, many of whom were families and friends of Lab employees. But I didn't want to argue with Holly, either.

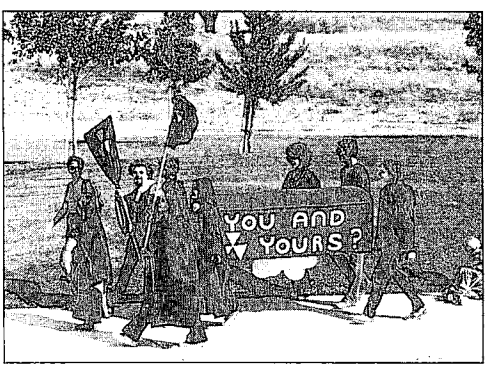
We walked along with Karina and Sara for the last stretch of the march. I wondered what their relationship was like. Next to Karina's exuberance, Sara seemed downright contemplative. She was tall, with a long nose and straight brown hair that hung nearly to her waist. "I can't believe they're building condos here," she said, pointing to a billboard announcing a future development in the abandoned farm field just up the road from Livermore Lab.

"Comes complete with a lifetime supply of radiation," I joked.

"Imagine raising a family across the street from a nuclear lab," Sara said. "Who would live here?"

"Lab workers," bantered Karina. "They're already in total denial." Sara laughed. Karina beamed and took her hand as we strolled along the roadside.

"It's not exactly denial," I



Affinity groups created funereal costumes and props for the march.

said, thinking back to my own education. "It's faith. People are taught this unquestioning trust of science. Science solves problems, it doesn't create them. Even when they distrust the government, people believe in science."

"Sounds like a new religion," Karina said. "Better living through radioactivity."

I laughed, but Sara looked pensive. "Americans can be so oblivious," she said. "We think that the planet exists for us to exploit and manipulate, and there will never be any consequences. The Earth might have ideas of Her own." She made it sound like such an ordinary observation that I found myself nodding.

Melissa fell in step with us. "We should ignore the police barricades and try to walk to the Lab gates. Just refuse to acknowledge them."

Musicians and dancers led the October 9th funeral march.

I tried to assimilate the idea. To me, the police seemed like an impersonal authority with boundless power to enforce their edicts. Even when we did CD, it was with the understanding that we would inevitably be arrested, that there was no escape. Defying police orders and getting away was another leap.

Karina seconded the proposal with such buoyant enthusiasm that Melissa took a step back. "The only problem is," Karina told us, "I can't risk arrest today. As soon as the march is over, Sara and I need to catch a ride back to the City for a pro-choice vigil."

We arrived at the southwest corner of the Lab, where we were handed a red, black, or white carnation. Daniel and a couple of other organizers pointed to a billboard-sized frame up near the intersection. The flowers were to be fitted into designated spots in order to spell out a simple message to the Lab workers and guests: "Convert the Labs."

"Is this your idea of positive imagery?" I kidded Holly, trying to lighten our mood.

"It is," she answered. "Flowers reach people who shut out negative images. The world is so harsh already. It's up to us to offer an alternative."

"The system already has an alternative," I said. "Disneyland. Nothing

negative is ever allowed to happen." As the words came out I winced, wishing I hadn't been so flippant.

Fortunately Holly seemed to take it in stride. "Yeah," she conceded with a smile. "But we need to offer real-life alternatives, examples of beauty and peace."

As we finished our bit of the flower-sign, we followed others down East Avenue toward the barricades between us and the picnic site. Police were routing most of the exiting Lab traffic away from our demonstration. Only people leaving from a small parking lot up Vasco Road would have to pass us.

"What the hell!" said Hank as he climbed out of the Reaper-truck. "We march all the way out here and no one will even see us."

"Doesn't look too promising," I said.

"We should have stayed in town," he said. "Then people would at least have to see us as they come home."

Some people took their signs to the small exit on Vasco, while others talked about how long it might take to hike around to the other side of the Lab.

Holly looked uninspired by the options, and went back to help Daniel with the flower-sign. I went up toward the barricade, where a hundred people had gathered. The barricade itself was simple enough, a bunch of metal sawhorses bedecked with yellow "Police Line — Do Not Cross" ribbon. Behind that stood a double row of riot cops armed with three-foot batons.

Among the protesters, there was no concerted plan of action. One AG was trying to get a song going. But those up front seemed more interested in venting their frustration at the line of cops, and their shrill voices carried the day.

All around, signs and banners drooped at odd angles. I followed Melissa and a few other people out toward the end of the police cordon, but both sides of the road had chain-link fences, and the barricade reached almost to them.

I was trying to rally my spirits when Caroline walked by wearing a forlorn expression. "We lost money on the rally," she said. "I was counting on today to raise money, not lose more."

I reached out and rubbed her shoulders, which were hunched. But I couldn't think of anything uplifting to say, and Caroline drifted off.

Needing an energy boost, I worked my way right up to the barricade, where the tirades continued. Across from us, the column of cops rocked on their heels and fidgeted with their batons while protesters took turns haranguing them.

Melissa wasn't one to abuse the police, but she was in a sour mood. She sought out the squad captain at the edge of the barricade and loudly expounded her views on freedom of speech. She demanded to know why a nonviolent group was not allowed to peaceably assemble up at the gates. The captain listened for a moment, then turned away. Melissa took a step around

the end of the barricade, still lecturing him. He turned abruptly and barked at the line of cops. Two officers closed in on Melissa, and she stepped back across the line, still jawing at the retreating captain.

Finally she turned away, and stalked over to where I was standing with Pilgrim and Walt. "It's like talking to a brick wall," she said with exasperation as she joined us.

"Of course," said Pilgrim. "They don't have to pay any attention to us if we're not risking arrest. I don't know why we bother with non-arrest actions."

I could see his point. But Walt's brow creased. "The Lab is working around the clock to destroy the planet. We can't just disappear till the next blockade."

I could see his point, too. Face it, that was about all we were going to accomplish today, anyway. Might as well appreciate it.

Melissa left us and wandered back toward the barricade. She walked out to the far end of the line and started admonishing a couple of cops. She tried to give them a leaflet, and shook the paper at them when they declined.

Pilgrim and Walt were still talking, but my mind drifted away. The baseball playoffs were on that evening. I hadn't had time to listen to any of the games so far, but if I headed home soon, I could catch the St. Louis-Atlanta game. Get my mind off politics for a while.

A scuffle at the far end of the barricade jerked my attention back to the protest. People hurried down that way. The cops bunched up to hold their line. Melissa, clutching a handful of leaflets, had actually slipped beyond the barricade. The cops on the line didn't go after her, but a roving officer came over and used his club to shove her back toward the crowd. "You can't come through here, this road is closed."

"I need to get up to the gate to leaflet," she stated, regaining her balance and stepping forward. People pushed against the barricades, but the cops held firm. Melissa was alone on the other side of the police line. "I have the right to leaflet in a public place."

Other cops headed for her. People yelled to warn her, but she was focused on the officer who had shoved her. He stepped back, and as Melissa took another step forward, two other cops grabbed her by either arm. Her leaflets went flying. Everyone was yelling, and a few people tried to follow, but the poised nightsticks of the barricade cops dissuaded them. Melissa went limp. The cops dragged her to a nearby van and shoved her in the back. They slammed the doors, and in a minute the van was gone.

Some people kept yelling and jostling the barricades, but a lot of us just stared in disbelief. Claudia walked past and said something about Melissa knowing what she was doing and being alright, but it didn't do much for my mood. I felt deflated, knowing I didn't have the nerve to follow. Sure, I'd join a blockade and even get arrested. But defying the cops on my own and getting hauled away? I wasn't ready for that.

A moment later, Caroline came by to tell me that Holly had taken off. "She

was feeling tired, and someone offered her a ride back to Berkeley if she went right away. She said to tell you goodbye, and asked if you would call her tonight."

"Sure," I answered, as if I expected Caroline to convey the message to Holly. Caroline walked away, and I stood alone, scanning the scene as if watching it on a movie screen.

The blue sky receded before the incoming fog. The sun was an orange dot over the distant hills. My mind drifted back over the Summer, over my months in LAG. Coming out of the blockade, I had seen LAG as almost a magical movement. From one hundred seventy arrests in February to thirteen hundred in June. Why couldn't we keep growing like that — growing till the government could no longer resist our numbers? Nonviolent direct action would accomplish what no armed insurrection had a chance of doing in this country.

This demo shook my confidence. Where had everyone gone? I felt sad, gray. LAG was fallible.

I thought about Holly again. How different it would be if we lived together, and she was waiting for me when I got home. I sighed. It wasn't the first time I'd thought about living with her.

Cars were coming out of the little lot on Vasco Road, so there was finally someone to wave signs at. But I felt an inclination to slip away, hike back to Livermore, and catch a bus home. It would feel good to be alone with my thoughts. And I could probably get home in time to catch the end of the baseball game.

I surveyed the bedraggled scene one last time, then turned to head back to town. But before I'd cleared the intersection, Hank and Mort flagged me down. "Hey, Jeff," called Hank, "We're heading back to Berkeley with the truck — you want a ride?"

I felt an impulse to make an excuse about running an errand in town. But who was going to believe I had an errand in downtown Livermore? "Does the truck have a radio? I think the playoffs are on."

"Yeah. Come on, the game's already started."

I GOT HOME around seven. Should I call Holly right away? Or hold off? Wait a bit, I thought. Listen to the end of the ballgame. St. Louis was up by a run when Hank dropped me off, but Atlanta was coming to bat. I flipped on the radio and tried to follow the action, but the announcer got on my nerves with his non-stop talking. I was relieved when the inning ended and I could switch it off. I didn't even catch the score. I put on a South African jazz tape. It was still on the hectic side, with a saxophone blaring over multilayered rhythms, but at least there were no words.

I paced around the living room. What was Holly doing? Was she expecting my call?

One hour and one large bowl of popcorn later, I was still debating with myself. Finally I punched out the number and listened to the jangling ring. Maybe she wasn't home. It rang for the fifth time. But then she answered. "Hey, Jeff." She sounded happy to hear from me, like she was expecting my call. "Feel like coming over?"

"Sure," I said. So it was as simple as that? I hung up the phone. Something felt unreal. Was it just me? I finished the popcorn and headed out. Maybe everything was fine between us, I thought as I walked across town. Maybe my fears that she'd get back together with Frank were unfounded.

And maybe they weren't. Was she asking me over to tell me that her feelings had changed? Surely not.

How well did I know Holly? Suppose she did want to break up? I had no idea how she'd go about it.

She greeted me with a hug. I leaned forward and kissed her lightly on the lips. Her eyes were welcoming, although, as usual, I couldn't make out what was going on under the surface. She leaned up and kissed me gently. I felt at a loss, and hugged her again.

"We could take a hot tub," she said.

I nodded, glad to have a plan. She led me through the house and onto the back deck. We lifted the lid, and a wisp of steam rose into the cool night. Holly lit a couple of candles, and we slipped out of our clothes and into the water. She leaned back onto the rim of the tub. "When I left Colorado, this is what I was looking for," she said.

I looked at her, wondering if she meant the hot tub, me, or both. I still felt uneasy. Should I bring up our relationship? Or just try to relax and enjoy the evening? I groped in the water for a seat. "This is harder than I thought," I said, not quite sure what I meant.

"What is?" She looked at me carefully. "Is there something you're wanting to ask me?"

"Well," I said, not sure how to answer, "I guess I'm wondering how it went with Frank."

She looked into the night. "Really nice. In some ways, we're growing apart. But in others, I feel so close to him."

I nodded quietly and didn't reply.

Holly looked at me. "If what you're asking is whether Frank and I might get back together —"

I tensed.

"— that's not going to happen, Jeff. I love him, but there were reasons we broke up, and they're still there."

I took a slow breath. Did I want to know the details? Yeah, in a way. But the night was short. This was a time for me and Holly. Enough about Frank.

We sat silently, submerged to our chests in the warm water. I bent over and kissed her cheek. She leaned her head against my shoulder and rubbed my

leg gently. A warm breeze rustled the tall trees along the back fence. Overhead, a sprinkling of stars glimmered through the haze. Had Berkeley ever been more beautiful?

Thursday, October 28, 1982

IT WAS JUST before Halloween when Change of Heart Cluster gathered for the first time since the June blockade. Holly's AG, Duck and Cover, had called the cluster meeting to start planning for the Vandenberg action, which was just three months away.

I remembered the Livermore blockade back in June — meeting my affinity group two days before the action. What a distance I'd traveled.

The cluster meeting was at Doc and Belinda's house in the Castro district of San Francisco. Holly and Karina and I rode over with Sara, who wasn't in the cluster but was going to a poetry reading at Modern Times bookstore after dropping us off.

The three of them talked about the Spiral Dance, a Wiccan ritual they were going to on Saturday night. Karina, up front next to Sara, turned in her seat to face Holly and me. "Our circle is building the south altar. We're invoking fire and passion."

"Actually," Sara said, glancing at us in the rearview mirror, "if you know anyone who has a red bodysuit, we need to borrow a few. We're going to dance around the altar with red veils before the ritual."

"We should paint our bodies red and do it nude," Karina said. I studied her profile. Her jaw jutted out, and she had a bright, expectant look on her face.

Sara shook her head. "You can do it, but I'm wearing a bodysuit."

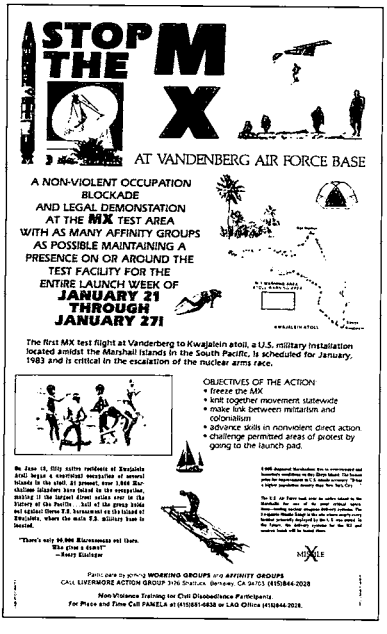
We got to the City early, and decided to walk through the neighborhood. Sara and Karina made last-minute plans, then kissed a long goodbye. Holly put her arm around me, and we kissed, too. "It's a double date," Holly whispered in my ear.

As Sara drove off, we headed down Castro Street, the heart of Gay culture in the City. It was dusk after a warm day. The big neon sign of the Castro Theater shed a soft glow over the Scarecrows, Dorothys, and Wicked Witches waiting in line for the "Sing-Along Wizard of Oz."

Across the street, Halloween looked to be getting an early start as men in elaborate and risqué outfits sauntered up the sidewalk to the cheers and catcalls of bystanders.

"This is nothing compared to Halloween night itself," Karina told us. "Last year, Castro Street was closed for three blocks, and all the side streets, too. It drives the cops crazy."

We turned off Castro onto Nineteenth. After a few small storefronts, the



LAG flyers seldom lacked for words, as this Vandenberg leaflet shows.

block turned residential, lined with old Victorians. Doc greeted us as we climbed the stairs to his flat. He flashed his bright orange fingernails for our inspection. Despite his flowing hair and long gray beard, Doc presented a fairly low-key demeanor, and the orange nails jumped out. "Halloween is my favorite holiday," he said as he welcomed us. "I can let out a part of myself that I spent years hiding."

"Yeah, let it out," Karina said, throwing her arms around him.

Twenty people from seven AGs gathered in Doc's front room. It wasn't a huge room to begin with, and overflowing bookshelves and record bins made it seem even smaller. Luckily, a wide doorway let a few people stand in the hallway. The rest of us filled two old couches, and a few sat on cushions in front of a bay window overlooking the street.

I knew about half of the people present, mainly men: Hank, Walt, Doc, Antonio, and Daniel. Among the ten women, I recognized only Holly, Karina, and Cindy.

We spent a little while checking in, then pitched into the Vandenberg action. Spokescouncils for the action had started up, every other Saturday. A number of us from Change of Heart had been at the first one. It had been unfocused, spending five hours and accomplishing little beyond agreeing on an agenda and facilitators for the next meeting.

But the spokescouncil was memorable on other grounds. One of my few political heroes had stopped by the meeting: Daniel Berrigan, the dissident priest. I'd heard of his protests since I was a teenager first coming into political awareness. He and other religious activists did "Plowshares" actions where they went into military offices and poured blood on files, or broke into assembly plants and hammered on nuclear missiles.

His anti-war actions reached me in Indiana and helped rouse me from my patriotic upbringing. If someone believed enough in peace to go to jail for months or years, maybe I should be listening.

Berrigan's visit t0 the spokescouncil was a surprise. There were fifty of us at the meeting, and we had a spirited talk with him about tactics and organizing. He was about to go on trial with several other activists for

hammering on missile nosecones at the Electric Boat plant in Connecticut.

"We couldn't do that," someone said. "LAG's nonviolence guidelines say, 'No Property Destruction.'"

"A missile is not property," Berrigan answered. "What's 'proper' about a nuclear weapon?" We laughed, but he pursued the point. "Property means something that is proper to human beings. So I don't think that it's 'property damage' to hammer on a missile whose purpose is to destroy human life, or to break a window to gain access to it."

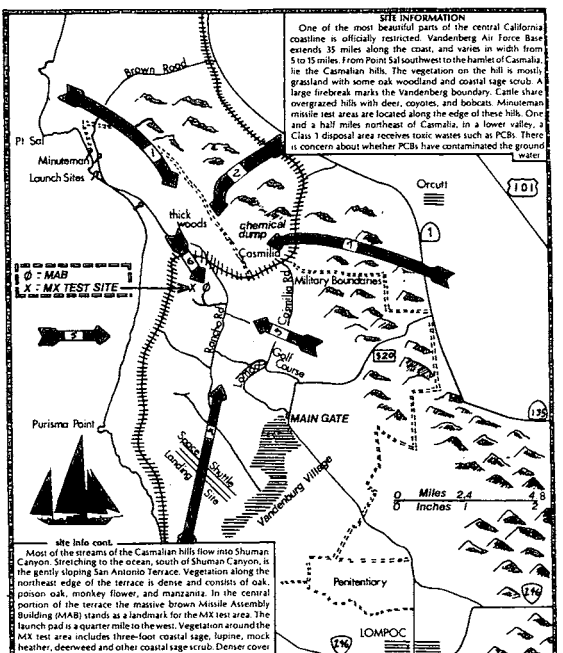
We started discussing it again at the cluster meeting, till Cindy called our attention back to the agenda. She was working on the handbook for the Vandenberg action, and gave us a background report on the MX. The new missile would have multiple nuclear warheads capable of striking Soviet targets with extreme accuracy, dramatically destabilizing the balance of terror.

The MX still required a series of test firings, though. The Democrat-controlled Congress, despite caving in to every military funding request that the Reagan administration put forward, had approved only limited initial funds for the MX. If we could successfully delay the tests, Congress might yet find the stomach to say no to the Pentagon and the military corporations.

Ideas for the January action started to fly, but Cindy had one last item in her report. "We need to remember that the MX test schedule is just tentative," she said. "We should be prepared in case the test is delayed."

"Prepared for what?" Hank asked. "We're not going to delay our action, are we? There's still plenty there to protest."

Everyone agreed with him, although one woman said she'd probably wait to get arrested until they



Vandenberg Action Coalition activists studied Vandenberg AFB and produced this site map, which guided protesters at the January, March, and June actions.

actually tried to test the MX. "I only get two weeks vacation all year," she explained.

"Well, so far *Aviation Week* says that the preparations are running right on time," Cindy assured us.

"Great," Karina piped up, "World War III is right on schedule."

We moved on into reports on the rally and campsite. VAC was trying to get farmland near the base to set up an encampment modeled after the 1981 Diablo action, a place where AGs could meet and network before going onto the base, and where support people could stay during the legal proceedings. "It's been hard finding land," Doc reported. "The FBI is talking to local farmers and scaring them out of letting us use their property. But the folks in Action for Peace and Disarmament down in San Luis Obispo are working on it."

Karina was next with the scenario report. She was kneeling on the floor in front of an old green couch. "This action is ideal for a backcountry occupation," she reported as she passed out a xeroxed map. She pointed to the upper portion of the map. "Most of the north area is wilderness. It's not even fenced in. We could go on the base at night, take cover during the day when they're searching for us, and move again at night. Even if they spot people by helicopter, it may be hard to get to us, since there are hardly any roads through the backcountry."

"I have a question," I said. "How bad is the poison oak?"

"Face it," Hank spoke up, "You can't go backcountry down there without running into poison oak."

That squelched some of my enthusiasm. I was willing to risk a lot for world peace. But poison oak?

Several other people looked just as queasy. Doc pointed out that even a blockade at the main entrance would disrupt the base and call attention to the arms race. But most of the cluster still favored a backcountry plan.

Walt was working on the legal collective for the action. "The key legal issue will probably be whether or not you are arrested on Air Force property. For people who blockade the road outside the base, it's the same as at Livermore — state charges. People who are arrested inside the gate will probably get federal trespass charges. If you go backcountry, trespass is also likely, but you may be risking additional charges like obstruction of federal property."

"What about a trespassing charge? What would we get for that?" Cindy asked.

"It's hard to say. There aren't a lot of precedents for mass arrests on military bases. But for a first offense, about two weeks seems likely."

"Two weeks?" Everyone started talking. It was a long stint, but for most people, two weeks seemed tolerable, especially if we were kept together.

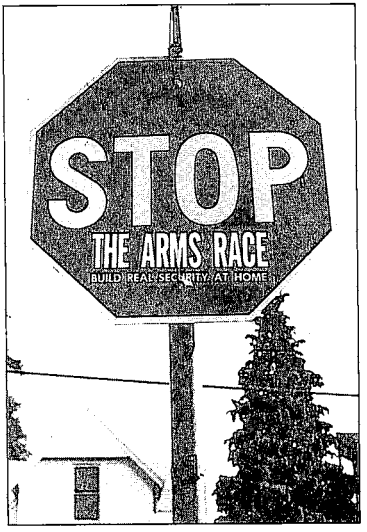
"There's one other possibility," Walt added. "It's this thing called ban-and-bar, where they give you a written warning and throw you off the base. You go

free at the moment, but they can hold it over you if you get busted there again. It's a way for them to avoid the immediate legal hassles."

"Not for long," Antonio said emphatically. "We'd return and occupy it again. We are not going away." A ripple of approval ran through the room.

Doc gave the Vandenberg work group report, and took a dig at Coordinating Council for trying to control the organizing. I started to respond, but most people seemed ready for the meeting to end, so I let it pass.

International Day was the final topic of the meeting. Holly gathered her papers. "A dozen groups from across the country and in England have already pledged to do local actions next June, and a lot more are discussing it. Members of the work group will be traveling around the U.S. and Canada over the next few months to meet with groups that responded to our first mailing. And Les and Aurora are planning a trip to Europe to network with peace groups there."



Few stop-signs in Berkeley lack a political footnote.

Holly passed around copies of the latest draft of the International Day Call. "The Call is still being hashed out," she said. "We need to get it mailed out soon, but if you have feedback, we're still open."

People gathered in a closing circle, arms around each other. "Should we sing a song?" someone asked.

"Wait," Karina jumped in, "I have something I forgot to announce. My affinity group is organizing an action next Saturday night. We have these bright red bumper stickers that say 'The Arms Race' that we're going to stick across the bottom of every stop sign in Berkeley. Here's a photo of one we did as a test. We need a lot of people, so tell your AGs."

The meeting broke up, but most people hung around talking for another fifteen minutes. Finally the last of us stepped out onto the sidewalk. The night had cooled, and I pulled on my sweatshirt. Up ahead of us, Hank called: "Is everyone going to go out next Tuesday and vote?"

"Yes, teacher!" Karina called back.

I wondered if they actually would. I planned to vote, but it was funny how little anyone I knew talked about the election. If you can *do* politics, why bother talking about Republicans and Democrats?

Daniel gave Holly and me and a woman named Megan a ride, steering his old Buick station wagon through the Mission district toward the freeway

entrance. Daniel and I rode in the front, Holly and Megan in the back of the big family car.

Daniel was in his mid-thirties, married, and the father of a two-year-old boy. Holly liked Daniel, but I hadn't warmed to him. When we talked, I felt put down. Partly it came from Daniel having a Ph.D. in Medieval literature, whereas I had dropped out of grad school and was studying history on my own. But it also related to the imperious way he dismissed Marxism, as if it were some simplistic prejudice that mature minds had cast aside. I was no hardcore Bolshevik or anything, but I had read Lenin and Trotsky and Gramsci, and it rankled me to hear them dismissed out of hand. I wasn't sorry to have him and Holly do the talking.

Holly sat in the back seat sorting index cards on her lap. "We're pasting up the first LAG Rag this Sunday," she said. "We need to have an International Day article."

Daniel gave a wry laugh. "Maybe we should reprint all the arguments over the International Day Call. Of course, that would fill the whole paper, and I don't see where it's gotten us. I have a hard time grasping the objections."

His tone goaded me out of my silence. Claudia and Mort had voiced major objections to the Call, and I shared them. "I don't think it's a big mystery," I put in. "The new-age tone annoys people."

"Yes," he replied, "I suspect what they'd prefer is a bland, voiceless piece of traditional leftist rhetoric."

"It's not about rhetoric," I said. "It's the content. There's no mention of any sort of oppression or injustice, no sense of conflict."

"That's because we're speaking about fundamental levels of being, not about humans' narrow perceptions," Daniel said flatly.

"Conflict seems pretty fundamental to me," I came back. "Workers and owners, tenants and landlords — these aren't superficial distinctions. It's reality."

Daniel tilted his head back slightly, keeping his eyes on the road. "Of course such conflicts exist," he said. "But I don't subscribe to the viewpoint that contradictions and oppositions between humans are inherent."

"Okay, maybe conflict isn't some inherent, unchangeable part of human nature," I said, warming to the debate. "But we're born into a world that is divided. We live in a world of polarities that we didn't create and can rarely escape."

He nodded knowingly. "Yet look closely at any so-called polarity, and it dissolves into a complex array of individual actions and motivations. Reality is overwhelmingly complicated. Any approach that starts from the idea that there is an 'enemy' to fight against is wrong. That's why nonviolence is so important. Moving beyond dichotomies and polarities is the underlying assumption of nonviolence."

"Maybe for nonviolence as a morality. As a tactic — "

"I was never interested in nonviolence as a mere tactic," he interrupted. "As a tactic, it's just another transitory device. It doesn't operate for basic change. As an ethos, it has the possibility of fundamentally altering the world."

I felt like we'd gotten away from the original issue: conflict. I tried a different approach. "Isn't a group that does direct action implicitly acknowledging conflict? It's hard to blockade someone without entering into conflict."

"I'm not arguing that the world is or can be free of conflict," he said. "The question is, how fundamental is this opposition? Most dichotomies are a function of limited perception."

"Limited perception? That's easy for us to say. What about the civil war in El Salvador? The army has killed fifty thousand people in the past decade. That has nothing to do with limited perception. You get to the hills and pick up a gun, or you'll be murdered in your home."

"Now you're positing that there's only one alternative," he said imperturbably. "Submission or violence. There are other ways."

Although I tried to clarify my point, he out-talked me. "For instance," he said, "Nonviolent organizing groups are working to protect the rainforests in Brazil. Of course, you may end up dead that way, too."

It still seemed that he was avoiding the core issue. I thought about reading Trotsky the previous year. "Aren't there moments of crisis," I said, "when the blurred lines and ambiguities become very clear, and you're either striking a deal with the ruling class, or you're rebelling and you're in great danger? Aren't there times in history when the polarities are objective? That's the question."

"But what are these polarities?"

"To submit or to fight."

"To stay and fight involves a wide range of choices."

"Sure — but the choices are no longer to 'appreciate the complexity of the situation.'"

For the first time, Daniel was ruffled. "I object to that," he said with evident restraint. "This is not a patrician position. I think you would find plenty of so-called proletarians who realize that things are a lot more complicated than the simplistic rhetoric of American leftists. If you look at a situation like the civil war in El Salvador, if you look at the actual individuals, you'll see that the ties of friendship and family cut across the supposedly clear lines of the conflict. Human reality exceeds all our boxes. And it's not just philosophizing to say that. It's a description of how people actually experience the world."

I didn't have an answer. Daniel settled back into his usual professorial mode as he turned off the freeway into Berkeley. "This is the problem that the traditional left has in communicating with the public," he said. "Marxist analysis is so remote from how life feels. It doesn't speak to the reality of

people's daily lives. We have to learn to speak in a language that touches people's hearts."

Holly, whom I didn't even realize was listening, leaned up between the seats. "The vision of International Day is aimed at people outside traditional left circles, people of ecological consciousness, people who have a holistic view of the world. People like that are rising up all over the planet. That's who our Call will reach."

I shook my head. "But how is a new-age Call going to work as far as building a local coalition? Mort said he'd be embarrassed to take it to the Central America support groups."

Daniel sighed. "I don't especially want to work with those traditional White leftist groups," he answered. "The forms in which they operate are an obstacle. I'm not looking for a coalition. I want people to get involved directly in our actions."

It seemed like a hopeless disagreement. I knew how Mort and Claudia felt, and Daniel was intransigent. I didn't envy Holly's having to try to resolve it at the next International Day meeting.

As Daniel pulled up in front of my apartment building, he changed the subject. "Holly tells me that you're interested in Medieval and Renaissance music. I have a fairly extensive record collection from my academic days that you might want to look through. You're welcome to borrow and tape them."

"Thanks," I said, struck by his generosity. "I have a few that you might not have, too."

As Daniel drove off, Holly turned to me and smiled. She put her hand gently on my arm. "I guess I just assumed it was okay for me to spend the night with you," she said.

"Sure," I said. We stopped outside the front door and hugged. My chest tingled with the warmth of her embrace, and I took a deep breath. "Sure," I whispered. "You can stay here anytime."

Tuesday, November 9, 1982

ELECTION DAY brought a big victory for the local progressive slate, Berkeley Citizens Action. Despite being heavily outspent by the landlord's party, BCA held the mayor's office and captured most of the seats on the city council, rent board, and school board.

Holly and I got up in the middle of the night to go "door-knobbing," hanging slate-cards on every doorknob in our precinct, and I felt like I was part of the victory. Part of the vanguard. Let the media make fun of "far out" Berkeley — we were forging the path of resistance to Reaganism. How long till the rest of the country followed?

The question clearly alarmed the rest of Alameda County, and the

suburban majority on the Board of Supervisors took up the struggle. Sorely vexed that some demonstrators in Berkeley had burned an American flag and gone unchastised, the County Supes ordered the Berkeley city council to humiliate itself by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of its meetings. The city council naturally refused, and the Berkeley school board entered the fray by voting that the purchase of state-mandated American flags for the classrooms would be given the "lowest priority" in the new budget.

Into the heated controversy stepped the newly-formed Commie Dupes affinity group, who decided to honor the supervisors with a special musical visit. Cindy from my old AG was in the Dupes, and invited me to join the chorus. Given how little singing I'd had time for lately, it sounded like fun, even if the dress code was a stretch: "We want to make a good impression on the suburban supervisors," Cindy said.

Now there was a challenge. Luckily, Holly's housemate Randall loaned me a dinner jacket that was only a little too small. I scored a pair of slacks and a button shirt for two dollars at a thrift shop on Telegraph, and I was styling.

Catching BART during the crush of the morning commute was a wake-up call. I arrived in downtown Oakland jostled and craving sugar. I found a donut shop and got a couple to go, then made my way to the Board of Supervisors' chambers.

Our crowd, seated together on the left side of the room, numbered two dozen. And a nattily-attired group it was. Most of the men were wearing ties and jackets. Daniel sported a monogrammed handkerchief in his pocket. Women wore gowns and make-up, and a few were in high heels.

Cindy handed me a songsheet of patriotic classics. I scanned the lyrics, confident I knew most of them by heart. It would feel good to be singing, no matter what the content. It felt like weeks since I'd really opened up my voice.

At nine o'clock on the dot, the supervisors emerged from backstage and stepped to their places on the podium. The audience rose to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

I kept my eye on Cindy, figuring she knew the timing. Along with the rest of the crowd, she recited the Pledge. I followed along, saying by rote the words I'd mouthed every day in grade school.

As everyone else sat down, we remained standing. Cued by Daniel's rich baritone, we launched into "My Country 'tis of Thee." Others in the crowd, no doubt impressed by our fashion finery, joined in. Up on the podium, the supervisors reacted with surprise and pleasure. A couple sang along.

We worked our way through "You're a Grand Old Flag" and several verses of "America the Beautiful." The supervisors looked irritated, and a couple besmirched their reputations by conferring with anxious aides during our performance. But when we struck up the "Star-Spangled Banner," everyone in the room dutifully rose and faced the flag with hand over heart through all four stanzas.

We could have held the supervisors captive all day by repeating verses, but we were holding up the meeting for everyone else as well. As the strains of the national anthem faded, Cindy stepped forward and faced the dais. "We'll stop imposing our patriotic gestures on you — and we call on you to do the same. Patriotism should be a voluntary act, not a display mandated by the government."

We applauded her words as we filed out of the room. And I heard more than a few people in the audience applauding, too.

Monday, November 15, 1982

THE HIGHLIGHT of the next couple of weeks was an action at Livermore by Pilgrim and Imagine affinity group. Their AG had been doing monthly leafletting at the Lab since Spring, keeping the protests visible.

Apparently too visible. In September, Lab security warned Imagine to stay clear of the entrance gates or face arrest.

That was the wrong threat to make to Pilgrim, who counted the June blockade as his thirty-first career bust, and had notched number thirty-two with the Walnettos in October. Once he heard about the ban on leafletting, he and his AG announced the date for their return visit, and asked other LAGers to come out and support them.

Mort, Hank, and I took the afternoon off and rode out to the Lab together. A light drizzle coated us as we stood along the roadside holding signs, waiting for Pilgrim and Imagine to finish their last-minute planning. In the crowd of twenty supporters I spied Monique and Melissa, but no one else I knew.

Traffic was sparse, and I walked over to where Melissa was holding one end of a banner. It was the first time I had seen her since her arrest at the October demo. She had been away visiting her family, and although I knew she'd gotten out of jail okay, I hadn't heard anything else about it.

"Hey Jeff, I saw the LAG Rag," she said as I approached. "It looks great."

I welcomed her praise, proud that she knew I'd been involved. Holly, Caroline, and I had coordinated the all-day production marathon, and I also wrote a short critique of the Freeze campaign. The paper turned out to be eight pages, since on production day we wound up with twice as much material as would fit into the four pages we had planned. Not bad, eight pages. That was no newsletter — that was practically a newspaper.

I buttoned my jacket against the misty rain, and asked Melissa what had happened after her arrest at the October demo.

"Wow, that seems like a long time ago," she said. She gazed into the distance. "I was just fed up with their trying to tell us where we could and couldn't protest. You know what was funny, though — when they took me in for booking, there were all these tables set up with fingerprinting pads and

stuff. They were obviously ready to arrest us all if they had to!"

"Sounds like we've got them worried," I said. "Do you still have to go to court?"

"No," Melissa said scornfully. "I didn't commit any crime, so they never filed any charges. It was just harassment."

"Typical," said Mort, who had put down his sign and joined us. "The point is to grind us down."

Melissa got me to hold her banner-pole while she tied on a scarf to keep her head dry. "So how are other things going with LAG since I left?" she asked. "Daniel told me that the International Day Call got mailed out."


LAG RAG
LIVERMORE ACTION GROUP NEWSPAPER
50¢
INSIDE:
Non-Violence Code on Property
THANKSGIVING ACTION
BAY AREA CALENDAR
VANDENBERG MEETING
OCTOBER 9TH
INTERNATIONAL DAY
Spokes Meeting
CISPES RALLY
SING-ALONG
Introducing Our Newspaper . . .

LAG Rag #1, November 1982

"The Call!" Mort said. "Four pages of new-age drivel."

Melissa recoiled. "I thought the Call was beautiful when I read it," she said.

"Sure, as poetry," Mort said. "It just happens to completely disregard reality. Every problem in the world is reduced to individual motivations. There's no awareness of class conflict or the control of wealth and resources. New-age 'no conflict' ideology is totally irrelevant to most political groups. There's no way we can build a local coalition around it."

I didn't disagree, but I wished Mort would tone it down a notch. I could imagine how this played out at International Day meetings: Mort going off about power and class, Daniel dismissing it all as superannuated leftism, Mort sputtering back about privilege and analysis, Daniel rolling his eyes.... And Holly wedged between the two of them, trying to get some work done.

"Maybe the Call isn't perfect," Melissa said, taking the banner-pole back. "But we have to put forward a vision. After the June blockade, people around the country are looking to us. If we put out a proposal, it might catch on."

"And then what," Mort said impatiently. "There's this fantasy that we'll do International Day year after year, and the blockades will get bigger and bigger until the arms race ends and the government collapses and we all live happily ever after. What a strategy! Growth means a lot more than bigger numbers.

There's this naive idea that if enough people do civil disobedience, the government will be paralyzed. As if the government needs our consent to operate! Even if they did, they wouldn't ask for it — they'd manufacture it."

Melissa started to say something about keeping faith, when someone from her AG interrupted her. Mort seemed satisfied with himself. I thought again of Holly trying to mediate the disputes, and asked Mort if he had raised these issues with Daniel outside of meetings.

"Oh, I've tried," he said with a wave of his hand. "It's pointless. Any criticism is taken as an attack. It would just turn into a fight."

I looked away in silence. With that attitude, it probably would, I thought. I had a hard time listening to his attacks on International Day and Holly's work.

Just then Monique caught my attention. I started to say hi, but she cut me off. "People in my affinity group were really upset over your Freeze article in the LAG Rag," she said sharply. "A lot of them worked on the Freeze."

I groped for a response. What could I say? Knowing that the referendum had passed, I felt free to vent my true feelings. I called the Freeze a distraction from real organizing, and accused it of sucking energy into a non-binding advisory measure that the government would completely ignore. Not that I didn't believe those words. But my face reddened as I recalled being mad at Mort for attacking other people's work.

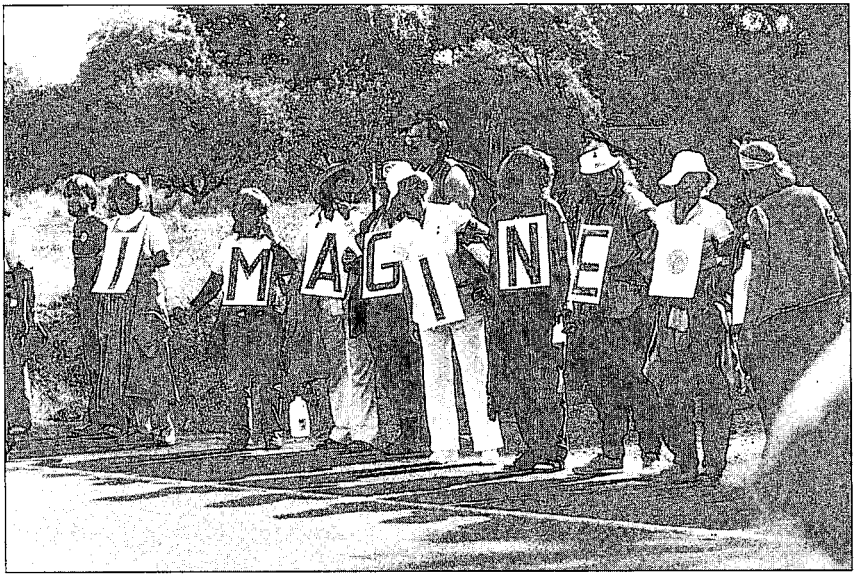
"I was criticizing the electoral system," I said apologetically. "It wasn't meant as an attack on individuals."

"Well, that's how they took it," Monique answered. "The Freeze got a lot of new people involved in the peace movement, and they felt like the LAG Rag was minimizing their contributions. Nuclear weapons are the single biggest problem facing the world today. We don't need divisiveness. We've got to work with anyone who will join us."

I shuffled uncomfortably. I wanted the paper to reach out to all blockaders, to pull people together, not cleave to a purist line. "Maybe you could write up the other side of the argument," I offered.

"I'll think about it," she tossed back as she walked away. I took a deep breath. Next time, think before you pop off, I told myself. I didn't want to jeopardize the paper's support by having it — or myself — seen as representing one viewpoint or clique.

Imagine AG finally broke from their huddle. The rest of us shored up our picket line and held our signs high as six men and two women came up the roadside toward us. Pilgrim, full of bustling vitality, was out in front in his usual jeans and flannel shirt. His sparse white hair jutted out of a bright red



Imagine affinity group organized many small actions at Livermore Lab, particularly involving leafletting rights. April Fool's Day was another Imagine favorite.

headband. As he reached our lines he turned, and his AG joined hands in a circle for a moment. Then, armed with leaflets and xeroxes of anti-nuke articles, they strode up to the Lab gate.

One of the cops at the guardhouse ambled over, wearing a tired smile. "You're not planning to get arrested again today, are you, Pilgrim?"

"No, officer, just came to exercise our right to pass out a few leaflets."

"Do you have a permit to do that?"

"Sure have," Pilgrim said politely.

"Let's see it."

"It's called the United States Constitution, first amendment."

The cop shook his head. "Not good enough. If you attempt to distribute any materials we'll have to arrest you."

Pilgrim reached into his sidebag. "Would you like a leaflet, officer?"

The police quickly took Pilgrim and the others into custody. The arrests didn't come as a shock to anyone, least of all the AG, who planned to plead not-guilty and try to get a trial.

"There's a good chance of them winning, or of getting the charges dropped," Melissa said as we gathered up the signs and banners afterward. "They can't stop you from leafletting in a public space. It's still a free country."

"Appreciate it while you can," Mort tossed out.

"Yeah," Hank said. "1984 is coming up fast."

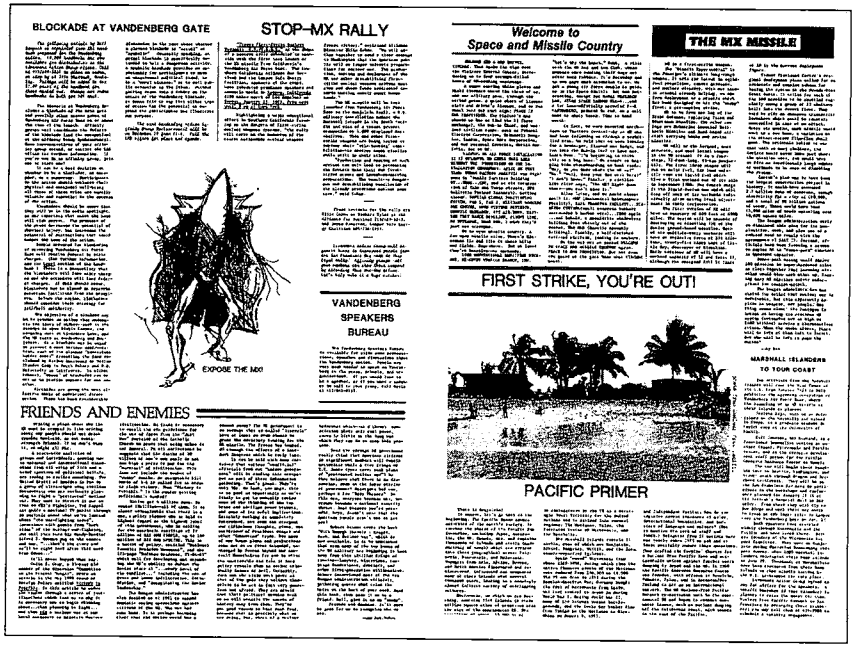
We hit the highway back to Berkeley. Hank and Mort planned to get a

burrito, pick up a six-pack, and play some pinball at Hank's shop. "I just got El Dorado working," Hank told us. "Fastest flippers in the house."

I had reserved the evening for reading and guitar, but I figured I could hang out with them for a while. I pictured Hank's shop as a mytho-poetic lair of flashing pinball lights and 1960s paraphernalia. When we arrived, what I saw was a dilapidated twenty-foot-square building with cinder block walls, whitewashed wooden rafters, and a corrugated roof. In the middle was a big steel workbench, surrounded by the tools of the trade. Beyond a row of acetylene torches and metal scraps, a bunch of banged-up old arcade games lined two walls. Several had their playing fields tilted open to expose the under-wiring. In front of one machine was a big cardboard box overflowing with tools and wire.

Hank walked past the workbench, reached behind a toolbox, and flipped a switch. Miraculously, the place sprang to life. A dozen classic pinball machines filled the room with twinkling colored light. A Wurlitzer in the corner started playing "Jumpin' Jack Flash" by the Rolling Stones. Neon signs glowed on the walls, along with an animated display of a waterfall filling a Schlitz beer mug.

Hank opened a small refrigerator under one of the machines and handed each of us a Pilsner.


BLOCKADE AT VANDENBERG GATE

STOP–MX RALLY

Welcome to Space and Missile Country

THE MX MISSILE

FIRST STRIKE, YOU'RE OUT!

VANDENBERG SPEAKERS BUREAU

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

PACIFIC PRIMER

The second LAG Rag featured two pages of articles on different aspects of the Vandenberg action — a forerunner of later "theme sections."

"The games are all wired to play for free," Mort told me. "Just push the reset button."

"That's great," I said. "These things used to bust my budget."

Hank tinkered with the wiring on one of the open machines. "The idea is to restore them, then convert them from bloodsucking capitalist mercenaries into socialist workers at the service of true revolutionaries everywhere."

I laughed. "What a noble mission!"

We played a few rounds on different machines, my favorite being Queen of Diamonds, which I remembered from my teenage years. Between games, Mort pulled out one of the largest joints I'd ever seen, lit it up, and passed it to me.

"Hey, we forgot the train," Hank said as he passed the joint back to Mort. He went over by the jukebox and flipped a few switches. Above the machines a model railroad engine chugged into gear, hauling several cars in its wake. Between a couple of boxcars was a silver missile launcher with an American flag on the side.

"Every model train should have one," I said.

"Check out the last car," Hank said. "A friend of mine from Earth First! just gave it to me." I took a closer look. Neatly stacked on the yellow flatcar was a load of clear-cut timber, heading for the market.

"What's next," Mort said, "a nuclear waste car?"

We shot pinball for another hour. Hank and Mort talked about going to a movie, but I decided to head home.

"Where's Holly?" Mort asked.

"Holly? I'm not sure," I said. "She has a friend visiting from England. I didn't talk to her today."

"Oh, that's right. I was thinking that you two lived together."

His comment was innocent, but it hit home. I'd been thinking of asking Holly to live with me lately. I imagined how it would be if she were at home, and I were heading back to spend the rest of the evening with her, talking, listening to music, making love.

If I knew she'd say yes, I'd have asked her already. But Mort's remark triggered the other side, the reality that she had other friends, other commitments, and a house she considered her home. Did I expect her to give it up and move into my box-like apartment? It wasn't impossible. Just steep odds. Was I ready to risk asking?

Thanksgiving Day, 1982

HOLLY AND I were seeing each other two or three nights a week, sleeping over at her place or mine. But it was rare that we spent a whole day together. She

mentioned going to the Native American Un-Thanksgiving at La Peña, but I wanted to set aside the day for just the two of us.

Holly sometimes spent holidays with her family in Colorado, but stayed in Berkeley for this one. Myself, I hadn't gone home for a holiday since my freshman year in college. Drinking whiskey and watching football on TV wasn't my idea of a Great American Tradition I wanted to perpetuate.

Still, as a young kid worshipping God and Country, Thanksgiving had been my favorite holiday. I devoured tales of the American Revolution — Ben Franklin, Samuel Adams, Betsy Ross, Paul Revere, John and Abigail Adams — never doubting that their legacy lived on in our times, that my country really was the land of justice and freedom, and that our disproportionate wealth was a divinely-ordained reward for the truth and light we brought into the world.

Coming of age toward the end of the Vietnam era, I'd let go of most of that baggage. But Thanksgiving was still a romantic season for me.

Lately I was dreaming a lot about living with Holly — how great it would be to spend every night with her, to see her every day without making special plans. A week or so earlier, while we were out on a nighttime walk, I asked her in a roundabout way if she'd thought about it.

Ocean Beach shorebirds enjoy dinner at low tide.

She took my hand and turned to face me. Her hand felt warm in mine. "I really like being with you, Jeff," she said. "I'm committed to our relationship. But I'm not sure I'm ready to live with a lover again. I think I need the challenge and support of a collective house." She paused and looked directly into my eyes. "But I want you to know that I love you."

Under a corner streetlight we hugged. I pressed Holly to me, feeling the warmth of the best relationship I'd been in since college.

But afterward I wished I'd been more direct. She hadn't exactly said "no" to my question. Maybe if she knew how much I wanted her. How much I wanted to know that at the end of the day, whatever else had happened, we'd be lying in bed together...

For Thanksgiving, we planned a trip to the ocean, followed by dinner at my place. We met at noon, and by one o'clock we were rolling through San Francisco's Sunset district on a sparsely-populated Muni train. Retail shops

mixed with houses lined our route. The buildings got progressively smaller as we approached the ocean.

The train let us out at the four-lane road that cut the beach off from the rest of the City. We made it across the road, crested the iceplant-covered dunes, and looked out over the ocean. From the boundless west, low waves washed onto the beach. The sun sparkled against the cool blue sky, scattering patches of emerald green amid the white of the surf.

To the north, where a craggy promontory rose, breakers dashed against rock-islands jutting out of the sea. On the tip of the promontory was perched the Cliff House, a nondescript commercial building that added a quirky touch to the picture. Beyond the Cliff House, a patch of low-lying fog was gathering. Beautiful as the blue sky was, I almost wanted the fog to roll in and give the day more of a gray Thanksgiving feel.

Holly and I stood at the edge of the dunes, gazing over the vast beach. I felt an impulse to go running down the sandy incline to the water, but Holly took my hand and steered us along a more leisurely route.

She was telling me about a guy named Jerald who had been arrested earlier in the week down at Vandenberg. "He was scouting out routes through the backcountry and the military police spotted him. He pled no contest and got ten days."

"Ten days," I repeated. "That's less than we were expecting. Not like it would be a picnic, but I think I could handle ten days, if it's with other protesters."

We strolled along the tide's edge. Holly looked out at the ocean. "The hardest part would be being away from the office for ten days. Every day there's something new to think about for International Day."

I nodded. Thinking about International Day was Holly's job. She had been hired along with Caroline as a LAG staffer. People at Coordinating Council were worried that we were already behind on pay to Craig and Claudia, but everyone agreed that we needed an International Day staffperson, and Holly was the obvious choice. After that, we had little option but to entrust Caroline with trying to raise the thousands of dollars we planned to spend in the next eight months.

Holly pitched into International Day with all her heart. She was out of bed at dawn every morning, brimming with purpose. It was a dream job for her, using her administrative skills to help organize an international peace protest.

Just before Thanksgiving she had visited DQ University, the Native American school near Sacramento, for an encampment and pow-wow. "We did some good networking for International Day," she said. "But mostly it was an honor to be included in the ceremonies. You would have loved the drummers and dancers. It was so beautiful, you could feel their kinship to the Earth, to the air, to growing things."

Holly stopped to tie a scarf around her head, and I put my arm around her

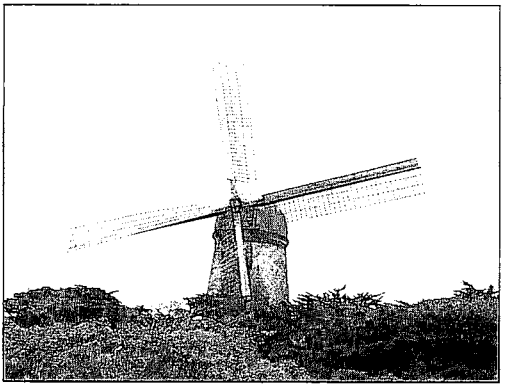
shoulders. Even if I didn't share her enthusiasm for spirituality, I loved the softer, reflective facet that it brought out.

"You should write it up for the LAG Rag," I said.

"I was thinking about that," she said. "We should run it by other people."

"It's true, we already have a lot of stories." We'd held an editorial meeting for the upcoming issue and made a story list — a great leap forward from the spontaneous first edition. I took responsibility for a feature section on Vandenberg, with stories on the MX missile, the military and political background, and the action scenario.

"There's just one thing bugging me," I said, picking up a piece of driftwood and sidearming it out into the surf. "The name, 'LAG Rag.' It feels like a joke. I want the paper to have a serious name, something that says what we're about."



The "Dutch" Windmill in the northwest corner of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, designed by Alpheus Bull, Jr. and completed in 1903.

She smiled. "People like 'LAG Rag.' It's humble. You know what I want to bring up? Production process. The last issue was so frazzling, everyone racing in at the last minute and dropping their articles off." She gritted her teeth.

"I kind of liked that frantic feeling," I confessed. "It felt like things were jumping."

"I know you liked it," she said in a bemused tone. "But it's not how most people like to work, especially when they're volunteering. Our lives are frantic enough." She stopped and took my hand. "Want to turn around and head back?"

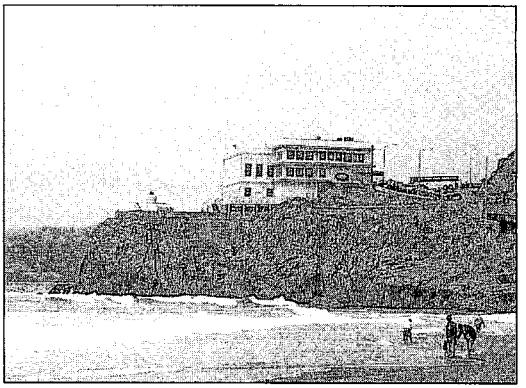
We had walked a good distance down the beach, which stretched far to the south before ending at some low hills. We turned toward one another. I gazed into Holly's eyes, which radiated warmth. I soaked it in. She loved me, I couldn't doubt it.

And yet, however much affection her eyes conveyed, there was never urgency or need. Was something missing? Yet she seemed happy enough. She even told me recently that she and Frank had stopped sleeping together. Wasn't that what I wanted? Why couldn't I let go of the doubts?

We meandered along the wet sand at the tide line. Little shorebirds darted in and out of our squishy footprints, scouring the freshly-washed beach for their Thanksgiving dinner. Holly danced her fingers in imitation of the frenetic

birds. "What hard work!"

To the north, beyond the promontory, fog was rolling in toward the Bay. But our part of the beach was still sunny. We were coming up on the southern corner of Golden Gate Park, a wild stretch that ran along the ocean for about half a mile. Near the edge of the park stood an old windmill with its arms removed. I was curious about the missing arms, and we hiked across the highway to inspect it.

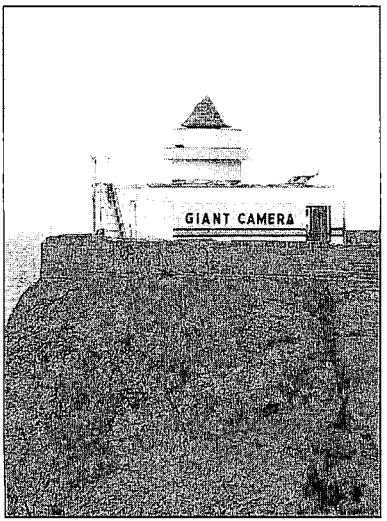


The Cliff House, at the northern end of Ocean Beach. To its lower left, looking like a tiny temple, is the camera oscura room.

We entered the park and circled the thirty-foot wooden tower, which had been brought over from Holland years earlier. The arms, made of huge beveled beams connected by lighter latticework, were piled up on the ground. "What a work of art." I said, inspecting them closely.

"And totally ecological," Holly said. "We haven't advanced over this."

"I wish it were working." I looked up at the dome-shaped top where the arms would have been mounted. The sky was still bright blue, but fog clouds were condensing and blowing past, forming a picturesque vista behind the wooden tower.



Camera oscura chamber, descended from a design by Leonardo da Vinci.

"I think the one at the other end of the park is working," Holly said.

"I never noticed that there were two," I said. "Let's go see it." We hiked north on a narrow trail that skirted the edge of the park, winding through scraggly underbrush and low, wind-gnarled trees. We talked about the windmills, thinking how they might have been made by our own European ancestors. In either of our genealogies might be a great windmill engineer.

"It's funny," I said, "I study history, but I never think about my own family line beyond my grandparents. I wonder

what my ancestors were doing ten generations ago? I'd be curious to know."

"Rituals are good for that," Holly said matter-of-factly. "At the Spiral Dance last month, we did a trance-journey to the Isle of the Dead, and each of us called upon an ancestor."

I tried not to sound skeptical. "Did you hear anything?"

"I felt like I did," she said, seeming to gaze back to that moment. "I spoke with a peasant woman who raised ten children and became a village healer in her old age. I told her I didn't want to have children, but that I wanted to do healing work for the planet. I could tell she believed in me."

I noted Holly's calm, focused expression, and nodded silently. Talking to the ancestors? Well, who was I to doubt her? Holly wasn't prone to making wild claims.

We arrived at the second windmill, its arms attached and turning gracefully in the steady ocean wind. Against the backdrop of weathered trees, it looked like a huge creature guarding the entrance to the park. "No wonder Don Quixote thought they were alive," I said, tracing the circuit of the majestic arms.

"A windmill on the ocean probably never stops turning," Holly said. "Why doesn't every house in San Francisco have one? It would be free energy."

"That's just it," I said. "There's no profit in free energy."

The fog was taking hold, and the grayness of sky and ocean imparted an autumnal spirit. As we ascended the hill to the Cliff House, a wave of good feeling washed through me, and my earlier doubts ebbed. What a beautiful day.

We got juices at a café and went back outside. "Want to see if the camera oscura room is open?" Holly asked. She led me to a little round building below the Cliff House. The door was open, and we stepped through a curtain into a dark room. In the center, several people were gazing down into a shallow dish eight feet across, where a projection of the ocean was displayed so clearly that you could spot seagulls flying from rock to rock. "The light comes in through a tiny opening in the roof," a guide explained, his voice filling the dark chamber. "The image is projected by mirrors onto this dish. The camera oscura was developed by Leonardo da Vinci, the famous painter."

Back outside, I said to Holly, "Leonardo da Vinci, now there's a guy I could imagine as my ancestor."

"Maybe you could go to a ritual and talk to him," she suggested. I wasn't sure whether she was joking or not, but it made me smile. Go to a ritual and talk to Leonardo. There's an idea I had never considered.

We stayed a little longer, gazing out at the choppy gray waves. Finally we headed back toward Berkeley. The plan was to go to my apartment and have dinner, then over to her house to take a hot tub and spend the night.

Traveling through the transbay tunnel on BART, the train was too loud to talk, and we sat silently. I found myself thinking again about living with Holly, how nice it would be if we were heading "home" now.

It wasn't like she was holding me at a distance. Lately we had talked about forming an affinity group with Caroline, Walt, and a few other people that we actually had an affinity with, not just for the Vandenberg action, but as an ongoing support group. And working on the newspaper gave us our first shared project. Our activism was right in synch.

But I wanted more. I wanted to feel like we weren't just co-organizers, but that our lives were twining together. I loved being with Holly, loved how relaxed I felt whether we were alone or in a crowd. If we lived together, I thought, I'd feel her presence even when she wasn't around.

Dinner was simple. I had baked a turkey drumstick and some potatoes the day before, so all I had to do was heat some frozen corn and stovetop stuffing, open a can of cranberry sauce, and voila, Thanksgiving. Holly had brought some lentil soup and a salad. "I got us a vegan pumpkin pie, too," she said. "I'll heat it while we're eating."

We sat on the floor with the food in a circle around us. I put on a classical guitar tape, and Holly lit a couple of candles. I knelt and slipped my arms around her from behind, burrowing into her thick blonde hair to kiss her neck. She leaned back and squeezed my arms to her.

Right now, I thought. Here's the moment. Ask her to live with me.

I almost did. But with all the food ready, it didn't seem like the moment.

We ate our fill, and opened a bottle of wine. It was unusual for her to drink, but she sipped at a glass. Pushing the dishes aside, we stretched out on the carpet, quietly listening to the music. My eyes roved over the art prints on the wall, but my mind was still sifting through thoughts about Holly. A Bob Marley album played in the background. "I'm jammin'," he sang plaintively. "Hope you like jammin' with me."

Holly and I lay on our backs, our heads sharing a pillow. What if we were together like this every night? I looked over at Holly. Her eyes were closed. "Holly, I want to live with you, it's really important," I imagined saying.

No, I chided myself, be patient. Let her enjoy tonight just as it is, then ask her next time you see her.

I propped myself up on my elbow and gazed down at her. She opened her eyes and smiled. "Holly, it would be so wonderful to have you live here," I whispered. "Have you thought any more about it?"

She paused for just a moment. Her eyes moistened. "Yes," she said in a soft voice. "I'd like to."

A tear rolled down my cheek, and I held her to me. My heart swelled, not with giddiness, but with deep satisfaction.

We lay together on the carpet for a long while, holding each other. When the tape player clicked off, neither of us moved, and for once, I felt like I could live without music. I looked into Holly's eyes, drinking in their deep greenness, their steadiness and subtle twinkling. "I want you so much," I whispered.

She stroked my hair. "I knew the moment you spoke that I'd say yes," she

said. "I love living at Urban Ecology, but I don't have time for that now that I'm working full-time for LAG. Still, I wasn't sure what I'd say until you asked again."

Asked again. I'd done it. Without knowing the answer. And look what happened.

We lay together a while longer. Finally she stretched and said, "If we're going back to my house, we better do it now, or I'll never make it."

She lay languidly on her back. I leaned over and kissed her. "We can take a hot tub this weekend," I said. "How about staying here tonight?"

Holly assented. We went out on the patio to get some fresh air. I gazed out across the Bay toward San Francisco, but Holly looked up at the moon. "Waxing," she said. "That's a good sign."

Monday, December 20, 1982

Stand on the moon and look at the Earth. In sunlight and solar wind it hangs, a pearl infinitely precious, whole and entire.

Stand on a mountaintop, stand by the sea. Land, air, water — they move round the great arch of Earth to meet themselves again.

About the globe the mantle of life clings, no less seamless than what it clothes. There are no breaks or barriers, only a million kinds of continuity.

Yet life threatens life with death. Human beings have distorted the variety of life into oppositions and polarities. Many have forgotten that life cannot be divided, only destroyed. In the pursuit of limited and local gains, we risk the loss of everything.

We are killing each other, and killing our planet. Everything we do affects all of us. We need to work together, consciously, for our common good.

— from the International Day Call

ANTONIO HANDED ME a crisply-printed copy of the final version of the International Day Call as I reached the top of the stairs.

"Thanks," I said. "Holly showed me a copy, it looks great." I remembered how excited Holly had been the day it came back from the printer, staying up late working on a mailing to dozens of activist groups.

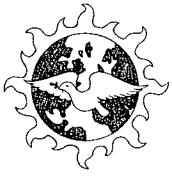
The last Coordinating Council meeting of the year gathered at Melissa's house in the hazy zone between the Mission and Castro districts, where bookstores and burrito shops alternated with leather bars and artsy cafés. Melissa lived with five other high-powered activists in the upper flat of an old Victorian. She and her roommates were involved in so many projects that they were practically a coalition among themselves.

As we assembled for the meeting, one topic was on everyone's mind. We'd learned a couple of days earlier that the government had thrown the long-

A CALL FOR

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

JUNE 20, 1983



PROPOSAL:

A day of coordinated local actions around the world to resist nuclear arms and power, militarism, intervention, and their social and ecological consequences. People will use whatever nonviolent means they think appropriate—civil disobedience, strikes, marches, vigils, demonstrations, individual initiatives, etc.

OBJECTIVES:

To further the causes of 1) global nuclear disarmament, 2) demilitarization and non-intervention, 3) equitable distribution of wealth and resources within and among nations, and 4) a sustainable relationship between the human race and the planet.

To protest, halt, and disrupt the design, production, transport, and deployment of nuclear weapons worldwide for at least one working day.

INTRODUCTION

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We are killing each other, and killing our planet. Everything we do affects all of us. We need to work together, consciously, for our common good.

The roots of war are deep, and the A-bomb, the H-bomb and the neutron bomb are its most poisonous flowers. They must be eliminated, for they threaten the very existence of life on earth.

At the same time, if we hope to achieve a lasting peace, nuclear disarmament can only be the beginning, the necessary pre-condition, of a profound process of transformation and rebuilding.

The June 1982 U.N. Special Session on Disarmament demonstrated the unwillingness of the world's nuclear powers to disarm. It is clear that we cannot rely on governments to promote peace without serious pressure from their citizens. We as individuals, working with one another all over the earth, must take upon ourselves the responsiblity of stopping nuclear destruction.

On the days leading up to the Solstice in June 1983, we call for people all over the world to say NO to nuclear weapons and to the increasing world militarism which squanders precious resources needed for basic human necessities.

We call for, in fact, the celebration of an annual world holiday for peace and justice.

THE ISSUES

The threat of nuclear war increases each second. An emergency situation confronts us as the world's nuclear powers move closer to deploying first strike weapons, designed not to deter an attack but to launch one. Two of these weapons, the cruise missiles and the Pershing IIs, are slated for deployment in Europe this year, 1983. Plans to test the MX missile in the Pacific also continue for 1983. These dangerous plans must be resisted with all our will.

Funds for human needs are increasingly siphoned off for war preparation while world unemployment, malnutrition, infant mortality, lack of adequate housing, and other societal ills abound. We must work diligently to change the existing social, political, and economic order, nationally and internationally, wherever it fosters suffering and favors war.

Accelerating militarism increases the likelihood of war, and new "conventional" weapons make war much more violent. Military conscription forces young men, especially poor men, to coerce other people, to kill, and to die. The current military build-up pushes us toward destruction and away from a civilized, peaceable world.

Intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries is bringing death to hundreds of thousands of people each year, and untold misery to others. Wherever intervention exists, it must be opposed, and the right of people to self-determination affirmed.

Discrimination by race, class, sex, age, and religion, is reinforced by a militaristic world. To change that world, we must begin now to live as we would in a more equitable society, and to eliminate these inequities in our daily lives and institutions.

The opening page of the International Day Call, which was drafted by a LAG work group and sent out to grassroots groups around the world in Winter 1982-83.

Hundreds of groups responded, and over three hundred groups in North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia did events around Summer Solstice 1983. Over twenty groups did civil disobedience, some for the first time. See participants' list in Appendix.

Visit www.directaction.org for more information on the 1983 International Day of Nuclear Disarmament. Full text of the International Day Call in the Appendix.

feared monkey wrench into our Vandenberg organizing: the MX test was delayed. "You can't count on the government for anything," Claudia said in genuine aggravation as I sat down next to her on the couch.

We were meeting in the living room, already crowded with couches and cushions and now heaped with coats and scarves. Claudia, Daniel, and I sat on an old couch along the back wall. Holly, Hank, and Lois were on cushions on the floor, with Mort, Caroline, and Craig on the next couch. Walt and Antonio set up folding chairs by the door.

A minute later, Doc and Belinda stepped in, and the temperature in the room rose a couple of degrees. They represented VAC, which had been sending rotating spokes to our meetings for the last couple of months. Belinda eyed the room suspiciously before greeting Melissa. Doc took a seat next to me on the couch, and I welcomed him to the meeting. Being in Change of Heart, Doc and I had a special bond, even if we were on opposite sides in the Vandenberg disputes.

I was less excited about Belinda's presence. She sat with her feet planted firmly on the floor, one hand squarely on each knee, as if impatient for the meeting to begin. I knew she and Doc would go over the organizing with a fine-toothed anarchist comb. But in a way it was good to see both of them. What better evidence that despite all our differences, we were working together as the action approached?

Regardless of who attended, Coordinating Council always had its share of tense moments, as we hashed out every last detail of every conceivable topic. For me, it was a weekly seminar in grassroots organizing — how to get the next action together, how to pull a coalition together, how to keep LAG itself together.

And with the newspaper I'd found a niche. Several of us at the meeting were involved with the LAG Rag, but I was the one who kept track of the details and had the scoop on our production timeline. When people wanted to get something in the paper, they'd look to me to make a note.

Melissa brought in a tray with tea and coffee. People pulled their feet in, and she set the tray in the center. "Has everyone heard about the religious protests at the Lab this month?" she said as we got situated. "Today there was an AG that got arrested praying in the road outside the gate."

"Was that the Catholic Worker group?" Craig asked.

"No, they were last week. Today was Mustard Seed affinity group. Every day there's a different group organizing something. There have been Jews, Buddhists, Christians, and tomorrow, for the Solstice, there's a Pagan ritual."

I looked over at Holly, who smiled at the mention of Pagans.

Walt offered to facilitate, and the meeting got underway. The tensions around the MX test delay simmered through a few other topics, until finally we moved on to a report from Saturday's Vandenberg spokescouncil.

People shifted and leaned forward as Craig laid out the cold facts. "The

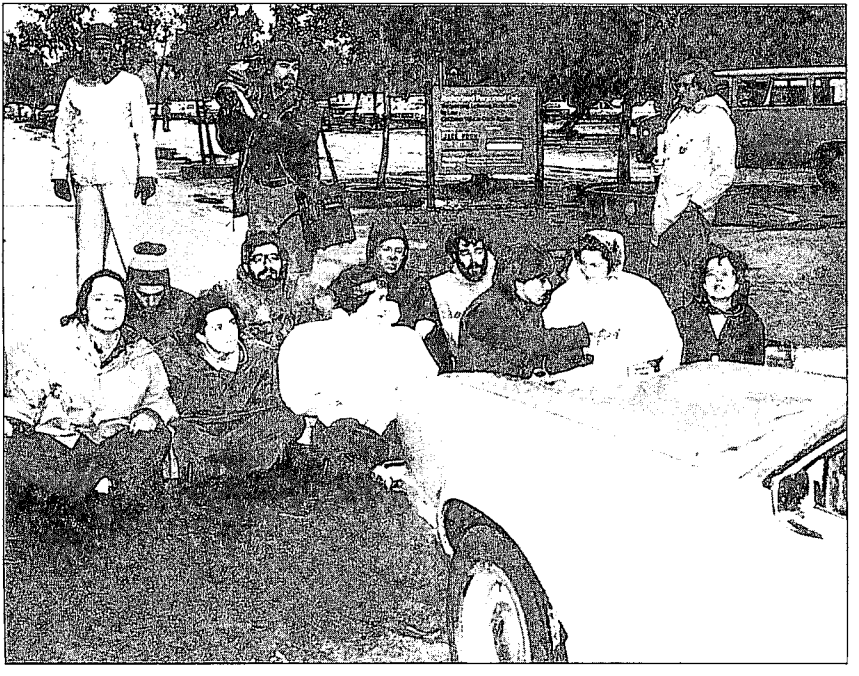
Washington Post reported that due to a technical failure, the test launch has been delayed at least a month. January is out. I've heard that because of satellite positions, the next possible launch date would actually be late March. And that presumes no further delays."

Different people tossed out comments about what it meant for us, but Claudia cut through. "We've called an action for January 24th. There's no question, we're going ahead with it."

It made sense to me. Several people raised their hands. Daniel addressed the importance of keeping our focus regardless of what the government did. A couple of others spoke to the same effect.

All the while, Belinda was steaming. When her turn came, her face was red, and she bit off her words. "I've been part of the Vandenberg planning, and I would say this changes a lot. If the test is delayed, our major action should be delayed."

Although Claudia tried to respond, Craig had his hand up first. He spoke quickly and firmly. "LAG called an action for January 24th. We've been organizing all Fall. Even if there isn't a test launch, a January demonstration would draw attention to the MX and the arms race." He looked around the circle, his gaze stopping on Belinda. "Besides, LAG has other commitments later in the Spring."



Protesters and security don rain gear for a wintry blockade of Livermore Lab.

Exactly, I thought. Wasn't that the point of LAG's three-action annual plan, to leave us the entire Spring to work on Livermore?

Doc was next. His brow furrowed, and he spoke deliberately. "I don't think this is a matter for Coordinating Council to decide."

Melissa looked astonished. "What is there to decide? It would be completely irresponsible to postpone an action that we have led people to plan for. We have to carry through on our word."

Others echoed her sentiments. By the time it came back to Belinda, her face was even redder, and her voice barely controlled. "If LAG wants to do an action, fine! But VAC called an action for the MX test date. If it's postponed, we need to start planning for that."

"I don't think many people will scrap January for a vague floating test date action," Craig rejoined. "People have to plan ahead for an action of this magnitude. It's clear where we should be putting our priorities."

"It's clear to *me* where our priority should be," Belinda shot back. "On stopping the test."

I wished I saw some way to defuse the tension, and I was glad when Melissa asserted herself. "Process, process," she called out. "This is turning into a personal debate. Obviously LAG is still committed to a January action. It was called for that date at the LAG Congress, and Coordinating Council can't call it off. People are also free to work on a floating test date action if they want. Is there anything else we need to discuss here? Can't we please move on?"

The combatants reluctantly agreed, but the mood remained edgy. I leaned over to catch a glimpse of Daniel's watch: nine o'clock. And that was before Walt delivered a legal collective update, and Mort gave a long report on the Central America protest at Concord Naval Weapons Station in late January.

Next came the finance report. Caroline fumbled with her papers. I winced for her. I'd been helping her with fund-raising, and knew how anxious she felt. She didn't seem quite ready to speak, despite having waited for the past two hours. Her eyes flickered with doubt, and her shoulder-length brown hair was knotted in the back from twisting it around her fingers.

"As I reported last week, or was it two weeks ago, yeah, anyway, LAG is close to $5000 in debt." The debt wasn't news, but hearing exact figures was sobering. We stared back at her. "And we, that is, by my calculations, LAG will be $7000 in debt by the time of the action." More stares and a few sighs answered her.

She picked up a sheaf of notes. "But the mailing, the fund appeal, is finally getting out to people, although we do need more volunteers to stuff the rest of the envelopes, but I'll bring that up later. And the Grand Raffle — "

She bent over and rooted around under her chair, producing a stack of raffle tickets. "We're hoping we can raise $5000 by selling raffle tickets. Grand prize is a trip for two to the hot springs in Baja, Mexico. Plus there's lots of other prizes."

Hank cupped his hands over his mouth. "Get your red hot raffle tickets here!"

"Exactly," said Caroline. "We're phoning AG contacts to get them involved."

"Get AGs to help with fund-raising? Good luck," Claudia tossed in.

Walt tried to move the meeting along, but Caroline raised one more item. "I wanted to say that the LAG Rag is still bringing in money." She pointed at me. "So far we've received over $2000 from the subscription appeal that Jeff wrote."

The commendation caught me by surprise. "That's great," a few people said, and I felt a flush of pride that lasted through the next couple of reports.


DECEMBER, 1982

LAG RAG

50¢

PUBLISHED BY THE LIVERMORE ACTION GROUP

This Is Not A Test! It Is An Outrage!

ISLANDERS RELUCTANTLY LEAVE HOMES

The Occupation of Vandenberg AFB

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE

LAG Rag #2, December 1982

We got through the rally and outreach okay, but then Doc got a look at the publicity flyers. "These Vandenberg flyers don't have VAC's contact number on them."

I winced as Craig snapped back, "That's because they're meant for LAG organizing."

"They make it look like Vandenberg is totally a LAG action," Doc countered.

To my relief, there was no support for pursuing the argument. Even Claudia seemed unexcited. "Let's get International Day done and get out of here," she said.

With that ringing introduction, Holly cleared her throat. She sat upright on her cushion and surveyed the notes on her clipboard.

She and Daniel and Antonio had just returned from the Mobilization for Survival conference, a gathering of grassroots groups held in Austin. "The Mobe officially adopted our proposal for International Day," Holly reported, her voice gaining brightness. "We talked with dozens of groups, and a lot of them are going to do something in June."

Mort scrunched his face, although I couldn't tell if it was about the Mobe

specifically, or the mere mention of International Day. He twisted in his chair and tugged at his goatee, but refrained from commenting.

Doc's brow furrowed, and he raised his hand. "I heard that in order to get this proposal on the agenda, we had to join the Mobilization for Survival."

"We affiliated," Holly answered carefully. "Coordinating Council agreed last month to affiliate with the Mobe. It's a coalition of grassroots groups like us."

Doc shook his head slowly, almost sadly. "Joining a coalition is not a decision for Coordinating Council. It should have gone to the spokescouncil."

Claudia let out a sigh. Doc turned sharply on her. "It's clear that Coordinating Council doesn't trust the AGs or the spokescouncil," he said.

"Is it any wonder?" Claudia answered impatiently. It was hard to tell if she was more irked at Doc's point or at the delay in the meeting. "If it weren't for Coordinating Council, half of the Vandenberg organizing wouldn't even get done."

Belinda smacked her knee in disgust. "It's exactly that kind of attitude — "

"Process, come on, process," Walt pleaded. "This is not the issue we're discussing."

"I don't see the point in discussing any of it," Belinda retorted. "The damage is already done."

"Then let's move on," Claudia said bluntly.

Belinda glared at her but didn't respond. Walt looked at Holly. "Did you have anything more to add?"

Holly's face was pallid. I felt sorry for her, having International Day dragged into the Vandenberg fighting. She added a few more details and wrapped up her report.

With that, the last item was struck from the agenda. We straggled into a closing circle. As we draped our arms around each other, a palpable relief filtered through the room. The conflicts still rumbled under the surface, but people seemed willing to let them rest. Here we are, I thought. Working together. Even if Claudia and Belinda won't make eye contact, we're all in the same circle. As I looked around at the familiar faces, I was struck by the personal rapport I had with each person. Holly, Mort, Doc, Claudia, Hank — the whole bunch. More than any time since I moved to California, I felt like I had found my people. We were building something together.

It was past 11:30 when the closing circle broke up, but the discussions kept on going as we put on our coats. I went over to talk with Doc, to let him know that I appreciated his viewpoint even when we disagreed.

He peered at me from under his bushy eyebrows. "I don't have a problem with disagreements," he said. "Clearly LAG has its priorities. What bothers me is when people try to control the movement, making decisions without consulting the affinity groups."

"I don't think it's control," I answered, standing my ground. "We called an

action for January, all of us, at the Congress. No one is saying that VAC can't call a floating test date action later on. But most people have to make definite plans. They can't put their lives on hold for months waiting for the missile test."

Doc shook his head. "That may be true, but it isn't a Coordinating Council decision. It's for the AGs to decide at a spokescouncil." His eyes locked in on mine. "Most people on the VAC work group want nothing to do with LAG, and this is precisely why."

I started to say something conciliatory, but Belinda was gesturing to him to go. "Well, happy Solstice," he said, giving me a hug. "See you next year." I hugged him back. If we couldn't settle all the politics, at least our parting was warm. I even stepped over and gave Belinda a hug, although that felt like a formality on both sides.

We finally made it down the stairs and out the door. "Don't forget, no meeting next week!" Hank called to everyone. "And there's a New Year's Eve party at my house in Oakland, everyone's invited. Costumes optional, dancing compulsory."

Sunday, January 2, 1983

IT WAS production day for the newspaper, so I didn't want to stay too long at the Vandenberg spokescouncil. But I figured I'd stop by and check it out.

The meeting was in the main hall of La Peña. Coming in from the street, it took my eyes a moment to adjust. The thirty-foot-square room was filled with disheveled rows of folding chairs. To the left was a large stage cluttered with microphone stands and cables. Framed photos of villages in the Andes were highlighted by small spotlights on the far wall.

Fifty people were milling around, swapping leaflets and listening to a mandolin player. I was surprised how few people I knew. Craig was talking with Lyle from Overthrow cluster. Claudia and Lois came in a little later. Walt and Alby from Change of Heart were there, and a woman named Ariel from Urban Stonehenge, an anarchist household over in San Francisco. There were a few more people I recognized from the Livermore blockade, but otherwise it was unfamiliar faces until Karina came bopping in.

When she entered La Peña, it was as if the lights came up. She was wearing a tight sky-blue sweater and her customary smile, and her spirit radiated into every corner of the room. I hadn't seen her much in the past few weeks, since she stopped coming to Coordinating Council. She shared Doc and Belinda's frustration around hierarchy and control. Compound that with the subtle condescension she had to take for being young and outspoken, and it probably wasn't the most inviting milieu.

I crossed the room to greet her, and we hugged for a long moment. "It's

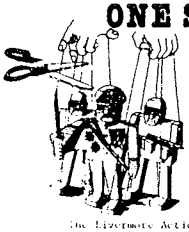
great to see you," I said, and couldn't help adding, "You've got to come back to Coordinating Council. We need you."

She squeezed my arm. "I will, I've just been too busy lately." We talked another minute, then someone else called to her. "Let's ride down to Vandenberg together," she said as we parted.

"Sure," I answered. "I think Hank is driving a van down."

I walked up front and looked over the handwritten agenda. It focused mostly on the upcoming Vandenberg action, with topics like the camp, action logistics, and an MX update. Partway down the magic-markered list was "Future Vandenberg Actions," which figured to set off some sparks. The test was delayed at least till March, and probably longer. But with nothing concrete to go on, I didn't see what arguing over a nebulous future action could accomplish.

As usual, the meeting was a half-hour late in starting. By that time, I'd made up my mind to split and work on the paper. I checked with Craig to make sure he was going to write a report after the meeting and bring it over. Then I headed for Caroline's new place down in the Berkeley flatlands, where we were doing layout.



ONE STRUGGLE — MANY FRIENDS

A TEACH-IN

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY
JANUARY 15th and 16th!

Veterans Memorial Hall
(Center and Grove Streets, Berkeley)

The Livermore Action Group is initiating a Teach-In on the Issues of our existence. Workshops and meetings will focus on the directions for the anti-nuclear movement in relation to the threat of nuclear war, on-going conventional wars, the economic crisis and the increase in racism, sexism, and political repression all over the world. On the birthday anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr, we seek to find our friends in other struggles, to share their concerns, wisdom, and most of all, the common bond between us. We seek to learn why our work is their work, why their fight is our fight.

At home we see racism, sexism, pollution, poverty, and the economic crisis. Abroad we see the multiplicity of murderous dictatorships. At home and abroad we see people raise their voices against this reality.

In dialogue with our friends in other struggles we see all of these issues as interrelated. How they are related is the focus of this teach-in.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15

9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
WORKSHOPS:
CENTRAL AMERICA --CISPES
AFRICA --African Resource Center
THE MIDDLE EAST--November 29 Coalition; Committee Against the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon
PACIFIC/MARSHALL ISLANDS--Bay Area Asians for Nuclear Disarmament; Marshall Islanders

2 to 5 p.m.
VANDENBERG ACTION ORIENTATION /OR
KING DAY RALLY
Bart to 12th Street & March to Rally

9 p.m.
BENEFIT DANCE AND GRAND RAFFLE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 16

9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
WORKSHOPS:
DOMESTICE VIOLENCE AND MILITARISM --TBA
LABOR--Plant Closings Project; Mike Berkowitz, Service Employees International Union
BLACKS AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT--John Allen, News & Letters
UNLEARNING RACISM --Ricky Marcuse
NATIVE AMERICANS --American Indian Movement
DRAFT RESISTENCE --Berkeley Draft Resistence

2 to 5 p.m.
TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS IN THE GLOBAL ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT: ALLIANCE BUILDING, CLASS VIOLENCE, PROPOSALS FOR ACTION --Marcy Darnovsky, Adam Hochschild

Childcare available.

Wheelchair accessible.

Livermore Action Group, 3126 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 644-3031

Members of LAG's Outreach Collective organized this multi-issue teach-in to develop a broader context for the anti-nuclear protests planned in Spring and Summer 1983.

We had finally renamed the LAG Rag. I kept bringing it up until someone suggested calling it "Action," which people liked okay. Then Mort added the prefix "Direct," and we knew we had it — Direct Action. We decided that two of our eight pages should cover other direct actions besides LAG, one page for the Bay Area and the other for national and global resistance.

A folk music show was playing on KPFA when I arrived at Caroline's, a small adobe house which she shared with three roommates. She, Holly, and several others were seated around a couple of small tables, working away.

I gave Holly a hug. Then Caroline took me on a tour of her new house. Caroline looked less stressed than when I'd last seen her, partly due no doubt to LAG's finances improving as we approached the action. But also, she had been subletting and house-sitting for as long as I'd known her. "Having a stable place to live makes such a difference," she said as we came back into the living room. "I didn't realize how much that had been distracting me till I moved in here."

We went over to the production table, where Holly was reviewing the story list. I put my arm around her. "How is it looking?"

"We're making progress," Holly said, showing me the page line-up. "We have to go up to twelve pages, though. There's way too much stuff for eight."

I was glad to see the paper growing, but I glanced at Caroline, knowing the extra expense would worry her. She pouted her lower lip, but nodded her agreement with Holly.

"Well, twelve pages sounds good to me," I said nonchalantly. "Anything that I can paste up?"

Holly pointed to a folder on the table. "How about typing up the Native American news and the letter about your article?"

Monique had written up the Walnettos' response to my diatribe on the Freeze. "Is that my punishment, that I have to type up my own criticism?" I said as I sat down at the typewriter.

As I got going, Mort came in the door carrying bread, chips, and a six-pack of Sierra Nevada ale. "Here's some supplies," he greeted us. "And I brought the ad for the Teach-In."

"How's the Teach-In shaping up?" I asked, looking over the ad.

"I think it's coming together," Mort said. "We have workshops or panelists from almost twenty groups. We'll get great cross-fertilization among the issues. Now we just have to get LAG people to show up."

"That's what the paper is for," I said. "We need to print more copies. We distributed all seven thousand of the second issue. I was lucky to grab a few for the LAG archives."

"Did we send Reagan a copy?" Mort asked.

"No way," I said. "He's got to subscribe like everyone else."

We toiled on through the afternoon. We figured that if we worked late that night, and then a few of us came back the next morning, we could get it to the printer by that afternoon.

I did a quick survey of production. Several pages were almost done, and the front page lacked only Craig's spokescouncil story. We were cruising along, listening to Joan Armatrading's "Show Some Emotion," when the front door swung open.

Craig stood in the doorway, his face impassive, his mouth slightly open. He fumbled for words, then burst out, "They called another action!"

No one moved. "What?" Mort said in a creaky voice.

"The spokescouncil just called an action for the end of March!"

Mort got Craig to come in and sit down. But in a moment he was up, pacing the floor. "I knew VAC was thinking of a future action, but I never suspected they'd call theirs before the January action was over. This totally undermines our action. And a March action will interrupt our organizing for Livermore this Spring."

"This is crazy," Mort scoffed. "This is the VAC work group?"

"Well, part of it," Craig muttered. He named a few people I vaguely recognized. "You wouldn't know them from LAG meetings," he said. "They don't think LAG as an organization should even exist."

"Doc and Belinda?" I asked tentatively.

"No, they weren't even there. They'd never have done it this way." Craig stopped pacing. His eyes swept our circle. "It's totally parasitic. We spend all Fall organizing and mobilizing people to do an action at Vandenberg — and then VAC not only pulls out of January, but they go and call a March action deliberately designed to draw people away from ours. They could have at least waited till ours was over!"

Craig paused, then flared again. "It's just backstabbing. These people — they said decisions I made — there was all this talk of hierarchy — they said I was leading a conspiracy in Coordinating Council, that I was betraying the movement..." He looked away.

Caroline walked over to Craig. "Didn't you or Claudia or anyone argue back?" she asked.

"Claudia had left by then. Lois argued some, but there was no real dialog. I certainly wasn't in a position to challenge them, after being declared the king of a headless organization." He chuckled for the first time, although in a jaded tone. "I could have made a legalistic appeal to the Congress decision, but VAC could claim that was just LAG's decision, and they aren't bound by it."

"I can't believe it," I said. "What about process? Aren't AGs supposed to have time to discuss new proposals?"

"Only LAG goes by that process, I guess. Anyone else can call any action they want," Craig said quietly.

Caroline put her hand on Craig's shoulder. "How are you feeling?"

Craig met her gaze, and his eyes reddened. "Well, to be trashed openly, to be humiliated and declared worthless, what can I say? It's just too much. A March action —"

His voice cracked, and he coughed sharply. "It's a deliberate attempt to undermine us."

I tried to think practically. "What should we say in the paper?"

Craig pointed at page one and spoke rapidly. "We'll have to tear up the front page. We need a big headline saying that the January action is still on. We have to show that LAG doesn't call off actions just because the government can't meet its deadline. The MX missile and first strike are still part of the government's plans. There's no reason to call off the protest."


January , 1983

DIRECT ACTION

80¢

PUBLISHED BY THE LIVERMORE ACTION GROUP

THE RIGHT ACTION AT THE RIGHT TIME

VANDENBERG ACTION STILL ON

LIVERMORE ACTION GROUP

STOP MX

NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION OCCUPATION VANDENBERG BLOCKADE

FIRST MX TEST FLIGHT??

This Missile Needs a Home. Won't You Help?

Direct Action #3, January 1983

No one disagreed. Craig took off to write his story.

I turned back to my layout work, but Caroline sighed. "The split over the dates doesn't surprise me," she said. "You always get power struggles. I don't entirely blame VAC for calling another action. I mean, Coordinating Council *is* kind of controlling."

"But what's the alternative?" I said. "Somebody has to make sure that the work is getting done. If VAC wants to do it differently, fine. But Craig's right — this is a competing action. It's bound to pull people away from January. Makes me wonder who's paying them."

"No," Mort said sarcastically. "They've got plenty of reasons to attack LAG. We're an affront to their adrenaline-rush mentality. For us to plan a year's worth of actions like we did at the Congress is a challenge to absolute affinity group autonomy to do whatever is hot at the moment."

Holly slowly looked up from her layout, as if measuring her words carefully. "We don't have to see it as an attack on LAG," she said. "Some people find LAG's organizing too hierarchical and centralized, and they want to do it differently. We don't have to take it personally."

"But a March action undermines our organizing," I put in.

"Some people will probably wait and do the March action," Holly conceded. "Some might do both."

"Well, I'm still doing January," I said. I looked across the table at Holly, who had looked back down at her pages. I hesitated, then asked, "How about you?"

"Probably not," she answered, looking up. "If it's not the actual test date, it doesn't make sense to take that much time off when we're so busy with International Day."

I searched for words and came up empty. All along I'd pictured us doing the action together. Our action — where did that go? I stared blankly at her.

She set down her work and came around the table. "I'm sorry, Jeff," she said as she put her arm around me. "I should have told you that I was thinking of not doing it."

"Yeah," I said sadly. "I hope everyone won't decide to wait."

"I'm still going to do it," Caroline told me. "It'll be a good action. A lot of people are psyched for it, they won't want to wait."

"You're probably right," I said. But I still felt deflated, as if what I was pouring my life into wasn't quite as important, quite as central, as I had thought it was. Why would people undermine us? LAG seemed like the best thing that had happened in the Bay Area in my five years here. I couldn't understand why everyone didn't see it that way.

Watching the pages of Direct Action coming together allayed some of my dejection. I finished typing the letters page and hunted for a good graphic. Caroline pasted up a page that covered Greenham Common Peace Camp in England and Native American news. Holly and Mort designed a new layout for the front page emphasizing the January action, so all we needed to do was plug in Craig's story the next morning.

I surveyed the pages as I finished my beer. "If we get it done tomorrow morning, we'll have it back from the printer by Thursday."

"We could work on the mailing at the office that night," Holly said. "It could be in the mail by Friday."

"And people would get it by the first of next week," Caroline picked up. "Once people know the action is still on, they'll plug in."

I appreciated her buoyancy, but the split over the date weighed on me. I tried to dismiss it as a conflict of personalities or organizing styles, but I knew there was no evading the core issue: control.

And I knew where I stood. I didn't have a problem with VAC or

Ad from the January 1983 Direct Action.

the spokescouncil. I liked the vision of a leaderless, collective action where everyone involved took a fair share of the responsibility. But if I were heading off to federal prison, who would I trust to keep track of the big picture — the LAG office, or a bunch of rotating AG spokes who met every other Saturday?

Sunday, January 16, 1983

HOLLY HELD the crystal up to the sunlight, rotating it to catch the rays from different angles. We were lying in bed on a Sunday afternoon, feeling lazy after making love. Bessie Smith's blues floated out of the tape player, and I had just opened a bottle of beer.

"The cluster meeting yesterday was really encouraging," I told her. "There are fourteen people from Change of Heart doing the action, plus Walt doing legal. Hank and Cindy from my old AG are going, Antonio from Lifers, Karina, and you know who else? Doc. He wasn't at the cluster meeting, but Rick was there from Enola Gay, and he said Doc is doing it."

Holly was still rotating the crystal, which she had hung in our window first thing after moving in. "I keep going back and forth," she said, "But I shouldn't get arrested."

"You're still riding down there with us, aren't you?"

"Yeah," she said, turning on her side to face me. "I'm looking forward to camping together on Sunday night before the action." She caught my eye. "Do you want to go backpacking sometime this Spring?"

"Well, maybe if we go to the ocean or the desert, so I don't have to worry about poison oak," I said. I thought about poison oak at Vandenberg. "Luckily for me, Change of Heart is doing our action at the front gate. Only a couple of people were in favor of going backcountry since the MX isn't there."

"Craig told me that Overthrow decided the same thing," Holly said. "But they aren't going to announce it, to keep the government wondering."

"How's Craig doing?" I asked.

"Craig? He's been totally absorbed in his work. He's on the phone all day, rocked back in that old tilting office chair he found." Holly seemed to be gazing at Craig, and got a concerned look on her face. "He acts like he's doing fine, but I think he's burying himself in the organizing to avoid his feelings. It must really have hurt him to be attacked at the spokescouncil when he's put so much of himself into the movement. But his attitude is more like, 'So what, who needs them? We're doing all the real work.'"

"Well, we are," I said half-jokingly.

"No, we aren't," she answered. "The spirit at the office has been good, though," she said. "The day we got Direct Action back from the printer, everyone was in a great mood. And the Vandenberg fund appeal we sent out last month has brought in over $3000."

"That's great," I said. "I'll bet that's helped the mood."

She lit a stick of incense. I lay back on the pillow and watched the first gauzy stream of smoke rise. A slight breeze rustled the curtains, sending shimmers of light across the wall.

Holly lay down next to me. Her thick hair brushed against my face. "Someone called last week from San Luis Obispo," she said, "and told us that a woman from the Chumash tribe, the original people of the area, will be at the action to lead a ceremony honoring the land at Vandenberg."

"That's great," I said.

She gazed up at the crystal again and drew a deep breath. "There's something perfect about it," she said. "We're not just blockading. We're reclaiming sacred land."