



THE

SOWER

True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers
from seeds sown in the spirit of peace. James, 3:18

Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa Number 6, Spring-2011

Dear Friends,

Whatever the final statistics for winter 2010-2011 look like, at Strangers and Guests it was a cold, hard winter. Plenty of snow cover, and gloomy days, icy winds, beautiful drifts and sparkling mornings were experienced, endured, enjoyed.

By the time the winter issue of "the Sower" was mailed out, Brian had left for his journey to Afghanistan (see page 2) and I was home alone mostly, 'till after Christmas when my sister Kathy came for a visit. I kept up with goat chores, feeding chickens, hosting Bible study, teaching a couple young guitar students, with visits to the Benedictine sisters at Clyde and a few visits from friends. There was weaving to do and the phone and e-mail to keep in touch with my far-flung family. On December 31st, on the tail of another "snow event" Brian arrived home in time for a New Year's Eve Party, greeting the New Year with family and friends.

Then Brian got sick- oh so sick! The cough he brought home with him (ask him about the air in Kabul) became influenza. According to plan, I took off for California, hoping he was past the worst, to attend a gathering for

Catholic Worker gardeners and farmers. It was great to visit the sister CW Farm at Sheep Ranch, enjoy their hospitality and see how they have built for sustainability and service over the years. Hobnobbing with other CW folk- old and new, about soil and seeds and seasons and all that Peter Maurin stuff was great. The movement is growing greener on many fronts and very encouraging to some of us veterans.

I traveled by train from Sacramento to Eugene, Oregon to see daughter Clara and hear her oboe recital performed at the University of Oregon as a requirement for her Master's degree in Music Performance, -wonderful music making!

Back home Brian struggled with the chores, in some blizzard conditions, but he and all the animals survived the ordeal. He hadn't much time to recuperate on my return before heading to Chicago for court preparations with the Voices for Creative Nonviolence people, then out to Las Vegas for the Creech 14's verdict and sentencing.

In Maloy the big February project was our Catholic Worker craft retreat (see page 5). Brian began speaking

(Dear Friends, continued on page 4)

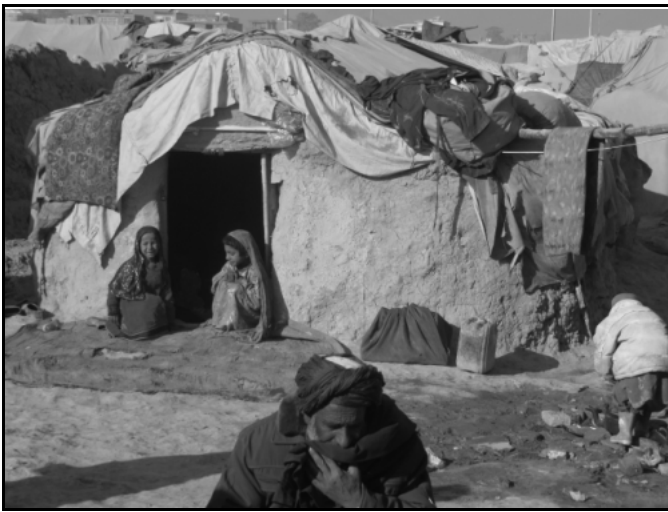


Betsy helping nature weave a fence of living willow branches photo by Veronica

A Report from Afghanistan Planting Seeds of Peace

By Brian Terrell

I travelled to Afghanistan in December for three weeks, participating in a Voices for Creative Nonviolence delegation that was hosted by the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, a group of young men from the Bamiyan province.



Chara Qumbar Refugee Camp in Kabul
photo by Hakim

Arriving in Kabul, Afghanistan, by air is a shock to the senses, all the more jarring in contrast to the opulent and conspicuous luxury experienced in the airport of the wealth emirate of Dubai, where most international travelers to Kabul have a layover. Unless one can get behind the blast walls of concrete and stone that surround the enclaves of the elite, it is difficult to find anything in Kabul that works, anything that is not broken, anything that is not covered with grime.

Over this all hangs a miasma of stinking smog. The air of Kabul by itself is said to kill thousands of its inhabitants each year and to contain more suspended fecal matter than does the air anywhere else in the world. There is the natural inversion occurrence trapping air over any city surrounded by mountains, as is Kabul, exacerbated by overcrowding, open sewers and the widespread use of burning garbage as a fuel for cooking and warmth. The streets and doorways are full of men armed with the ubiquitous Kalashnikov AK-47, all the more daunting with their faces covered against the smog.

Before the more than 30 years of war, Kabul was a cosmopolitan and elegant city of legendary beauty. There are still remnants of that splendor that can be seen. Much of the city was destroyed in the civil wars of the 1990s that brought the Taliban to power and by the 2001 bombardment by the United States when the Taliban was routed. When the US occupation began in 2001 the population of Kabul was about a million and since then it has swollen to more than five million and counting. Most of these newcomers are squatters, living in huts and shanties, often without plumbing or electricity, being built on the steep mountain sides surrounding the city.

In an insurgent war such as is being fought in Afghanistan, the county sides and their villages and farms are the most dangerous places to be. As hard and forbidding as life in Kabul is, it is at least a little safer than the home provinces from which these farmers and villagers have fled with their families. The refugees that I spoke with cited fears of the Taliban but more often of US and NATO air attacks, the night raids, the foreign private security forces and local militias that are armed by the US and the economic and social chaos of Afghan government supported narcotics trade.

I had the opportunity to leave Kabul for a couple of days and visit the farm of a friend, Nur Agha Akbari, in the Panjshir valley. This is an area that bore the brunt of violence in the war with the Soviet Union in the 1980s but



Brian in Panjshir photo by Mike Ferner

is relatively peaceful now. In some places in the mountain heights overlooking this valley spent Russian bullet shells lie as thick as gravel on the ground. It is here in this soil that Nur and other farmers are working both toward reconciliation and toward rebuilding an agronomic society and economy based on something better than graft or opium production.

The Panjshir is breathtaking beautiful (actually it was a great place to catch a breath after staying in Kabul!) often called one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Friends we met in Kabul from the various provinces all seemed to speak with reverence for the places that they had to leave. The deserts, mountains and planes of their homes are described only in superlatives- if there can be more than one 'most beautiful place on earth' they must all be in Afghanistan. My visit to Panjshir, its vistas, pure water, clean air, fresh food, all revealed to me the cost of leaving such places for the squalor of Kabul and the yearning of refugees for their home.

From Kabul we heard President Obama's "December Review" of the war in Afghanistan and his evaluation that "we are on track to achieve our goals." The president's optimism runs contrary to the assessments of The International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the World Food Program, even the US's own Intelligence Review, all reporting failed policies and a country spiraling out of control.

The book that I brought along on this trip to Afghanistan to read as a diversion was *The Plague* by Albert Camus and the bit that I read the night before the president's review was this: "The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding. On the whole, people are more good than bad; that, however, isn't

the real point. But they are more or less ignorant, and it is this that we call vice or virtue; the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance that fancies that it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill.

"There can be no true goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness," Camus continues, and a more clear-sighted review of the war in Afghanistan than that offered by the president is required. The best way to begin is to listen to the people of Afghanistan.

Hakim, the friend and mentor of the Afghan Youth

Peace Volunteers, reminds us of what Gandhi said about how the seed that is planted determines the tree that grows. Violence and war, such as the US and NATO occupation offers Afghanistan, cannot be the seed that will bring peace there.

The young men of the Bamiyan based AYPV who accompanied us are all survivors of the attempted ethnic cleansing of their home district by the Taliban. Most were internal refugees during those years and witnessed the killing of family members, yet it is from this group that comes the incessant demand for immediate and responsible end to our fighting there.

As a society we are more ready to take risks to fight a war than to risk for peace. Perversely, the inevitable risks incurred by war making are deemed acceptable, even if regretted, but the possibility of

any risk attached to peacemaking renders peace impractical. Daniel Berrigan grieves, "We cry peace and cry peace, and there is no peace. There is no peace because there are no peacemakers. There are no makers of peace because the making of peace is at least as costly as the making of war." These courageous Afghan young people are among the few willing to pay the cost required for peace and we should accept their challenge to join them.



Brian with some of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers in Kabul photo by Hakim



Chuck Trapkus

Dear Friends,

Continued from page 1

engagements around Iowa, and catching up with friends at the same time, in Des Moines, Ames, Cedar Falls and Dubuque. I began garden clean-up as the snow melted and weather permitted: starting seedlings indoors and potting up some herbs that overwinter in the house, cutting the basket willow. As March progressed we have been clearing up garden debris and starting to eat some fresh spinach, leeks and parsnips that overwintered. In the garden the perennial onions gave greened up and now are spicing up our beans and salads. The hens are laying and soon Brian will head out with a shovel to harvest the year's first horseradish.

Friend Veronica was back from Florida for a few weeks, picked up her car and headed back down south to take advantage of an opportunity to train in wild bird rehabilitation. Mark Kenney, pays a visit as he awaits an assignment from the Bureau of Prisons for his 6 month sentence for trespass at Offut Air Force base, headquarters of STRATCOM. He is helping with garden preparation and clearing some stubborn old stumps from the orchard to make way for new cherry trees to be planted this spring. Our friend and itinerant worker/scholar/craftsman Alex Iwasa is expected back soon for another growing season.

As the first space in the garden tilled up beautifully for parsley, peas and flax, I had to marvel at my luck to sit in this beautiful Iowa soil. The snow, ice and drastic temperature shifts leave us this wonderful medium for growing food and life on the land. And the winter is just long enough to take delight in spring, its glorious sunshine and the returning greenness.

We look forward to a busy growing season, and many helpers coming to join in the planting, harvest and eating in the coming months. We depend on the help of our readers to continue this CW rural outpost, of teaching, welcoming travelers, indoctrination and witness. Thanks for all your support.

Peace,

Betsy

Another Appeal...

October will mark 25 years since we moved here to Maloy to establish our experiment with living nonviolently and on the land. I remember our beloved friend Stanley Vishnewski, who died at Maryhouse in New York in 1979. He had been with the Catholic Worker since its inception 46 years earlier and insisted until the end that he had not decided, yet, if he was staying. I now recognize this as more than a clever quip. We are deeply rooted here but at the same time, our hold is precarious.

Most of our work on the farm is toward sustenance rather than income. We work harder at needing less money than we do at making it. Weaving is bread labor. The income that we might garner from selling handmade crafts is not all that it might be, due to our commitment to producing household items for use by our neighbors rather than "objects of art" for the homes of the wealthy. Taken by Martin Luther King's "fierce urgency of NOW," my work off farm these last years has been largely unpaid work for peace.

Another great anniversary coming up is the centenary of this magnificent house, built by Irish settlers in 1911. We try to be good stewards but with our hand to mouth existence, repairs and maintenance often are neglected. A new roof, new windows are needed but not on the budget.

These are times of uncertainty for all and we are grateful for all who help us along, spiritually and materially. Thanks to all who make the living and the work that you read about in this newsletter possible. We are broke and humbly beg your continued financial help. We are also in need of people to come here to this beautiful but poor place on the margins of Iowa to work with us to build a more sustainable life.

Love to all, **Brian**

A Craft Retreat in Maloy

This year "Strangers and Guests" hosted a craft retreat February 17th to 22nd in Maloy. Instruction, demonstration and hands-on projects included -

- fabric baskets with basket making guru Sandy Maxa, of Lenox, Iowa
- making rag rugs and mug rugs on a loom with Betsy
- creating insulating window quilts with Barb Kass from Anathoth Community Farm, Luck Wisconsin
- Candle dipping with Brian
- Hot process soap making with Sr. Cathleen Marie Timberlake At the Benedictine Sisters soap shop in Clyde, Missouri.

The communal and refreshing aspects of the retreat included cooking, eating (cleaning up) singing and playing music together, walks and talks and praying, a pot-luck meal and dancing with some of our local friends.



Barb brings the art of making window quilts from the frozen north, Luck, Wisconsin

Photos this page by Elizabeth Russell of Rock Island

Due to wonderful concentration, amazing things were accomplished. It was a fun, productive and creative time for all of us.



Catholic Workers Siobhan (Rock Island) and Chrissy (St Louis) finishing a rug. Below- Squeaky from Chicago weaves mug rugs

14 participants came from Iowa Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, along with a traveler from the West Coast, bound to settle in Iowa soon.



Here in Maloy this winter we hosted two craft retreats at which more than a dozen Catholic Workers from around the Midwest crowded into our farmhouse to join us and some neighbors to weave, make cheese, carve wood, dip candles, knit, make baskets, cook, eat, pray, dance and sing. We had fun but these sessions were *not* recreational in the conventional sense nor were we really "on retreat." These gatherings were, rather, the Catholic Worker movement going about some of its most serious business.

From an article by Brian in last spring's issue of *The Roundtable*, St Louis CW

The Creech-14 Verdict:

Guilty of Protesting US Drones

On January 27, a Las Vegas judge found 14 activists guilty of criminal trespass for their protest at Creech Air Force Base in April, 2009, finding that considering the harm done by drones operating at Creech are so far away, the defendants did not establish that that harm was imminent. Here are some of the defendant's statements at sentencing. Thanks to Kathy Kelly and the Nevada Desert Experience for these notes.

Brian Terrell: Brian cited a recent interview with a Drone operator; "...the war is 7000 miles away and the war is 18 inches away; 7000 miles, the distance from Creech to Afghanistan; 18 inches, the distance from his face to the computer screen. This distance is an illusion...our action purpose was to dispel that illusion; the danger we were addressing was and is imminent.

Kathy Kelly: "It's criminal for the U.S. to spend 2 billion dollars per week for war in Afghanistan that maims, kills and displaces innocent civilians who've meant us no harm."

Sr. Megan Rice: "I have listened to the voice of the victims of drone warfare; these weapons are aptly named drones, predators, reapers. I had to enter the base in order to obey higher orders."

Libby Pappalardo: "Our country is worse off because of the violence of war and militarism. It's necessary to take this next step."

Dennis Du Vall: "We cannot run from the consequences of our drone air war 7000 miles away; eventually it's going to come home to us. We're going to be the victims."

Mariah Klusmire: "As long as Afghan youth peace volunteers are working for peace and nonviolence in their country; I will too."

Fr. Steve Kelly: Through our presence, we were trying to make the imminent danger posed by drone warfare less remote."

Judy Homanich: "I prayerfully acted in solidarity with all mothers, daughters, wives and sisters here and around the world who suffer loss due to war."

Fr. Jerry Zawada: "We think of people on the other side of the border or the ocean as being different from ourselves; they're not; that's my family and your family too; we are one family."



Now available:

"Ground the Drones- the trial of the Creech 14"

A new book based on this "history making" trial

This 48 page book is redacted and only slightly edited from the original courtroom transcripts of the trial of fourteen activists arrested at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada while protesting the use of robotic "unmanned aerial vehicles," drones, for extrajudicial executions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Includes testimony from expert witnesses- Former US Attorney General RAMSEY CLARK, Col. ANN WRIGHT, former US State Dept. diplomat, and BILL QUIGLEY, legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, in response to questions posed by defendants Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Jesuit priest Steve Kelly and cross-examination by overzealous deputy district attorneys. Kathy Kelly's opening statement and Brian Terrell's closing statement are included, as are the conflicting (and conflicted) orders of Judge William Jansen.

"Vegas drone trial makes history," read one local newspaper's headline, describing proceedings that took place on September 13, 2010 in Justice Court of the Township of Las Vegas. In this trial the defendants and their witnesses skillfully circumvented a judge's order to severely limit testimony to the bare "facts" of an alleged trespass. They were able to witness not only to drones as a murderous and unthinking leap in war technology but also to the grave legal, moral and religious responsibilities of citizens of a nation engaged in wars of aggression.

Keeping the format of a trial transcript, "Ground the Drones" naturally lends itself to dramatic group reading. It is useful as a resource for those actively resisting war crimes in the streets and the courts and for those considering joining them.

A \$5 per copy donation is suggested and can be obtained from Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm. A pdf file of "Ground the Drones" can be emailed to you gratis, from brian@vcnv.org.



By Alex Iwasa

From March 12-18 I was able to participate in No More Deaths' Alternative Spring Break. I volunteered for their desert relief project, making water and food drops on the trails used by people walking from Mexico to the US.

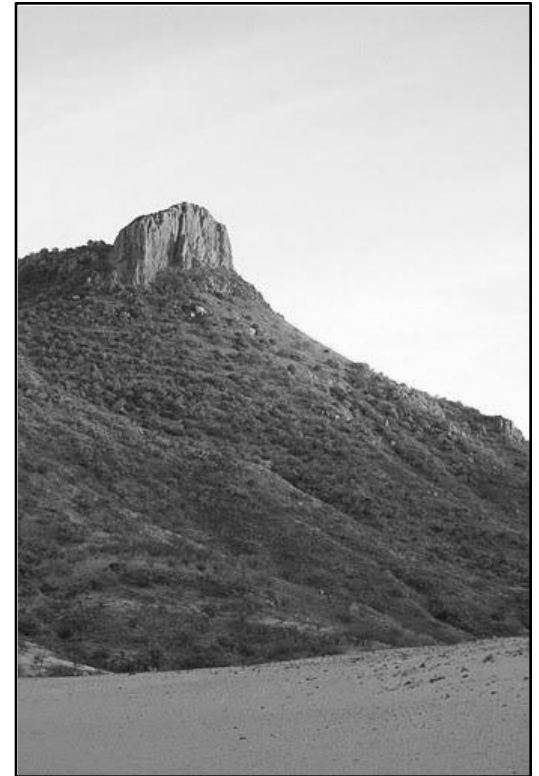
The Mexican-US border is arguably a low intensity war zone. I don't use the term lightly, nor for dramatic effect. 253 people have died in the desert from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, and deportations of undocumented workers hit a record high under President Obama of 387,790 in fiscal 2009.

Some of No More Deaths' other work includes documenting the abuses of recently deported people staying in Nogales, Mexico.

Please check nomoredeaths.org for more information about their work. You can also check the Multimedia section of the Workers' International Industrial Union website to learn more about the history of the Mexican-US border:

http://wiiu.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=39&Itemid=58.

A book I would highly recommend to learn more about the border situation would be Enrique's Journey, and another film I would recommend and hope to show in Iowa is Asalto al Sueno.



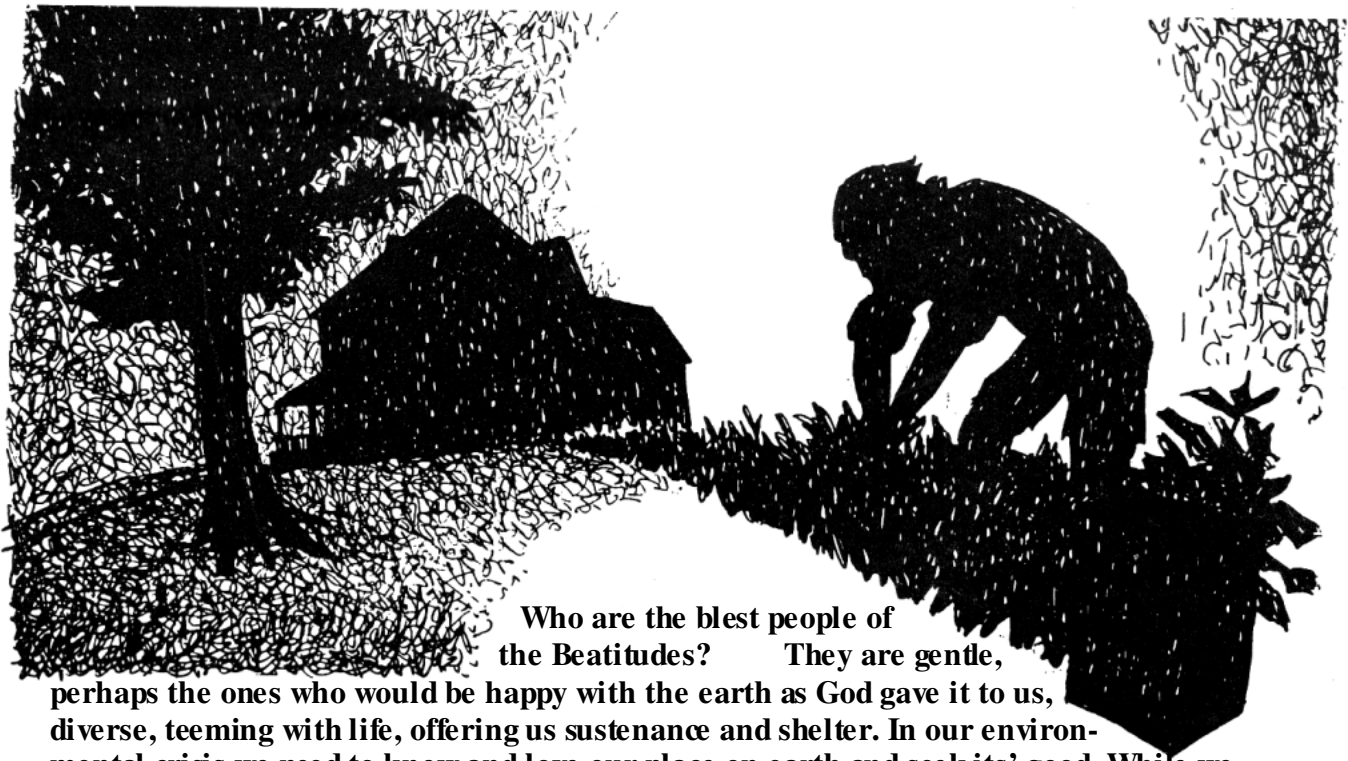
Photos by Fionna Fallon

Alex will be making a presentation on the work of No More Deaths and the low intensity war going on along the border between the US and Mexico.

**Tuesday, May 31 at 7 pm
Foxtown Music Hall
Maloy, Iowa**

Contact Alex at S&G for more information





Who are the blest people of the Beatitudes? They are gentle, perhaps the ones who would be happy with the earth as God gave it to us, diverse, teeming with life, offering us sustenance and shelter. In our environmental crisis we need to know and love our place on earth and seek its' good. While we have concern for the whole, attention to detail is key; to water flow, sources of contamination, pressure on wild animal populations, and plant diversity. Watching the migrations of birds, the signs of Spring. Slowing down, staying put, paying attention is vital.

Betsy Keenan, from "A Plea for Stability," published in *The Catholic Worker Farmer*, Spring, 2011

Graphic by Chuck Trapkus+

THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

Catholic Worker Farm

108 Hillcrest Drive

Maloy, Iowa 50836

641-785-2321

Brian Terrell, <brian@vcnv.org>

Betsy Keenan, <keenanweaving@yahoo.com>

Celebrate the
Summer Solstice
and feast of
St John Baptist
in Maloy

Saturday, June 18

Come celebrate with us
the gift of the sun and
the longest days of the
year, despite the
darkness of the times
around us!

RSVP

