

18 Years of Protest

For many years I had a bumper sticker on my car saying "No Nukes". A friend who took a job in Idaho disagreed with me and said, "They could bury nuclear waste with no harm forever." I am sorry that friend is not living today to read the many editorials regarding the pollution of ground water near the Colorado River.

Twenty two years ago I was elected to be an Elder in the Stamford Presbyterian Church. The 30 Elders were the ruling body, which was sometimes a point of disagreement but today the two boards have merged. I was chairman for 6 years of the "Church and Society" committee.

My most important issue was "peace in the world". I walked in many silent "peace marches" through the center of Stamford and other cities with 30 or 40 others, each carrying a white cross showing the name and date of a person killed in a war. One day I stood for an hour in the rain with a local lawyer and another man in front of Singer's Building with a sign "Singer's sewing tradition has given way to nuclear ambition."

For 18 years, 1980-1998, I sent the military portion of my income tax which was for weapons to a "Quaker Peace Account" which they invested in projects for peace. I had many visits to the IRS because they kept writing me. They levied my bank account and my state employee credit account to recover the amount I had given the Quakers. I went to the chairman of my bank to explain why I had a levy on my account. He was a young man and he said, "I fought in the Vietnam War and I think this is wonderful."

The Quakers wanted the IRS to levy their account so they could argue for peace but the IRS never did.

A Stamford lawyer, Barry Boodman, who later became the "city corporation counsel" said he would defend me for no charge if the IRS took me to court.

For 18 years, every year, I attached a letter to my tax form explaining why I was sending the "military portion of my taxes" to the Quakers. I sent a copy of my letter to my Congressmen in Washington. I also hired an accountant to do my taxes in case I got in trouble. (I have saved all my forms and letters.)

In 1987 I attached a Xerox copy of my check to the Quakers with my tax form to the IRS. A worker at the IRS cashed the Xerox check in error. I had sent the

Xerox copy of the \$200 check to prove to the IRS that I had sent the money to the Quakers. It was made out to the Society of Friends". I have the canceled check endorsed on the back by the IRS. My bank made it up to me because they had let it go through.

I figured that over the 18 years of 216 months of IRS penalties that this cost me about \$20 per month and I would have given that much to "gun control".

My reward has been in the basic Presbyterian Law that "God alone is Lord of the conscience."

(This article was written by Grace Montgomery for a Memoir class)