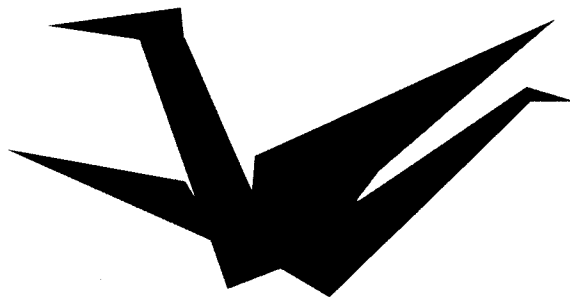


NEWSLETTER OF THE NORFOLK CATHOLIC WORKER SIMPLICITY



Fall 2008

live simply so that others may simply live

Volume 20, No. 1

Air Shows and Resistance

by Steve Baggarly

Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach, Virginia, hosted its fiftieth annual air show from September 19-21. Oceana is home to F-18 Hornets and Super Hornets which are deployed on aircraft carriers stationed at Norfolk Naval Base. This year's show, dubbed "A Legacy of Excellence," is one of over 200 air shows that take place across the country each year from March to November.

Air shows are the US Military's hottest public relations and recruiting tool. Many take place on military bases that are opened to the public for the occasion, others at local airports or fair grounds. At Oceana, attendees were dazzled by active duty fighters, bombers, transports, and spy planes, as well as historical and stunt aircraft, displayed both on the ground and in speed-filled, eardrum-shattering air demonstrations. Booths sponsored by defense contractors lauding the next generations of military aircraft under development offered pencils, stickers, and glossy photos of sleek futuristic war planes.

With local radio stations playing rock and country music, lines of concession stands, and picnicking areas, the show was an intentionally family affair as the endless stream of strollers attested. A small Naval river craft was crowded with kids behind the machine guns, a rack of M-4, M-16, and sniper rifles and Army issue shotguns were handled by young and old alike, and a virtual Army experience allowed groups of people to embark on their own company-sized Army mission. But the Navy's Blue Angels precision flying team and the other military aircraft were the stars of the show.

Unmentioned anywhere was the sole purpose for the existence of all the assembled high-tech weaponry on display. Nowhere was their killing vocation acknowledged. Nowhere was the reality of the people under the bombs even whispered; the deafening explosions, the quaking earth, the flying debris, the smoke and fire, the



Photo: Chrissy Nesbitt

Around the City

by Kristin Sadler

This past Spring the city's redevelopment plan forced our breakfast line to relocate further outside the downtown area. Now we gather and eat together amidst the city's drop spot for building materials, and each week the piles accumulate more debris, literally towering over us and blocking us from the main road. Often we are treated as if we do not even exist. But this is not surprising when Norfolk's idea of beautifying the city involves warehousing the poor of our streets in the city jail and pushing folks out of the downtown. At times our friends are targeted by the police merely for being poor and locked up because the

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Photo: Chrissy Nesbitt

fear, the desperate search for loved ones, the utter chaos, the instant loss of life, homes, jobs, utilities, and resources, the burning of flesh, the spurting of blood, the pain and shock, the blinding, maiming, and crippling, the loss of limbs, the deep psychological trauma, the soul-rending howls of new orphans and widows. Nowhere was mentioned the inherently indiscriminate nature of air strikes; that every time a bomb bay door opens or a wing launcher is fired that civilians, innocents, and children are as likely as anything to be blown to shreds. Nowhere were the photos of decapitated or blood-drenched Iraqi and Afghan children. Nowhere was posted the definition of war crimes.

Such realities would have upset what was essentially a religious event. Heartfelt belief in the weapons was palpable. The aircraft were heralded as the source of freedom and security, peace and prosperity. These attributes of God were readily assigned to the warplanes, the airborne idols of our national religion, militarism. In the end it is our B-52's, stealth fighters, and AC-130 gunships, our B-2's, predator drones, and attack helicopters that are the objects of our faith. We entrust our families and friends to

their protection, swell with pride when our children join the ranks in their service, and freely give our money to create ever more lethal versions. The creed of the air show was that life as we know it is made possible by these machines and to them we owe our absolute and undying allegiance. Ultimately, we believe that the killing power of our weapons is our protection and salvation. Our national faith is demonic.

There are two air shows each



Photo: Joe Filipowski

year in Virginia's Hampton Roads area, and several hundred thousand people attend the three-day events. On Saturday, September 20th at Oceana four people

disturbed the good order of the show by climbing atop the B-52 bomber on display with banners reading "We Shalt Not Kill" and "Weapons of Mass Destruction are Nothing to Celebrate." When nuclear armed, each one of the Air Force's 66 B-52's can carry the equivalent of 320 Hiroshima bombs. They can also carry 70,000 pounds of conventional weapons (including cluster bombs, cruise missiles and gravity bombs) and in their 47 year history have carpet bombed Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The four banner bearers were detained along with eight observers. Eleven people were given letters banning them from all Naval installations from Virginia to Maine. I violated a previous banning order and will face a trespassing charge in Federal Court in Norfolk on November 3rd that carries up to 6 months in jail and a \$500 fine.

Air shows are public liturgies venerating our gods of metal. They glorify our wars and indoctrinate our children. It's not too early to go to airshowbuzz.com and find the air show that will be nearest to you next year. Then when it comes to town, grab some friends, some signs, literature, puppets or a bullhorn,

and, as Dan Berrigan said, "Don't just do something, stand there!"



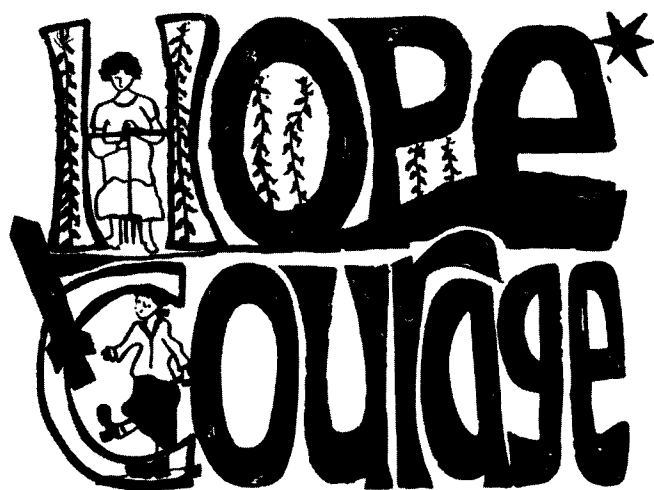


Illustration: Willa Bickham

A Letter to the Judge

by Steve Baggarly

(Eds. Note. On September 17, 2007, unprovoked Blackwater USA security contractors for the US State Department in Iraq, killed 17 Iraqi civilians and wounded 27 more in Baghdad's Nisour Square. The next month, seven people protesting Blackwater's five years of terrorizing Iraqis with complete immunity reenacted the Nisour Square massacre on the front doorstep of the Blackwater USA compound in Moyock, NC. The activists had two trials. Judge Russell Duke presided over the second trial and before sentencing the defendants broke with his own tradition and offered some of his personal opinions on questions of law, Scripture, and morality.)

Dear Judge Duke,

I was intrigued by your words in the courtroom just before our January 24th sentencing for nonviolent civil disobedience at Blackwater USA. Two thoughts in particular stood out and I'm sorry I can't remember the whole exchange, but the two happened to be quoted in the local paper and I hope they are a fair rendering.

The first was your opening, "I've always thought that if you're going to be a follower of Jesus or someone who appreciates the Constitution, you can't select the portions that you like and disregard the rest." Then you went on to reference Romans 13: 1-7 where Paul exhorts followers to obedience to the governing authorities. You may remember that I responded by saying that Paul himself was constantly in and out of jail and ultimately executed by the state. In fact,

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system is rigged against them. In the last month or so, the city jail restructured visitation so that visitors talk with a prisoner via a camera. No longer can we press our hands against the glass to visualize personal touch, but now technological development has created yet a further separation between us and our friends who are away at the city jail. The stark setting of one room with monitors lined up side by side clearly reveals the dehumanizing nature of our 'justice' system. At the house, we receive calls daily from people looking for a place to stay or assistance with food and bills. Our country is constantly at war to secure the American way of life that only an elite few can enjoy. Dorothy Day's words ring louder and louder, "Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system."

In the face of such enormous economic and social disparity, we choose to take small steps toward living as we imagine the world should be. We decided to build raised garden beds and grow some of our own food, which anchors us to what is locally in season and directly stands up against our food system that takes from the many to feed the few. On the coffee line, we witnessed a beautiful reconciliation that fostered one man to put away his knife and the two to leave as friends. It is also here that brilliance bursts forth in the stitching up of Reggie's hand by a doctor who volunteers with us and through the several women who bring vases filled with fresh cut flowers to set upon the tables. Another volunteer cleared the ground where we gather for breakfast by picking up bucketfuls of nails, screws and metal with a magnet. To resist the war and our feeling of entitlement to foreign oil at any cost, we deliberately ride our bikes around the city and also to vigils, with Sam carrying the signs in surf racks on the side of his bike. We hang our laundry outside to dry, utilizing Mother Earth's solar dryer. When the phone bill arrives, we refuse to pay the federal tax that contributes to the incessant war-making. How liberating it was to cut up my corporate bank cards and join a local credit union! This summer we painted on walls and took trips to the zoo with the kids next door. We share meals together at the hospitality house weekly, trying to depend on one another as a family. At least once a week, some of our homeless friends come over to take showers, do laundry and cookout for lunch. Never have there been more enjoyable days. Little by little, I feel more alive, more human, and more connected to the human family.

Hope gradually peers its head through the ways in which we are able to take personal responsibility to live independently from the systems that stand upon the humanity each of us share. It is a gift to share in these forms of resistance and beautification together. The challenge and the joy of working to oppose the dominant social order continues. And so we go out to the garden to plant swiss chard that will survive the winter and produce hope.



Upcoming Events

November 3rd • Vigil (8AM) & Court Appearance (9AM) at US District Court:

In what could be considered part 2 of the September Airshow Action at Oceana, we will be vigiling to end the war in front of the US District Court (at the intersection of Brambelton and Granby) from 8AM to 9AM. Following the vigil we'll head inside for Steve Baggarly's court appearance.

November 11th • 'Love Lived on Death Row' at The NARO (7PM):

'Love Lived on Death Row' is a story of forgiveness, reconciliation and healing centered on the Syriani siblings whose father was sentenced to die for the murder of their mother. The film will be showing at 7:15PM at the NARO (1507 Colley Ave, Norfolk) and will feature a post-screening discussion with the filmmaker.

November 13th • Non-Violence Training Session 7PM at Sacred Heart Church:

Join us for non-violence training at Sacred Heart (520 Graydon Ave, Norfolk) starting at 7PM on Thursday, November 13th. This event is especially recommended for folks heading down to the SOA.

November 16th • Charlie King & Anne Feeney Concert 40th Street Stage (7PM):

Legendary Folk Singers Charlie King and Anne Feeney are making their way to the SOA protests (see following event), but not before the stop in Norfolk to share their passion for peace and justice with us. The pair will be putting on a concert at the 40th Street Stage (809 W 40th St, Norfolk) starting at 7PM the night of Sunday, November 16th. The concert will be free with donations to the Norfolk Catholic Worker accepted.

November 21st - 23rd • SOA / WHINSEC Protests in Ft. Benning, Georgia:

SOA graduates have been responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America. Training manuals used at the school in the past have advocated torture, extortion and execution. Among the SOA's graduates are notorious dictators and human rights violators. On the weekend of November the 21st tens of thousands of individuals will gather at the gates of Ft. Benning, home of the school, to call for its closing. If you are interested in carpooling to the protests call us at the CW House: (757) 423-5420.

December 6th - 7th • Fair Trade Festival:

Head to the Fair Trade Festival (at the Farm Market, Church & 26th St in Norfolk) the weekend of December 5th to celebrate sustainability, community, healthy economic relationships, and the spirit of the holiday season through poetry, music, vendors and more.

December 19th • Carolling at the Norfolk City Jail (7PM):

Join us as we spread holiday love to our brothers and sisters behind bars at 6:30PM on December 19th at the Norfolk City Jail. We'll bring the song sheets, and hot apple cider, all you need is your smile.

December 28th - 30th • Faith & Resistance Retreat (Washington D.C.)

Call us (423-5420) if you are interested in joining us for several days of speaking truth to power at the Faith & Resistance Retreat in D.C. To find out more information go to: www.jonahhouse.org.

January - April • 100 Days Campaign:

Contact us (423-5420) if you are interested in taking part in the 100 days campaign in Washington D.C., an effort to encourage the new administration to close Guantanamo and end torture. Visit witnessortorture.org to learn more.

Ongoing Events

Coffee Line • Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays:

At 6AM we prepare food at Sacred Heart Church (520 Graydon Ave, Norfolk). Food is shared at 7AM in the lot off Armistead Rd. behind 1500 Monticello Ave (the big white HRT Building). Clean-up at 8AM back at Sacred Heart.

End the War Vigil • 1st Tuesday of the Month (5PM - 6PM) at the Corner of St Paul's & City Hall (In Front of the Jail)

Stop Torture Vigil • 3rd Friday of the Month (Noon - 1PM) at the Corner of Granby & E. City Hall (by the Federal Building)

Death Penalty Vigil • The Night of Any Scheduled Virginia Execution (5PM - 6PM) Corner of St Paul's & City Hall (In Front of the Jail)



Thanks to all who have donated bikes for our friends on the soup-line. If you have an adult bike (in any condition), bike parts, lights or locks to share, call Wes at (757) 676-0121 or drop them off at the Hospitality House.

A Letter to the Judge : Continued from Page 3

in verses 8-10 Paul goes on to say that love is the fulfillment of the law. Almost every mainstream commentator explains this discrepancy by saying that Caesar is entitled to obedience until he goes against God's prior claim on believers. It necessitates discernment. In the same letter Paul equates the law with sin and death, and elsewhere repeatedly says that the law can save no one. He even says that the letter of the law kills (and this referring to God's law which was also the civil law). After saying one shouldn't select portions of scripture that one likes and disregard the rest, you went on to select perhaps the only portion in the totality of Paul's life and teaching that seems to espouse unreflective obedience to authorities.

I only say this as an example, because we all interpret Scripture according to what strikes us as the essence. The Scripture is a cacophony of voices, a divinely contradictory, ironic, convoluted, multi-faceted history of the Jewish people, and though some people claim literal interpretation, in reality we all pick and choose what strikes us as the heart of it. I know Christians who claim literal interpretation and are for wars of aggression based on parts in the Hebrew Scriptures that portray God as a God of war, giving no weight to Jesus' imperative to followers to "love your enemies," his blessing of peacemakers, or his example of giving his own life rather than taking others'. Jesus teaches much about the giving up of one's life and nothing about the taking of life, he opposes evil with active nonviolence, smiting none of God's children. Other self-proclaimed literalists I know make abortion or prayer in school their main ethical focus (which aren't directly mentioned in scripture at all), while dismissing the crystal clear Biblical demand of justice for the poor, vulnerable and needy, which is emphatically called for over 750 times.

Part of the human task is to discern which parts of the Scripture to build our lives around.

Likewise, discerning what parts of the law to follow and which to breach is also the human task. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about there being two kinds of laws; just and unjust. He championed the keeping of just laws that made for the common good, and breaking unjust laws which warped and perverted human community and the human person. Obviously laws that said black people must sit in the back of the bus, drink at certain water fountains, aren't allowed in hotel swimming pools, and can't register to vote weren't worth the paper they were promulgated on and any breaking of such laws was in fact an enactment of justice. Gandhi, a lawyer, taught the same. Paul certainly did this as he broke the law repeatedly, as did Peter, who explained his recidivism by asking, "Is it better to obey God or man?"

The gospel reading the day before our trial was the scene where Jesus heals the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath, rhetorically asking the authorities, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than destroy it?" His question gets to the heart of law -its purpose is to serve humanity, to do good, and to save life. But it doesn't always do that, so he proceeds to publicly break the law, as he does repeatedly, in effort to heal Israel's body politic. His outlaw career culminates with his action in the temple on behalf of the poor widow whose last two coins were taken by the temple elite and others like her exploited at street level by the money-changers and dove sellers. He could easily have been charged with an equivalent of disturbing the peace and destruction of property. Instead, he is soon arrested and convicted on much heavier charges, sedition and treason against Rome, as he is ex-

ecuted under a sign reading "King of the Jews".

You also quoted Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter who called the rule of law "all we have standing between us and the tyranny of mere will and the cruelty of unbridled, undisciplined feeling." Not knowing the context of that quote I can't help but think that he, having been on the Supreme Court from 1939-1962, wasn't speaking of blind obedience to all law. He must have recoiled at the Nuremburg Laws aimed at denaturalizing Germany's Jews and keeping Aryan blood from being corrupted by Jewish. He must have felt that the legal hedge around the Final Solution was the embodiment of tyranny. He must have been repulsed by Stalinist law that ordered the deportation of millions to hard labor and death. He must have felt that segregationist US law that condemned black people to second-class citizenship was inherently evil? He must have known that law itself is far too often tyrannical, cruel, and legislated by the darkness in the human soul. I'm no legal expert but it's hard to imagine that he was counseling obedience to such laws as the way to protect people.

These are a couple thoughts I wanted to share after pondering your words in the courtroom a bit more. I think it is central to who we are as human beings and followers of Christ to gather with community and discern which parts of Scripture are the core, as well as which laws deserve to be followed and which cry out to be broken for the sake of love and justice. Please don't feel pressed to respond. I can imagine you have more than enough to keep you busy. Thank you for taking the time to read.

Peace,
Steve Baggarly
February 4th 2008





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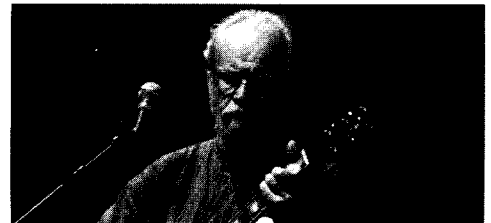
- Prayers
- Volunteers: to serve breakfast on the streets or to drive / accompany guests to medical appointments
- Food: ground coffee, quick grits & quick oatmeal (not old fashioned) sugar, brown sugar, creamer, family sized tea bags, salt & pepper, fresh produce, rice, pasta, beans, peanut butter & jelly, 'complete' pancake mix & syrup, tomato products, non-sugar cereal
- Used adult bikes (in any condition), bike parts, bike lights, bike locks
- Money to pay the bills

Dreams:

- An energy-efficient washer and dryer
- Fair Trade products such as coffee, bananas and sugar

We are NOT tax exempt

All gifts to the Norfolk Catholic Worker go to a common fund used to meet the daily expenses of our work. We have never sought tax exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience that come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation, or reward.



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