

Michigan Peace Team

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MPT VISION:

To pursue peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict

MPT seeks a peaceful, just, sustainable Earth Community grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

MPT MISSION:

Provide training in active nonviolence designed for the specific needs of participants.

Recruit and mentor individuals seeking experience with violence reduction teams.

Place violence reduction teams in domestic and international conflicts.

Convene, support and participate with local peace action groups.

Educate the public to the vision and practice of nonviolence.

The Art of Living Well A Legacy Left Us By Peacemaker Bill Petry

by Mary Hanna



With the sudden death of peacemaker extraordinaire Bill Petry,* many of us find ourselves grappling not only with our own issues of loss, but also grasping for some kind of meaning or lesson to take away from it all. Feelings of grief and futility are easy to access right now, but that is surely not what Bill would want us for us. Bill was his own paradox: he led a life both pragmatic and visionary; a quiet, unassuming man who managed to rise above the daily clamor to issue the rallying cry for justice for the less-fortunate and marginalized. His world was that of both concrete predictability (he was, after all, a mathematician) and the ethereal uncertainty of "someday," daring not only to dream of a better world but to daily work towards it. How did he manage to so comfortably welcome both ends of the vast life spectrum? Writer Serenella Leoni describes some people as "living life as an art form", and surely this is what Bill Petry did, "using all the senses, paying attention to each moment or detail, celebrating traditions and family, being endlessly inquisitive, highlighting one's individuality and finding many outlets for creativity".

Bill embraced life with both a love of what it currently "is", and a passionate belief in potentiality. To an outside observer, Bill was steadfast & faithful: you knew he would show up prepared to teach his classes, be available during his posted office hours, Continued page 2

Art and Activism: Another World is Possible

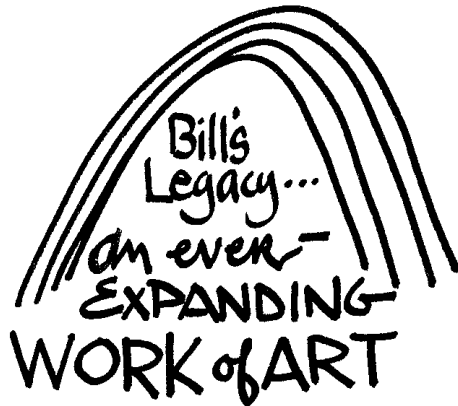
The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is – it's to imagine what is possible. - bell hooks

In this issue, we have invited the Michigan Peace Team and friends of MPT to imagine what is possible when art is partnered with activism. It is no secret that a poem, a painting, a story, a song can move hearts and minds in profound ways. In tense situations, the playful possibilities of art often afford people the opportunity to seek creative rather than violent responses to unjust situations. It can also disorient and disarm those who perpetuate injustice. Whether it is a defiant debka dance at a West Bank checkpoint or a street theatre performance on an eastside Detroit corner, art has a way of changing the dynamic and pointing to possibilities.

Artists are visionaries and truth tellers; therefore, to be an artist is to be a person of courage. It's to stake one's life on the belief that there is more power in guitars than in guns and in words than in weapons. It's to imagine that another world is possible and then sing that world into being. We hope that this issue of the MPT newsletter will inspire you to join in the song!

Kim Redigan

Member of MPT's Newsletter Committee



The Art of Living continued

keep his lawn mowed and his bills paid, and be in attendance for the innumerable organizational and planning meetings that were part of his participation in *Michigan Peace Team*, *the Peace Education Center*, *the Greater Lansing United Nations Association*, and *People for Positive Social Change*. And when he couldn't make it to a scheduled meeting? When he wasn't where you expected him to be? Sometimes it was because he was discreetly helping out someone in need: no fanfare or even repayment expected. Just quietly doing what he could do to make one person's life better. And sometimes, it was because he was celebrating the more artistic side of his life: joyously singing with the Michigan State University Chorale, or enjoying the sun on his face as he cycled the rolling hills of the nearby countryside, or taking in the latest film for discussion with his neighborhood "movie

group", or was perhaps just spending some cherished one-on-one time with the love of his life, his wife Julia. To those of us fortunate enough to call Bill a friend, we bare witness that the layers of Bill's life frequently overlapped with each other, so that friends from one area could comfortably move into another....and thus take with them some of the richness that comes from living life more fully.

Bill lived his life as an ever-expanding work of art. He sampled a bit of everything, and incorporated those things he found to be good and true to the overall vision of the world as a better place. Leoni writes "Life is like a blank canvas and you must execute the painting that is most meaningful for you." If we take one thing from Bill's life, perhaps it is the thought that he would not only encourage us to paint our lives broadly and deeply, but with the individual strokes that give each day meaning. Just as he did.

*(details <http://michiganpeaceteam.wordpress.com/remembering-a-peacemaker/>)

"Stones Weep"

by Paula Marie Deubel

This is an oil painting I completed after returning from Palestine. Stones remind me of Palestine for many reasons ... I liked the stones so much that a friend of mine from Ramallah actually brought me a huge basketful of them when he visited the States. I used those rocks as models for the stones in this picture. The angel is the spirit of Palestine as embodied in the wind that always seemed to flow across the lovely mountains of Ramallah. The title, I think, explains itself.



Editor's note: Original is in color



ART - An Oasis in the Desert

by Annette Thomas

Shortly before the United States invaded Iraq, a friend and I, at my relentless insistence, traveled from Jerusalem to the checkpoint that would separate the rest of the world from the Gaza Strip. A vehicle, still smoldering in the distance from an Israeli rocket attack, delayed our entrance into one of the most volatile regions in the Middle East.

As a Palestinian driver greeted us and took us to his car, I couldn't help but notice we had entered another world. The checkpoint drew a distinct line between the lush fields and fertile lands that were Israel and the impoverishment and disparity that would define Palestine. As we drove past the bullet riddled homes, bombed out buildings and piles of rubble alongside the streets, I imagined what life was like for the 1.5 mil-

lion inhabitants confined to this 26 mile long stretch of land.

As we wandered through the alleyways, listening to tales of heartache and despair, we stumbled upon an art gallery - an oasis in the desert - set apart from its surroundings, gleaming in the afternoon sun. The works of a Palestinian scholar, painter and philosopher were on display - a collection of reflections of the political, social and psychological climate. Forms and figures were depicted in intense, rich colors, a tribute to the spirit and resistance of the Palestinian people. In his works his subjects pressed forward, demonstrating resilience, strength and perseverance through the bold strokes of his brush. Many pieces remained semi-complete, a continuous work in progress, a sort of testimonial to the struggle of his people. Their lives, under immensely difficult

circumstances, were enriched by the Palestinian cultural movement, which celebrates life, even under occupation

Photos by Annette Thomas



GAZA

by Paula Marie Deubel

You were given nothing to eat or drink,
you asked for food and water
and the world gave you
politics, sanctions, embargoes.

Your immense suffering was overlooked.
You were bombed and buried.

But someday You will rise again!
Your memory will shine above the ages
like a thousand suns and the whole world
will fall (someday, but not yet)
at your martyred feet, ashamed
to have slaughtered his innocent lamb
at the hands of our time-worn leaders.

S/He who wages war on earth
Rebels against Creation.

December 27, 2009
to January 2, 2010

An international march to **END** the
siege on Gaza. To learn more or
sign the statement, click on:
<http://gazafreedommarch.org/>

**GAZA
FREEDOM
MARCH!**

Getting Through

by Peter Dougherty



Dictators live in fear of poets, prophets, artists, musicians, dramatists, clowns and other such uncontrollable characters because they have ways of getting through to people when public discourse is frozen by fear, ignorance, greed, indifference, and other such human obstacles. These folks threaten to topple the domination of the day.

Such out-of-step characters appeal to mind, body, senses, head, and heart. They unmask the illusions, give hope to the spirit, free enslaved souls, bring beauty where there is imposed ugliness. They unleash the power of imagination.

On the stark, imposing twenty-five foot high Separation Wall in the West Bank, see the Palestinian people's murals of resistance. See an image of a little girl rising upward toward the top of the wall lifted by balloons she is holding. She is free, defying the Occupation!

In 1993, 4,000 peacemakers were in Bosnia caravanning to Sarajevo in an attempt to help stop the war. As the fighting around us raged on, wrangling paralyzed the peace mission. Some wanted to press on, others didn't. Then Scott Schaeffer-Duffy and another decided to don the clown suits they had brought for entertaining orphans in Sarajevo, and started to walk there. Scott told me recently "Once we stepped into that world of the clown, people entered that world and took a pure leap of faith. A Bosnian family offered us food and never asked about the costume. A Bosnian soldier who asked what we were doing, listened to us and understood what we were saying. We peacemakers had been arguing for three days – and this soldier understood us in three minutes." Scott added: "After 33 years in the peace movement, I say that when I put on that clown costume that day, it was the most significant peace action I have ever done."

Once I was sentenced for an act of civil

disobedience by a judge who ordered me to perform community service specifically in a children's hospital. The nursing staff saw me do some juggling for kids. They asked me to go see Ben, a boy of 8, who seem depressed as he lay in a body cast from an auto accident. The staff could not get him to respond. I walked into his room and said "How ya been Ben?" I made a coin disappear. He lit up immediately, and we became buddies on the spot. I wheeled him into the play room and we played games each day I came in. I am still overwhelmed by the power of that experience.

Subcomandante Marcos was the spokesperson for the indigenous Mayan Zapatista movement for human rights in Chiapas, Mexico. In the 1990s the Mexican government, to discredit him, spread rumors that Marcos was gay. He sent out by internet a poetic response that began: "Yes, Marcos is gay. Marcos is gay in San Francisco, Black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland." So clever and so stirring!

In the 1970s a handful of us formed the Barrington Bunny Survival Theatre. We created and performed street theatre, challenging people to think about the horror and absurdity of the nuclear arms race. In one skit, we had General Domination (a metal colander served as his helmet) ordering his Trident nuclear submarines to fire, as he explained with glee their destructive firepower. The subs walked around, one hand raised high as the periscope, following orders. It was fun theatre! People took our flyers!

How do we get through to people? Join the theatre of the absurd. Sculpt that heartrending image. Overturn the tables of the moneychangers. Write the poem burning inside you. "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution!" (Thanks, Emma Goldman.)

"If I can't dance,
I don't want to be
part of your
revolution!"
(Thanks, Emma
Goldman.)



we had
entered
another
World.



The Art of Storytelling

by Sheri Wander

“Once upon a time....” and so it begins. Stories have power. This I know. So often when we read the evaluations from the Non-violence trainings people note the stories of empowerment as a favorite part of the training; when I give presentations – I will see people months afterward and what they will remember are the stories; on my personal blog one of the most consistently read pages is “more powerful” where I share stores of nonviolence and peacemaking.

Not surprising really, storytelling is an essential part of being human. We tell stories to remember history, to communicate feelings and information and to help us understand the world in which we live. It is a way to “take it all in” without feeling overwhelmed to the point of inaction. Wikipe-

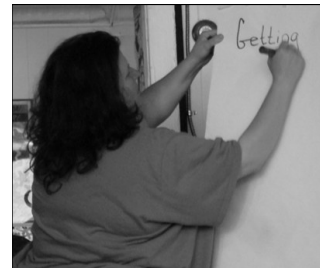
dia notes: “storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images, and sounds often by improvisation or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture and in every land as a means of entertainment, education, preservation of culture and in order to instill moral values” But like most art – and storytelling is an art form – storytelling is more than the sum of its parts. Storytelling is about connection. And as we at Michigan Peace Team work to create a world grounded in nonviolence and the sacred connection of all living things the stories are an important part of that. When teams go to Palestine we may do a variety of things; accompany farmers, check-point watch, take part in demonstrations, stay in homes or communities that have become targets for soldier or set-

ter violence – but the one common denominator is that people want their stories told. “Tell my story. Let people know what is happening here” – I heard it again and again when I was in Palestine. And is it any wonder, after all, it has been said that “whoever tells the stories, defines the culture”.

On the website, <http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles> Scott Momaday, in speaking of the power of the storyteller in Native American culture, said, “The storyteller is one whose spirit is indispensable to the people. S/He is magician, artist and creator. And, above all, s/he is a holy person. Hers/His is a sacred business.”

What an honor to be involved in this sacred task.

“Stories have power. This I know.”



Sheri Wander illustrating the story!

“What an honor to be involved in this sacred task.”



Peter Dougherty , Ona Meslin, Joe Devia
The Barrington Bunny Survival Theatre

Peter and Chiapas children doing magic tricks

“... a handful of us formed the Barrington Bunny Survival Theatre. We created and performed street theatre, challenging people to think about the absurdity of the nuclear arms race ...”

Music and Activism

by Star Rothe and Mike Ciavone

In the world of activism, music is a powerful tool. People discovered the influence of music most acutely in the 1960s, when singer/songwriters such as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Pete Seeger turned their passion for music into an expression of humanity, peace, and social change. Music has the ability to transcend politics, stir emotions, and create change.



As young activists and artists, we (Star and Michael) are striving to go beyond the political side of activist music. We strive to create change by helping people see the magnificence of life. We do not aim to write songs about war, carnage, or recent political crisis. In Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, the great poet writes, "keep your face always toward the sunshine and shadows will fall behind you." Greatly inspired by Whitman's work, our hope is to instill a sense of beauty and pride of simply being alive. People cannot feel compassion for strangers in a foreign land when they do not even value their own existence! Our purpose is to teach people the value of life and the splendor of the world – not to dwell on its horrors. In facing the sunlight, we teach people the value of their own lives, which then allows them to understand the value of ALL life.

Society is filled with horror stories, and activist music is often no different. We are faced with sorrow at every turn; on every side of life there seems to be sadness, malady, strife, and despair. Activist music often speaks (or, rather, sings) of such sorrow. This is not our intent. We desire to prove that love, hope, and justice not only are possible to obtain, but that they already exist!

There is a wealth of beauty in the world that is often overlooked because people are distracted by the horror of death. In being so distracted, we forget to see the

beauty of LIFE. As a species, we must learn to turn negatives into positives. As musicians, we hope to introduce people to positivity and brightness.

Peace activists are used to dealing with tragedy. Why not become equally used to

dealing with joy? When true joy and peace is a daily part of our lives, it becomes easier for us to handle our often difficult work with grace. In teaching life's blessings to non-activists, we are helping them see the worth of life – and thus the price of war. Perhaps no one could say it better than Walt Whitman himself, in his famous poem, *Song of Myself*:

"I am the poet of the Body and the poet of the Soul.

The pleasures of heaven are with me and pains of hell are with me. The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue."

There is no greater joy than being alive. Is that not what we're fighting for at MPT: to keep people alive, to make life happier? Why introduce sorrow into music when it is filtered through us in every other avenue? Our hope is that our message will be understood, and that we will make a difference through our own love for life. By turning towards the sunlight, we do not forget the shadows – we simply do not become engulfed within them. As peace workers, it is vital to stay away from the shadows as best we can. We must learn to pull others out of the darkness without falling in it ourselves. We truly hope to express these beliefs through our music. With our music we hope to share positive, meaningful messages of optimism and verve.

Editor's Note: Star and Mike are two young people who write their own music and sing at MPT events. We invite our readers to visit their website:

<http://www.myspace.com/twofortragedy>

"Peace activists are used to dealing with tragedy. Why not become equally used to dealing with joy?"

"Music has the ability to transcend politics, stir emotions, and create change."

"With our music we hope to share positive, meaningful messages of optimism and verve"

For Pilgrims an Idyllic Day, For Others Tragedy

by Barbara Beesley

As part of a three-year fellowship with the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, Barbara Beesley, IHM, participated in a pilgrimage to Egypt, Israel/Palestine, and Jordan. Here is Barb's April 24, 2009 journal entry:

Our last day in the Lands of Promise was idyllic. We took in the awesome wonders of Petra and Mt. Nebo in Jordan. That experience prompted the following poem:



The passageway curved and angled

Dueling Artists

Her exquisite breath over centuries
Hollowed a pathway
Through roseate rock
Wide enough for travelers
Even for chariot races

On its descent

While above rose
Wildly etched stone
Like lacework

Later skillful men with chisels
Took up the challenge
To transform the rock
Into immense buildings

One's neck ached with upward gazing.

You couldn't blame either artist
For unparalleled pride
Though while ascending Mt. Nebo
I heard the wind chuckle
preceding the majestic panorama--fields,
waters, mountain



Another side of the Land of Promises became clear upon my return. I learned that April 24 in the West Bank was heralded as a day commemorating a Palestinian from the village of Bil'in who had been killed by an Israeli soldier the preceding Friday during a nonviolent demonstration against the wall..

"On our last day of pilgrimage, Michigan Peace Team members were attending the Fourth Bil'in International Conference on Non-Violent Resistance, in honor of Bassem Abu Rahme. Bassem was killed in Bil'in by a tear gas canister shot by the occupying Israeli army during the demonstration against the illegal apartheid wall the previous Friday. (Just a month before an American, Tristan Anderson, was critically wounded by a tear gas canister in a peaceful demonstration in the nearby village of Nil'in. He has not gained consciousness.)"

Barbara Beesley



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MPT's 2009-2010 Newsletter Committee

Nancy Ayotte
Kim Redigan
Annette Thomas
Liz Walters

Thanks to the wonderful articles/photos/graphics from MPT members, in this Fall 2009 newsletter, we explore together how art defuses violence, creates a new space for peace to take root, and builds community. Also we imagine new and creative possibilities for PEACE ON EARTH.!

Thank you for your continued support of Michigan Peace Team! Your involvement and your donations grow the vision and mission of peace. We are most grateful!

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Kassey Fineout
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Mary Ellen Gondeck
Jasiu Milanowski
Paul Pratt
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Nicole Rohrkemper
Liz Walters

Peter Dougherty
Contracted Services

An Invitation:

MPT's 2010 Winter newsletter will be devoted to sharing positive experiences in peace team work that we have witnessed or heard about, for example diverse groups working together. To

submit writing or photos for possible publication send to the MPT Newsletter Committee by Noon, Monday, December 7, 2009. Please send via postal mail to the MPT Lansing office or via this email address ElizabethWalters.mpt@gmail.com



If you would prefer to have your MPT newsletters sent via email, please check the box, detach this section, and mail to MPT.

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