



January 2023 Newsletter



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Here's to the next 40!



KEY POINTS FROM A SUMMARY ARTICLE WITH WORRYING INFORMATION ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Nuclear Year in Review: 2022. “A global nuclear order in shambles”
By Francois Diaz-Morin, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. December
26, 2022.**

Summarized by Trudy Govier

- Russia considered and appeared to threaten the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine.
- In the war in Ukraine nuclear reactors and facilities were targets of attack.
- North Korea launched more ballistic missiles than it ever had in a single year, leading to fears that it was preparing for a nuclear test.
- Iran resumed construction of its underground nuclear complex and disconnected IAEA surveillance camera. It also accelerated its uranium enrichment program. (The IAEA is the International Atomic Energy Agency.)
- Saudi Arabia (arch enemy of Iran) took steps toward enriching uranium and refused IAEA inspectors.
- NO PROGRESS was made at negotiations regarding the NPT (non-proliferation treaty) or TPNW (treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons) or New Start (arms reduction talks).

The one positive note was that the successful fusion ignition validates modelling codes used to avoid nuclear weapons testing.



INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDING MEMBER SALLY HODGES

Sally Hodges, Queen of the Ploughshares Peace Hive



Although Sally Hodges was not right there at the very start of Ploughshares Calgary, she joined the organisation very early on. Not only did she stick with us for nearly 4 decades, she is renowned for encouraging others to join. Rare is the member of Ploughshares who has not been gathered in by Sally's sincerity, passion and kindness to volunteer for one or possibly many of our events.

Sally has known how to nurture us along, calling out our strengths, and putting them to good use in the cause of peace. This includes her husband Bob and their children and grandchildren, who have often joined in to support Sally's work with Ploughshares, from helping out with the Holiday Peace Fairs, to racing in the Peace Run. Not only did Bob support Ploughshares at his wife's side through many events, his generous gifts of Farmer Hodges honey helped our finances flow a little more on the sweeter side of the ledger.

Many of you know that Sally was born in New Zealand, and still has family there. She met Bob while he was working there, and after a stint in New York, they decided to move to Calgary in 1981. It didn't take long for Sally to get involved in her new Canadian community. Her year of teacher training in New Zealand was validated by Alberta Education, giving her the right to teach in her new province. The family found a home at St. David's United Church, and through meeting Rev. John Guy from neighbouring Parkdale United Church, Sally was introduced to Project Ploughshares, then in its early days. Sally plunged in. Soon, she connected with other educators in Calgary who were interested in infusing peace, conflict resolution and social justice into their classrooms. Together, they formed a new group, called "Educators for Peace and Social Justice."



INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDING MEMBER SALLY HODGES

This group created teaching resources, presented at the Calgary Teachers' Convention, offered workshops, and created a conference for Grade 4-6 school children that ran for three years, called “Guardians of the Planet.” There were between 150 -200 children attending each of these events, held on Saturdays, to hear presentations, participate in workshops, enjoy a lunch, and even raise a tipi together, as they learned more about how to be peacemakers.

Following Sally’s involvement in the children’s conference, she worked with Fif Fernandez and Val Hillaker to launch Puppets for Peace, a touring program for schools in which the theme of bullying was explored. Though Sally herself wasn’t a puppeteer, without her hands administering in the background, the program would not have been possible. Over its run time, the program was presented to over 90 schools in Calgary.

Sally took on the role of Chairperson of Project Ploughshares Calgary for a significant number of years. Over that time, she was instrumental in helping to create and carry out many successful spring workshops. She also did a great deal of organising for the popular Holiday Peace Fairs, contacting volunteers, gathering silent auction items, and making sure that everything ran smoothly. Some years, there were even full hot lunches available for purchase, from chili to chapatis! It is no wonder that in 1999 Sally was the recipient of the YMCA Peace Award. Sally also contributed beautiful artwork for the book of poetry that Ploughshares published in 2006, called “Words of Peace.” Together with staff person Karen Huggins, Sally launched a Peace Run for Calgary, another great initiative promoting peace that was held in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Sally deserves enormous thanks for her successful work on the creation of the Calgary Peace Pole. A site was developed by the Bow River pathway near 10th Street, and is, as Sally says, “emblazoned with the names of almost 100 Calgary groups.” An unveiling ceremony was held on September 20, 2009, with the intent that the peace pole and plaza become a place for personal reflection or as a gathering point for groups for peace-related events.



INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDING MEMBER SALLY HODGES

This is an enduring gift to the citizens of Calgary from the many organisations, businesses and individuals like Sally who donated time, money and materials towards this special project.

Sally's most recent efforts with Ploughshares have been with the Floating Lanterns project, which commemorates those who were harmed through the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and advocates for an end to nuclear war. Sally helped to launch this project back in 2012, and has worked closely with Shinobu Apple on this ever since to help this project grow. Participants have numbered as many as 2000 people. Here too, Sally brings in others to help, who are drawn to her cheerfulness, her hospitality and her passion, like bees to a flower. Sally says that there have been many times when her dining room table was completely covered in colourful heaps of tissue paper, as volunteers gathered around it to chat, (about their ordinary lives, she shares, as well as big world concerns such as nuclear disarmament,) their fingers busy with scissors and glue constructing the lanterns to be used for the lantern ceremony.

Sally has been an incredible supporter, a creative inventor, a calm yet dynamic activist, and a nurturer, not just of peace, but of people. She has been a wonderful contributor to the building of a Culture of Peace in her adopted City of Calgary. She has encouraged peace by engaging in visits, along with Bev DeLong, with two Mayors and several Members of Parliament, always adding her special sparkle to these important meetings. How lucky we have been to have her among us, inspiring us, caring for us, leading us in her gentle way, to become peace-builders ourselves.

I asked Sally if she had any messages she would like to share with younger generations, especially as we face some very difficult challenges at this time in human history. Sally said, "These things will pass. Good will overcome bad." Let us take on Sally's faith in humanity, and together follow her example of committed, kind, creative and caring actions on behalf of peace. Little by little, just like tiny bees carrying droplets of honey to their hive, we can build the sweetest of worlds, for all.



"THE OPTIMIST'S VIEW OF 2022"

**Nicholas Kristof, "The Optimist's View of 2022"
New York Times, Sunday, January 1, 2023**

Summarized by Trudy Govier

Well-known columnist Nicholas Kristof usually reports bad news, but in this column sought to balance the constant negative gush, citing:

1. Solar power capacity around the world is on track to roughly triple over the next five years and overtake coal as the leading source of power globally.
2. There are breakthroughs in battery development. These are needed to store green power.
3. Scientists are making progress on vaccines for malaria, and also on developing immunotherapy as a treatment for some forms of cancer.
4. Child mortality is declining, with a child half as likely to die by age five as he or she would have been in 2000.
5. Despite the terrible war in Ukraine, agreements have allowed exports of Ukrainian grain to move through the Black Sea, staving off full-blown famine in some African and Middle Eastern countries.

Kristof ends his column by quoting Max Roser, who works with the website 'Our World in Data'. Roser said:

The world is awful.
The world is much better.
The world can be much better.
All three statements are true at the same time.



GOOD NEWS

- From December 7 – 19, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference was held in Montreal. It was the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Nearly 200 countries were represented, and negotiations were at times tense. The earth's biodiversity is severely threatened, with a million species estimated to be at risk of extinction. Key to the survival of species is the preservation of habitat. Indigenous peoples own much of the land to be preserved, which has benefited from a low level of human intervention. At the meeting, the importance of indigenous knowledge was emphasized. The ambition of this conference was to achieve agreement to conserve 30% of the earth's land and 30% of its oceans by 2030, setting these areas aside from human development. An agreement was reached in the last hours. It included the stipulation that developed countries would assist less developed countries to meet these goals, by providing to them assistance of \$30 billion, also by 2030. Achim Steiner, head of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) pronounced the agreement "historic" and said that it would "shore up and strengthen the web of life."
- The U.S. Department of Energy announced a major scientific breakthrough concerning nuclear fusion, with a breakthrough experiment that released more energy than was needed to produce it. (This is the key point.) This success came after some 70 years of research. Nuclear fusion is the process that produces the heat and light of the sun and stars. Light atoms are smashed together to produce heavier ones, in 'ignition'. Deuterium and tritium fuse into helium and energy and there is a positive energy gain. In the December 2022 experiment, 192 lasers were fired at a tiny hydrogen pellet. Heated, it imploded, fusing into helium and releasing a blast of energy. Many hurdles remain for the development of nuclear fusion as a practical energy source, but there are prospects of abundance with a process that would produce neither greenhouse gases nor radioactive wastes as by-products. (Sources: The Guardian, December 13, 2022; the New York Times, December 14, 2022)



GOOD NEWS

- Rahul Gandhi (born 1970), great grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, has embarked on a 3570 km. walk from Kanyakumari at India’s southern tip to Srinagar in the north. Rahul Gandhi is an Indian member of parliament for the Indian National Congress Party. He represents a constituency in the southern province of Kerala. Rahul Gandhi has undertaken this walk in an effort to rally support for the Congress Party, which seeks to represent various religions and other groups in the Indian population and stands against divisive politics. Currently the prevailing party is that of N. Modi, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which strongly favours Hindus, sidelining Muslims and other minorities. Note: Rahul Gandhi is not related to Mahatma Gandhi, but rather to J. Nehru. (New York Times, December 4, 2022)
- The population of invasive mountain pine beetles has dropped by an estimated 94%, due to cold weather and mitigation efforts, Alberta Forestry announced. It peaked in 2019, having caused considerable forest destruction. (Calgary Herald, December 6, 2022)
- King Charles’ Christmas Address on December 25 was the most watched television presentation on BBC 1, when it was presented. In fact, it was the most popular such broadcast by a monarch in 20 years. King Charles honoured his mother Queen Elizabeth II and spoke of her emphasis on the “ability to touch with goodness and compassion the lives of others and to shine a light in the world around them.” He paid tribute to the work of charitable organizations and the “true humility that lies in service to others.”





GOOD NEWS

- Myrnam, Alberta is 170 km. east of Edmonton. There the students of Robert Tymofichuk have undertaken a number of environmentally positive projects including greenhouses, a wind turbine, a solar tracking system, a hydroponics (water-based, no soil) growing system and, most recently, the development of a tiny home based on the conversion of an old school bus. (December 5, 2022; Liam Harrap, CBC Edmonton)
- At the age of 100, Peter Offerd Davies has been awarded a British Empire Medal for his volunteer activities reading to primary schoolchildren. This was a New Year's honour for service to his local community. (BBC World News, January 1, 2023)
- Tareq Hadhad, 30, is a Syrian war refugee whose new chocolate store has just opened on Main Street in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. His factory is staffed by 77 people, about a dozen of whom are Ukrainian refugees. Hadhad describes chocolate as universal, and believes that chocolate is a product of happiness, which is why he and his family are in this business. Back in the 1980's, Tareq's father, Isam Hadhad, dropped out of civil engineering and started experimenting with chocolate making in his mother's kitchen. By 2011, Hadhad's Chocolate Establishment had two shops and an expanded five-storey factory, with hundreds of employees. During the start of Syria's civil war (2011) Hadhads factory was bombed, and the family decided it was time for them to flee. In 2013 they left Syria for Beirut expecting to eventually return to Syria. The family landed on the east coast of Canada, where they decided to continue their chocolate business. The Hadhad's aren't in the business of chocolate, they are in the business of peace. When war erupted in Ukraine, the Hadhad's produced a special chocolate bar that garnered \$100,000 for donations. (Calgary Herald, Dec.25, 2022)





THE YEAR IN CHEER: 183 WAYS THE WORLD GOT BETTER IN 2022

Here are some examples of how the world got better in 2022; to read the full list visit reasonstobecheerful.world

- A nonprofit has purchased \$6.7 billion in medical debt – and forgiven it all.
- Nine US cities now have the capacity to generate 3.5 gigawatts of solar power, more than the entire country did just a decade ago.
- Just four babies have tested positive for HIV in Botswana this year, a country that's on track to eliminate mother-to-child transmission.
- 60 unhoused people in Germany found a permanent home through an initiative that converts proceeds from art sales into affordable housing.
- Sweden sends just 1% of its trash to landfills. The rest is recycled or converted into energy.
- Zimbabwe's first all-women anti-poaching unit has made more than 300 arrests without firing a shot, and is partially credited with the Zambezi Valley's 80% decrease in elephant poaching since 2017.
- 14 cognitively impaired individuals who listened to their favourite playlist every day for three weeks showed a statistically significant improvement in memory.
- From 1993 to 2019, child poverty in the US fell by 59%.
- The number of endangered monarch butterflies found in Mexican forests rose by 35% from the year before.
- Every large parking lot in France will soon be covered in solar panels, generating green energy equivalent to running 10 nuclear reactors.

