

"We don't take busts just to take busts," Jackson says. The group does not cross the cattle guard in order to be arrested as do many other protesters.

But their creative actions sometimes mean added risks. "We do get scared," the redhead says. "We take as many precautions as we can."

For instance, the group uses police scanners and walkie-talkies to communicate among themselves.

But for all the challenges being a Wild Turtle offers her, Jackson says she would rather not be there.

"I'm not a martyr for peace," she says.

Because she has studied environmental science on a full-ride scholarship at Columbia University in New York, Jackson says she has an obligation to inform people.

"I have this knowledge and this information about the environment because of what I do," she says. "I have a responsibility to share that. I can't pretend it doesn't exist."

Jackson also is finishing her doctoral dissertation in atmospheric dynamics while studying for a undergraduate degree in documentary film at Stanford University in California.

Each member of the Wild Turtles, like each person at Peace City, has their own story, Jackson says.

Becky Simpson, who taught primary school in Michigan for six years, also is a Wild Turtle.

Simpson left her teaching life more than a year and a half ago to go on the road in her Toyota truck and multi-colored camper. Simpson now travels with Seeds of Peace, an organization that provides food, water and sanitation for several peace movements during the year.

But she manages to substitute teach occasionally to bolster her income.

"I never imagined I'd be doing this. I thought I'd be a doctor," she says. "What I do is totally by choice."

Simpson is "obnoxiously busy" following the peace movement, but it allows her to be near her friends.

"We love our lives," says Simpson of herself and travelling companion Vermin Supreme, whom she met at the Michigan Peace March more than a year and a half ago.

"We're busy all the time," she says, and there's nothing more she could ask for.

"It's a totally different lifestyle I know," she says. "But it's what I do."

And working for peace and the disarmament of nuclear weapons is just a part of Simpson's life.

"I have to do it," she says. "It's what I believe in."

It is that same belief in the peace movement that also helped to bring Sheila Stratton of Lincoln to the desert.

Stratton, a recent University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate and alumna of the Great American Peace March in 1986, decided the financial burden of a \$250 plane ticket

was worth tightening her belt to be at the protest.

Although it was the coercion of a fellow peace marcher that finally convinced her to go to the site, it was also a personal longing to return to the desert she crossed on foot three years ago.

Seated beneath a blue tarp in front of a wooden bandstand, Stratton recalls that only three years ago about 300 people gathered at the test site.

"It's exciting to see it grow to this," she says. "But I'm not surprised. It was just a matter of time."

The attraction to the event was not just an excuse for a party either.

"It's not just for the fun of it," she says, shaking her head. "I think there's a deep commitment here. These people are doing what they think they needed to do."

While she agrees it is equally important to pressure Congress to take action toward global nuclear disarmament through letters and phone calls, Stratton says public demonstration is just as effective.

"You just have to decide what is the best way for you," she says.

Although before she left Lincoln she had firmly decided against being arrested, Stratton says, she entertained different thoughts when some friends were discussing their plans to be arrested.

"I used to think it wasn't the thing to ever do," she says with a slight grin on her face, "but now I think maybe some day."

Stratton says she respects her friends and others at the protest and thinks crossing the line is actually a bigger political statement than just writing letters to Congressmen. But she realizes it may seem odd to some.

"It's their personal demonstration against what the government is doing," she says. "It's their constitutional right and it's a form of protest. For individuals, it's their choice of statement."

Stratton, who says she has a sort of spiritual experience in the desert, says coming to the protest renews her energy.

"It's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day things," she says, referring to her work at the Freeway Station for runaways in Lincoln and at Hudson Bay Co. "It's easy to forget there's a whole world out there."

Stratton says it's important for people in Lincoln and everywhere else to become aware of what's happening politically and environmentally in the world.

"We have to acknowledge we don't know everything," she says.

Stratton says the public also must be aware of its own government's actions.

"If this government was serious about slowing or stopping the arms race, they would simply stop testing," she says.

"The opportunity for an arms agreement with the Soviet Union is the best it will ever be," she says, although she questions whether any treaty will ever be reached.

"Either we blow up or stop weapons testing on this level," she says. "So far, I'd say the government's not serious."

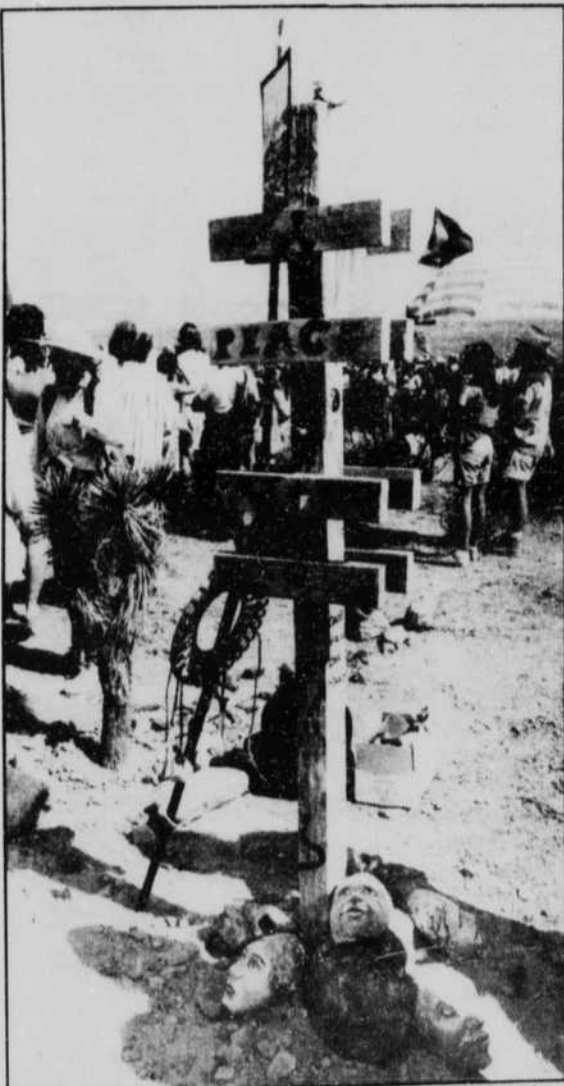
"It's just rhetoric . . . it's just words unless we take action."

-- Diana Johnson
Curt Wagner



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

Above: A man and his child crouch near the test site entrance during Thursday's confrontation between guards and activists. **Left:** A "peace post" becomes a collecting point for masks and personal mementos left by activists.



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan