



Students Against Global Extermination On tour, on film

by Lynda Cassels

In 1983 an open-line radio show asked Montrealers whether or not young people should be made aware of the threat of nuclear war. The popular response — "no, we shouldn't frighten them" — had the teen panel aghast.

"But we're already scared!" they replied, astounded at the reluctance of the adult public to discuss the issue. The young people decided to take action them-

selves, and SAGE — Students Against Global Extermination — was born.

In 1986 four SAGE members, all high-school students from the Montreal area, undertook a nine-month, marathon road-trip across Canada. Alison Carpenter, Maxime Faille, Seth Klin and Desiree McGraw spent four months raising funds, convinced their families that a year off school really wouldn't hinder their education, bought an old

station-wagon, passed their driver's examinations and set out for Newfoundland. Their goal? To speak with 1 in every 20 Canadian high-school students about nuclear war and disarmament.

"Mile Zero" tells their story. Over 60 people turned out at the Burke Education Centre at St. Mary's last Wednesday night for the film's Atlantic Canada premiere, which was attended by tour participant Alison Carpenter. Directed by Bonnie Sherr

Klein (of "Not a Love Story" and "Speaking Our Peace" fame) the film follows the Montreal foursome on their journey from St. John's to Victoria.

Like the tour itself, the film is lively, spontaneous and piece-meal; there are warm moments and dull moments. "Mile Zero" is not so much about disarmament or nuclear war as it is about young people confronting their fears and learning how to make their concerns known.

As the film progresses it becomes increasingly evident that, while individual students or schools may be less concerned than others, anxiety about the future is a nation-wide phenomenon among youth. A study at McMaster University discovered that 60 per cent of Canadian young people believe a nuclear war will occur during their lifetime; two-thirds of those students are convinced that they are powerless to effect that outcome.

"I guess I was like most kids," team member Desiree McGraw says in the film. "I didn't want to think about it (nuclear war) — it was so big and I was so small."

By the time the SAGE tour had completed its circuit of the Maritimes and Central Canada the group had already appeared on the popular television programme "Switchback" and both the CBC's "Midday" and the "Journal". Their encouragement to young people to speak out and "use the democratic system" prompted such an avalanche of mail to Members of Parliament that a reception was held for them in Ottawa so that MPs could better understand SAGE's activities and concerns.

"We tell young people to inform themselves, and inform their friends," Alison Carpenter said during the question period that followed the film. "And to write to the politicians, or make an appointment to meet with them. The politicians realize that today's 16-year olds will be voting in the next election."

Audience response to SAGE's efforts was for the most part enthusiastic.

"I recognize your groups' aims are idealistic," one man said. "But I would rather be an idealist than a pessimist, and perhaps idealism is the only real alternative we have left."

Not all were so sympathetic, however. A lone dissenter pointed out the possible destabilizing effect of disarmament and insisted that peace is as equally an objective for the Canadian military as it is for disarmament groups, only that "the means are different." Ever calm and articulate, Carpenter begged to differ and skillfully kept the discussion on her own terms.

"This is not the appropriate forum for a debate," she said later.

Many of the schools SAGE visited started up their own peace and disarmament groups in response to the tour, and a good number of these groups are still active today. Last week Carpenter met with students from Queen Elizabeth High School who plan to form their own disarmament group.

Whether or not you are in favour of disarmament, Carpenter tells young Canadians, the important thing is to educate yourself.

"The tour was not only about nuclear disarmament but about doing something for what you believe in."

'My grandfather was a rock-hound jeweller.'

by J. Meijer

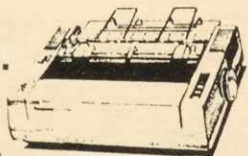
The Fireworks gallery in downtown Halifax is currently hosting "Amulet", an exhibition of new work by jeweller Beth Biggs. This exhibit is both beautiful and powerful and it is hard to imagine that it is Biggs' first solo exhibit. Biggs is no amateur in the jewellery business, having graduated from NSCAD with a bachelor of Fine Arts in jewellery and a Bachelor of Arts in Art Education, and having since instructed at the Gallery. Later Biggs also co-founded Halifax's Atelier Designers, a custom-design jewellery studio.

How did all of this start for Biggs? "Well my grandfather was rock-hound jeweller, and so I guess that's how I got interested". Rock-hound jewellers, Biggs explained were the people who went out and hunted for various materials to put in their works such as cowboy belts, hats and the like. At first just a hobby for Biggs, later she became more serious. "I was into music in high school, but then decided it was too competitive, and that I really wasn't very good at it, so I got into art." Biggs was lured to Halifax because NSCAD had the only degree-granting program in crafts in Canada.

For Biggs, making jewellery is

satisfying on many levels. On one level, jewellery can be simply fun, and fashionable to wear. But more than that, it allows personal expression by the wearer and the artist, and can symbolize many things. Custom jewellery is also satisfying to create, because "it is just as interesting taking in other people's ideas and being the vehicle to make them." In the exhibition now at Fireworks, amulets are the theme; amulets are protective charms thought to endow the

wearer with magical characteristics and to protect them from evil. Biggs creates these highly symbolic pieces utilizing materials such as 14K gold, sterling silver, and precious and semi-precious stones. A visit to Fireworks Gallery is always worthwhile, and this exhibit by Beth Biggs gives an added incentive to drop by. The exhibition continues until Dec. 17, and Biggs is now in Ottawa, where she is self-employed.

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