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# Activists stand up for peace



PEACE VIGIL: Sharon Chandler (right) uses her body to pin her anti-war sign to the railing on the Sunset Avenue overpass Saturday morning to keep it from being blown away by the wind.

EVAN E. PARKER PHOTO

## HIGHWAY PROTEST: Citizens with signs opposing war with Iraq take message to overpasses across three counties.

Mark Porter, The Bellingham Herald

FERNDAL - Dorothy MacSlarrow remembers seeing a steady stream of people holding "No Iraq War" signs on Interstate 5 overpasses while on a family trip two weekends ago.

"Visually, it was overpass after overpass from here to Seattle," she said. "It was exciting to see the solidarity."

Heartened by seeing "like-minded people," the Ferndale resident and her husband, Jack, decided to spend this Saturday at Ferndale's Main Street I-5 overpass holding anti-war signs.

"It can make a difference," she said, standing with a sign facing

northbound I-5 traffic and enduring high winds and a downpour along with five others. "I can make a difference."

A once-local overpass peace vigil has now spread to Seattle and Portland, Ore., as anti-war activists across the region use the method to voice opposition to a possible U.S. war against Iraq.

Peace groups in Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish counties started it two Saturdays before Christmas and supporters say it will continue at least through Jan. 18.

Whatcom County overpasses from Blaine through Alger are being covered, according to supporters.

### **Positive response**

Those on the overpasses say their efforts have been met with an overwhelmingly positive response.

Lynne Pendleton, who has spent four Saturdays at the Ferndale overpass, said she spent the first day counting responses from vehicles traveling up I-5. The favorable responses - honking, thumbs up and peace signs - out-pollled obvious negative responses like raised middle fingers 20 to one, she said.

"When they see stuff like this they honk and wave," Pendleton said. "This is one way for people to express themselves."

Peace activists from Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties were at a large anti-war rally in Seattle at Garfield High School on Dec. 8 when they brainstormed the idea of I-5 vigils, said Stonewall "Stoney" Bird, a Skagit County activist who helps organize the Skagit vigils.

### **Reaching thousands**

There are between 50 and 75 people on overpasses, according to supporters.

"The general idea is to cover them (overpasses) all," Bird said. "The idea was that lots of people would see the signs. We figured that in the two hours about 12,000 cars would go by and that meant 15,000 to 20,000 people."

Even the majority of truckers are giving sign-holders the thumbs up and honking, he said.

"It's my belief that lots of people have the same feelings but they don't know if there is someone else who agrees with them," Bird said. "If you stand up and say what you think, that encourages all the people who say the same thing."

"Every time we do it, people see what we are doing and then just stop and come and join us," he said.

Christine Vacca of Bellingham spent her first Saturday with an anti-war sign on the Sunset Drive I-5 overpass.

"I'm an American who is upset about our democracy and our process,"

Vacca said, watching one of her fellow protester's signs ripped from her fingers in high winds. "It just feels like this is when we should let our opinion be known."

The negative responses are sparse and kind of "anti-climatic," she added.

"I'm looking and thinking, 'Is that the peace sign or the finger?'"

While the middle finger is the most prevalent sign of negativity, Bellingham protesters did have one man turn up recently at a Bellingham area overpass with a sign that said something to the effect of "Nuke Iraq," said Dottie Dale of Bellingham.

Dale, who stands at the Sunset overpass on Saturdays, said the vigil is one more action for peace.

### Action for sanity

"It's one more action for people to use their sanity and not to buy all the lies that the media are giving us," she said. "We are reaching so many thousands of people, being up there on the overpasses, and their positive response - it is saying we both stand for peace."

Nineteen-year-old Western Washington University student Julie Goodwin said she has been at the Ferndale overpass holding a "No Iraq War" sign for the past four Saturdays.

"I have the hope that the American people will stand up and do the right thing," said Goodwin, wearing a peace sign pin on her knit cap. "I hope it shows other people that it's not unpatriotic to not go to war - my main thing is that this keeps them thinking."

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