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Nukewatch faithful in its vigil

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

I received my Winter 2009-10 issue of Nukewatch in the mail this week. Thank goodness -- and the spirit of Nukewatch guardian angel, the late Sam Day -- this feisty publication keeps going.

I got to know Sam Day during his Missouri visits in the 1980s when Nukewatch was mapping the 1,000 land-based missiles that then dotted seven Midwestern and Great Plains states, some of the sites just southeast of Kansas City. The effort ended in publication of the 1988 Nukewatch classic, "Nuclear Heartland."

Day recalled then that "a judge's gavel" gave birth to Nukewatch, an educational foundation and offshoot of *The Progressive* magazine. A Milwaukee federal judge in March 1979 allowed the U.S. government to suppress a *Progressive* article about nuclear weapons designs. The case ended, however, in the fall of 1979 with publication of the forbidden article after the government abandoned its efforts.

The purpose of the article, according to Day, was "to rid nuclear weapons of a mystique that allowed the government to maintain its cloak of secrecy."

Over the years, Nukewatch has challenged nuclear civil defense policies, investigated campus military research, helped mobilize support for the Nuclear Weapons Freeze and taught investors how to rid their portfolios of nuclear-related stocks and bonds.

Day once credited those tracking the "white train," which carried nuclear weapons, for the idea of tracking H-bomb trucks carrying weapons in and out of the Denver-based Rocky Flats nuclear weapons factory and eventually around the country.

"As with the truck watch," Day said, "the silo campaign did not stop the nuclear arms race or even slow it,

but it helped many in mid-America to better understand its closeness and omnipresence."

Today Nukewatch is based in Luck, Wisconsin. The organization's various projects bring critical attention to the locations, movements, dangers, and the politics of nuclear weapons, nuclear power and radioactive wastes. Staff and volunteers advocate nonviolence in the spirit of the civil rights movement in education and action to abolish nuclearism.

Many of us who follow U.S. nuclear activities are very grateful for Nukewatch's persistent vigil. If you are not familiar with it, you should be. As an act of solidarity with the peace- and justice-minded souls everywhere, learn more about Nukewatch and its mission and needs.

These are good people doing good things and they deserve our support and gratitude.

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