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## Keeping watch on N-weapons Group establishes Center for Peacemaking next to Pantex plant

By Terry FitzPatrick

Special to The News

AMARILLO, Texas — Peace workers have purchased 20 acres beside the Pantex nuclear weapons plant to establish a permanent Center for Peacemaking, a logistical base for demonstrators working to escalate the level of local protests.

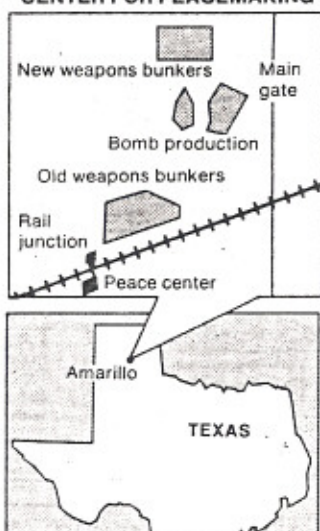
The land was financed through the Texas Veterans Land Board, with an \$8,000 loan from Amarillo's Roman Catholic bishop, L.T. Matthiesen.

"We just want to raise awareness and raise concerns about the nuclear arms race," said local peace organizer Les Breeding. "It's something that's happening in a lot of places across the country. People are buying homes across from these places that are creating plans for the end of the world. By being here, hopefully, we can be a witness to other people in the peace movement that maybe they need to take stronger action also."

Breeding's tract of land is just two miles from the underground production lines at Pantex, where America's nuclear warheads undergo final assembly. Breeding, his wife, Cindy, and photography student Karen Byars live on the site in a mobile home. Two small trailer houses were donated to the Breedings and serve as housing for out-of-town demonstrators who come to Pantex to protest or to monitor truck and train shipments of warheads from the plant to American military bases. Breeding can see the Pantex railroad junction from his kitchen window. He listens to Pantex security guards on a home police scanner.

U.S. Department of Energy spokesman Tom Walton called Breeding "just another neighbor." Pantex guards occasionally drive down the dirt road leading to the

PANTEX PLANT AND  
"CENTER FOR PEACEMAKING"



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peace center. "If he wants to set up a peace camp, that's fine. If they break the law, we'll take that up at that time," Walton said.

No laws prevent Breeding from using a Texas Veterans Land Board loan to finance the peace-center land, said land board staff attorney Wendell Smith in Austin.

"The rules really don't say anything about politics, what you can or cannot do," Smith said.

Les Breeding's father, a Korean War veteran who lived in Hereford until his death last month, was the owner of record for the land purchase, made this summer. The widow of another local veteran sold the land to the Breedings, who assumed the existing veterans loan.

"No one would have asked what they were using it for," Smith said. "This has never come up before."

Bishop Matthiesen financed the land transaction and development

of the peace center with a no-interest, no-deadline loan. The money came from his \$30,000 "Solidarity Peace Fund," established in 1982 to help Pantex employees who heeded the bishop's controversial call to resign for reasons of conscience. The fund is separate from the church, but is managed by the bishop.

"Other people contributed to that fund and told me that I could use that for whatever purpose I see would help in the total promotion of a non-nuclear world," Matthiesen said. "I do not feel comfortable in giving them (the Breedings) a grant. I did not do that. I gave them a loan, which they are going to repay."

Les Breeding, an Amarillo native who returned home three years ago for full-time peace organizing work, lives off donations and his wife's salary as a schoolteacher. Breeding's strategy is to slowly escalate the level of civil disobedience and direct action against the Pantex plant and the shipment of weapons.

In August, seven demonstrators including Dallas resident Mavis Belisle were arrested as they blocked Pantex's main access road during a sit-in. Their trials are scheduled for February 1987. Earlier this year, Breeding's nationwide alert that a trainload of nuclear weapons was headed to a submarine base in Charleston, S.C., led to seven demonstrations down the railroad line. Five people were arrested in Montezuma, Ga., as they tried to block the tracks.

Energy Department spokesman Dave Jackson, at the Albuquerque, N.M., command center for nuclear weapons shipments, called Breeding's train-watching "irresponsible." Jackson said increased awareness of the train shipments increases the threat of terrorism.

"If you advertise them, you certainly make it easier for anyone

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— Les Breeding,  
peace organizer

who might be interested in doing sabotage to the train to gain information," Jackson said. "If you have a large group of people who all profess to be peaceful and they are peaceful, that's fine. Our concern is that somebody in there might not be peaceful. Somebody in there might have an explosive or do something totally irresponsible that would hurt a lot of innocent people," he said.

Pantex manager Charlie Poole said the increased attention his plant now gets hasn't hurt employee morale.

"We don't see any problem with our people," said Poole. "We talk to them off and on, fairly regularly, about the fact that there may be demonstrations, there may be people with signs and placards along the road. But we impress on them the responsibility to the civil rights of those particular people who have a right to express their opinion," Poole said.

Breeding said donations to the Center for Peacemaking have increased since the land was purchased and developed.

"Whenever you're fund-raising," Breeding said, "if you land a certain amount of money, that makes it easier to make other money."

Breeding said the peace center has established itself as an institution in the eyes of contributors, who now feel more comfortable sending money.