



The Peaceful Standoff

(at the Livermore Weapons Lab, April 14, 2006)

It bordered on the ludicrous
to see the sight unfold.

Three hundred graying protesters
standing near the gate, so bold.

Blocked by fifteen young men
in full riot gear assembled,
faces shielded, clad in black,
leg armor which resembled

thousands more sent off to war
many miles across the sea.
Surely they could not have missed
the sad 'n blinding irony.

Was Good Friday lost to them,
too young for Viet Nam?

I wonder what went through their minds,
as they gripped their black batons?

Were we seen as Jesus Freaks,
Geezers, Geeks, or Hippies sown
from the not too distant past,
Or maybe parents like their own?

Two hundred Fools for Peace
Holding limp-stemmed flowers,
A threat to none, a threat to all
who live by wartime powers.

And twenty-seven of this gaggle
did choose to be arrested:
their faith in peaceful protest
was never to be tested.

We felt no hate, even pitied them
for the inconvenience we caused;
I think they sensed our love--
our songs could give them pause

to think about the dream again,
and what's behind those gates
where deadly weapons made by men
which left unchecked will seal our fate.

And now we made the point anew
which, 40 years before, some tried,
but then the lion ruled the lamb,
and birthed riots on all sides.

<-- Companions on the Journey members
Butch Shafsky (kneeling) and Bob Burns
(to his right) chose to be arrested.

This time we stood toe to toe,
and looked each other in the eye:
there was no tear gas in the air--
'twas peaceful as a lullaby.

A song which gives hope to all
who watch this scene unfold,
a small taste of what may be
in warring nations much more bold.

And so the peaceful demonstration
came and went and passed the test.
It went without a hitch: I'm sold--
Doctor King would be impressed.

-- Joe Barile



Above right, Joe Mastrocola, later arrested, holds a banner made
by Cheryl Bough. Below, a group of silent demonstrators for peace
respectfully face those who are about to arrest them for refusing to
disperse from the main gate to the weapons Lab.

